

Project Blakeana

Three New Chamber Saxophone Works by Hong Kong Composers

By

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ABSTRACT

Project Blakeana was launched to promote Hong Kong composers and invest in their new music. Playing one of the most active roles in new music in the 20th and 21st centuries, the saxophone has a reputation as a versatile instrument for soloists and chamber musicians. In addition to the two most common instrumentations (solo saxophone with piano accompaniment, and saxophone quartet), the works for a trio of two saxophones and piano are becoming more popular. However, there is simply not enough available repertoire, hence the birth of Project Blakeana. Some foreseeable influences of this project are 1) expanding the repertoire list for two saxophones and piano; 2) promoting Hong Kong living composers; and 3) fostering the new music scene and encouraging collaboration among performers and composers. I commissioned composers Meilina Tsui, Esther Wu, and Austin Yip for Project Blakeana. Tsui wrote *Fantasia for Two Saxophones and Piano* for soprano saxophone, baritone saxophone, and piano. Wu wrote *The Unheard* for two tenor saxophones and electronics. Yip wrote *If Winter Had No Fallen Leaves* for two alto saxophones and piano. This document provides background information of the composers, program notes, performance guide, and recordings for all three works.

DEDICATION

To my parents, Queenie Law and Ernest Wong – my first and forever mentors and supporters. Your faith in me, your company along my journey, and your caring are all my biggest motivation and encouragement, especially during my ups and downs.

And to my best friend Jason Fong – without him, I would neither have started the doctoral degree, nor released my first album, nor have come close to where I am today. I treasure the profound memories of our friendship.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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My gratitude goes to the three composers – Meilina Tsui, Esther Wu, and Austin Yip, who dedicated their time and effort to share their artistry with us. Their music has sparked new inspiration in me. I would also like to thank the musicians who recorded with me – Dennis Kwok and Pierre Tang, for bringing these pieces to life.

A heartfelt thank you to *Kodachrome*: Jade Deatherage, Bonson Lee, and Siobhan Plouffe, as well as the incredible Arizona State University saxophone studio for being supportive, welcoming, and inspiring during a prominent part of my journey.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Hong Kong Music Scene

Bauhinia Blakeana, also known as the Hong Kong Orchid Tree, is of a hybrid origin, with parental species Bauhinia Purpurea and Bauhinia variegata.¹ Bauhinia Blakeana is often found in the subtropical region of Southern China, with a pink and purple flower of the size five to six inches wide. Even though it was not indigenous to Hong Kong, Bauhinia Blakeana has been the floral emblem of Hong Kong since 1965. In my opinion, it symbolizes the historical background of Hong Kong as a mix of Western and Eastern cultures – as a colonial city of the United Kingdom and a city that originated in the People's Republic of China.

Hong Kong was a British colony from 1841 to 1997, and the handover to the People's Republic of China happened in 1997. Given that Hong Kong was highly influenced by Western culture, it has its positive and negative impacts on the general music education system. The city is inspired and surrounded by European classical music, which nurtures the whole Western music scene. It is also very common for students to start music lessons at an early age. There are wind band, orchestra, and choir programs in the K-12. At certain elementary schools (Grade 1 to 6), musical instrument classes are offered as an extra-curricular in Grade 1. In other words, it is not rare for

¹ C.P.Y. Lau, L. Ramsden, and R.M.K. Saunders, "Hybrid Origin of 'Bauhinia Blakeana' (Leguminosae: Caesalpinioideae), Inferred Using Morphological, Reproductive, and Molecular Data," *American Journal of Botany* 92, no. 3 (2005): 525.

students to start saxophone classes in their first grade. “Music education was perceived by the parents to be advantageous for promoting their children’s music-specific interest, and in their mental, motor and academic development but their ratings for interest in music and cognitive and affective development were the highest among the variables.”²

The first school of music at a collegiate level was established in 1965 at The Chinese University of Hong Kong Department of Music. Compared to neighboring countries, like the Shanghai Conservatory of Music (1927), The Tokyo Music School (1879), The National Taiwan Normal University College of Music (1946), and Ewha Womans University College of Music (1925), Hong Kong is a few decades behind. Nonetheless, the development of the New Music scene was not in the rear among them. “On a global level, Hong Kong is perhaps the most active Asian member (apart from Japan) of the renowned International Society for Contemporary Music (ISCM), founded in 1922.”³ The most active organizations that promote new music in Hong Kong are the Composers and Authors Society of Hong Kong Limited (CASH) and Hong Kong Composers' Guild, which were established in 1977 and 1983 respectively. Based on these data, we understand that demography was blooming in general, and composers received opportunities for career development.

² Angel Lai Yan Choi, Jennie Chen Yee Tse, Cindy Sin Ni So, and Alexander Seeshing Yeung, "Hong Kong Parents' Perceptions of Benefits of Music to Their Children," *New Horizons in Education*, No. 51 (2005): 111.

³ Jane Ram, "Personal Journal; Culture & Thought -- Music: New Music for Asian Audience; A Classical Composer Celebrates His Hong Kong Roots," *Asian Wall Street Journal* (2003).

The saxophone was not widely welcomed, initially. It is not a common instrument to be in the symphony orchestra rotation to start with, and the saxophone culture was not mature enough yet until the 1990's.

“As a colonized territory of Britain from 1842 to 1997, Hong Kong was heavily influenced by European orchestral music. Since such a genre does not usually include saxophone, the instrument has been considered an outsider among other instruments in the concert hall. Consequently, the saxophone has not been a popular choice of instrument for Hong Kong composers.”⁴

Leading into the 21st century, the saxophone has gained significantly more commissioned works from local composers. The pivot point is the growth in the number of saxophone-major teachers and students studying abroad in Europe and the United States. Prior to this, the majority of the saxophone teachers were clarinetists, oboists, and bassoonists. As students majoring in saxophone (local and overseas) began receiving exposure to western new music scenes, it catalyzed many new commissions for saxophones. Hence, it has become a popular choice in the 21st century. Xin Gao observed that Hong Kong has a much larger rate of production ratio of saxophone compositions relative to its geographical size.⁵ He suggested two possibilities: 1) Saxophone colleague Tak Chiu Wong, a close friend of Gao, has an extensive list of commissions, and 2) Hong

⁴ Dennis Tsz Kiu Kwok, *The Saxophone Music of Austin Yip* (DMA dissertation, The University of Iowa, 2022). 4.

⁵ Xin Gao, *Project China: A Resource of Contemporary Saxophone Music Written by Chinese-Born Composers* (DMA dissertation, The University of North Carolina at Greensboro, 2016). 7.

Kong composers enjoy collaborating with saxophonists. On the other hand, Gao had struggled to collect information about saxophone repertoire in mainland China.

Saxophone Chamber Music

The most common configurations in the classical saxophone repertoire are solo saxophone with piano accompaniment and saxophone quartet. Like other woodwind solo repertoire, the saxophone is capable of lyrical and virtuosic performances. On the other hand, the saxophone quartet, consisting of soprano, alto, tenor, and baritone saxophones, is often likened to a string quartet. With homogeneous voices, they can blend incredibly well with each other, and they cover a wide range of pitches, timbre, and intensity. In recent years, there has been a demand for saxophone chamber music, other than saxophone quartet, that is perhaps even more intimate, but even more colorful: that is the trio for two saxophones and piano. It is reminiscent of the traditional piano trio (violin, cello, and piano). The two saxophones can blend incredibly well, and the piano part covers the lack of harmonic content to fill out the sounds of a composition. It maximizes the variety of tone color and range without sacrificing the effectiveness of communication among the three musicians.

Some of the notable pieces for two saxophones and piano are *Duo Concertant* (1858) by Jean-Baptiste Singelée, *Barcarole* by Wolfgang Jacobi (1964), *Lullaby* by Jennifer Higdon (1990), *Oriental* (2006) by Masanori Katoh, *Lovers on the Celestial Sphere* (2005) and *Paganini Lost* (2008) by Jun Nagao, *Foxy Music* by Philippe Geiss (2011), *Techno Parade* (2002/2013) by Guillaume Connesson, *Pawn* (2013) by Steven

Galante, and *Vultures* (2013) by Carter Pann. While this is not a survey of the repertoire for two saxophone and piano, the same list of repertoires gets recycled in recitals often because the options are limited. The limitations in repertoire and a fast-growing demand for more compositions have inspired my Project Blakeana. Moreover, the representation of the diversity of these composers is less than desired. Since we have an opportunity to grow the repertoire list, it is my mission to build it in a way that represents the real demographic of diverse artists.

Through Project Blakeana, I wish to serve the saxophone community with more options for two saxophones with either piano or electronics, as well as introduce composers from Hong Kong to the community. I believe in the capabilities inherent in this instrumentation. In the next chapters, some background information will be provided about the three composers with whom I collaborated, such as composer biographies, and program notes, followed by a performance guide for each piece. I will also provide different performance practices, explanations of extended techniques if needed, and supplementary methods to help saxophonists navigate through each of them.

CHAPTER 2

FANTASIA FOR TWO SAXOPHONES AND PIANO BY MEILINA TSUI

Composer Biography

Meilina Tsui's biography:

Meilina Tsui (b. 1993) is a Kazakhstan-born, Hong Kong-American composer, pianist, and educator based in Orlando, Florida. She is the first classical composer of Dungan descent whose music has been gaining international recognition. Tsui's works explore her mixed heritage and uniquely intertwine elements of East Asian, Central Asian, and Western cultures.

Described as "irresistible and emotionally convincing" (The Aspen Times), "high-spirited, lively, and colorful" (Texas Classical Review), her music has been commissioned and performed by Houston Grand Opera, Opera Theatre of Saint Louis, Aspen Music School & Festival, Hong Kong Arts Development Council, Radio Television Hong Kong, Hong Kong Government Home Affairs Bureau, Hong Kong Philharmonic, Naples Philharmonic, Kazakh State Philharmonic, National Symphony Orchestra of the Republic of Bashkortostan, Kaleidoscope Chamber Orchestra, Hong Kong New Music Ensemble, Lontano Ensemble, PHACE Ensemble, Del Sol Quartet, Quartetto Indaco, Israeli Chamber Project, Mivos Quartet, Kazakh State String Quartet, and countertenor, Key'mon W. Murrah, among others. Her music has been featured by NAXOS Music & Video Libraries, London arts radio "Resonance fm," RTHK Radio 4, and Channel 31.

Tsui's recent highlight in her compositional career has been her opera, *The Big Swim*, co-commissioned by Houston Grand Opera and Asia Society Texas Center, which was listed as one of the "Top 10 operas to see in the world during Spring/Winter 2024" by OPERAWIRE. The opera premiered with sold-out performances in February 2024 at the Asia Society in Houston, and marked the

beginning of an annual tradition that will illuminate Lunar New Year celebrations in Houston for years to come.

Tsui holds music degrees from University of Michigan (DMA in Composition), King's College London (MMus in Composition), and Chinese University of Hong Kong (BA in Music). Her mentors and composition teachers include Professors Michael Daugherty, Bright Sheng, Gabriela Lena Frank, Christopher Theofanidis, Stephen Hartke, Lo Kingman, Silvina Milstein, and Wendy Wan-Ki Lee.⁶

⁶ Meilina Tsui, "About," *Meilina Tsui*, accessed March 11, 2025, <https://www.meilinatsui.com/about>.

Program Notes

Meilina Tsui's program notes of *Fantasia for Two Saxophones and Piano* reads:

Fantasia for Two Saxophones and Piano is a highly virtuosic and dynamic piece that combines elements of the neo-romantic style with Japanese traditional modes.

The piece was inspired by my honeymoon spent in Japan in early 2024. As a first-time visitor, I was taken aback by the incredible level of preservation of this country's rich history, culture, infrastructure, and nature. What stood out the most for me was hearing the traditional *koto* music in the most unlikely places, such as train stations and shopping malls. The sound of the *koto* felt so purifying to the soul in those busy and hectic places, it also made me feel engrossed by the distinctive esoteric quality of Japanese music that cannot be found in any other culture.

In *Fantasia*, I wanted to experiment with four different Japanese traditional modes: the *Hirajōshi*, *In*, *Insen*, and *Iwato* scales. I asked myself, what kind of music could I create using these traditional Japanese scales in a piece with western instrumentation, and how could these modes be expressed in the neo-romantic style. With the piano playing a substantial part in this piece, I perceived the soprano and baritone saxophones, the two wind instruments, as portraying a couple, myself and my husband, having conversations with each other whilst traveling through Japan.

The piece consists of contrasting episodes, exhibiting a palette of different emotions and moods, from outpouring excitement and exaltation to moments of sudden calmness with laconic melodic gestures. Rather than guiding with a detailed program note, I want to give space to the listener to decide what sort of

‘conversation’ the two saxophone players are having whilst they navigate through the different episodes of this adventurous piece.⁷

⁷ Meilina Tsui, *Fantasia for Two Saxophones and Piano* (Hong Kong, 2024).





Performance Guide

Koto belongs to the Zithers family which originated in East Asia.⁸ As large as a small desk, it is meant to be played on a flat surface or placed horizontally. Changing the placement of the sound bridges underneath the strings changes the length and tension of the strings, hence the pitch changes. Musicians would tune the instrument prior to the performance according to the key of the repertoire. While it has low flexibility to switch keys, there are interminable ways to pluck and strum the *Koto*.

The four common scales implemented in *the koto* tuning system are *Hirajōshi*, *In*, *Insen*, and *Iwato*. Since *Fantasia* was structured based on these scales, performers are encouraged to familiarize themselves with them, especially to execute the technical passages in the piece. They are essentially pentatonic scales but with varied modes and lowered scale degree(s). The following are the four scales arranged with the same tonic for the sake of comparison.








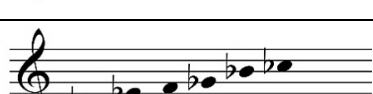
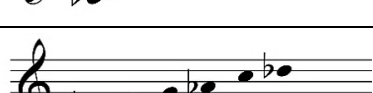


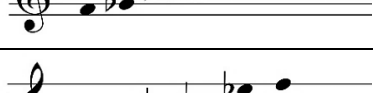
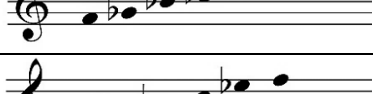
⁸ W. Adriaansz, "Koto," *Grove Music Online*, accessed March 10, 2025, <https://www-oxfordmusiconline-com.ezproxy1.lib.asu.edu/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000015420>.

Table 1. Types of Traditional Japanese scales.

Name	Pitch Collection
<i>Hirajōshi</i>	
<i>In</i>	
<i>Insen</i>	
<i>Iwato</i>	

Tsui used different Japanese scales to distinguish each section. All four Japanese scales are used throughout the piece, but *Hirajōshi* and *Insen* appear more frequently than *In* and *Iwato*. The piece starts in D-flat *Hirajōshi* and ends with F *Insen*. Overall, F *Insen* has the highest number of five reappearances throughout the piece. All the Japanese scales and its key in each section are listed in Table 2. While *Fantasia* changes key numerous times, all of them share the common tone F.

Table 2. Japanese Traditional Scales from *Fantasia*.

Measure	Type of the Japanese Scales	Pitch Collections
1-30	<i>Hirajōshi</i> in D-flat	
31-61	<i>Hirajōshi</i> in G-flat	
62-101	<i>Insen</i> in F	
102	<i>Hirajōshi</i> in C-flat	
103-106	<i>Insen</i> in F	
107	<i>Hirajōshi</i> in C-flat	
108-141	<i>Insen</i> in F	
141-171	<i>Hirajōshi</i> in C-flat	
172-185	<i>Hirajōshi</i> in D-flat	
186	<i>In</i> in F	
187	<i>Insen</i> in F	
188	<i>Iwato</i> in F	
190-196	<i>Insen</i> in F	

In each designated section, all the parts consist of the pitch collection listed above only, except for some chords, tritone was avoided for harmony purposes. For example, in m. 125, while this section is in *F Insen* and C is the chord tone, C-flat was used in the piano part. That is to avoid the dissonance from the potential tritone between the C and G-flat. Instead, the C was replaced by C-flat.

Figure 1. *Fantasia*, Non-chord Tones in Piano, m. 125.

The image shows a musical score for measures 124 and 125. The top system consists of two staves: a treble clef staff and a bass clef staff. Above the treble staff, the word "slaptongue" is written, with '+' signs above notes in measures 124 and 125. Below the bass staff, "slaptongue" is also written, with '+' signs above notes in measures 124 and 125. The piano part below features a grand staff with treble and bass clefs. It includes triplets (marked with '3') and slaptongue markings ('v') throughout measures 124 and 125.

Extended Techniques

There are only a handful of extended techniques written in *Fantasia*, which is a great repertoire choice to gradually introduce extended techniques to students. Slaptongue is written throughout the piece. Based on the notation, Tsui clearly wishes the clarity of the tone to come through just as prominent as the slap sound. A common phenomenon a student comes across is focusing too much on the percussive effect rather

than nuance. The goal is to imitate the sound of plucking a string. To maintain a decent embouchure and support are crucial. Focus on shaping the note and air like a bell tone. Then the decay of the tone will offer a nice resonance at the tail of each note and give an impression of a plucked string. However, in mm. 3-4, Tsui challenges the saxophonists to offset their slap-tongue pitches a sixteenth note apart. The idea is to match the rolling gesture in the right hand of the piano, but if the result is inconsistent in terms of togetherness, the performance could easily be misunderstood as not playing together. The trio is recommended to have the baritone saxophone player cue each set so that the piano can follow, while the soprano saxophone player responds immediately after. If the struggle remains unresolved, each saxophone player shall practice precise timing of slap-tongue. Slap-tongue is usually late. In a piece like *Fantasia*, saxophonists should anticipate the technique in order to avoid the delay.

Figure 2. *Fantasia*, mm. 3-5.

The musical score is for the piece *Fantasia*, measures 3-5. It is in 4/4 time with a tempo of *Allegro con fuoco* and a metronome marking of 160. The score is written for Soprano Saxophone (Sop. Sax.), Baritone Saxophone (Bari. Sax.), and Piano (Pno.).

Tempo and Dynamics: The tempo is *Allegro con fuoco* with a metronome marking of 160. Dynamics range from *pp* (pianissimo) to *ff* (fortissimo).

Techniques: The score includes the technique of *growl*, indicated by a 'v' symbol with a '+' sign above the notes. The *slap tongue* technique is also indicated by a '+' sign above the notes.

Instrumentation: The score is written for Soprano Saxophone, Baritone Saxophone, and Piano. The Piano part includes a Pedal (Ped.) line.

Measure Details:

- Measure 3:** Soprano Saxophone and Baritone Saxophone play a melodic line with a *growl* technique. Dynamics are *f*. Piano plays a rhythmic accompaniment with a *f* dynamic.
- Measure 4:** Dynamics for Soprano and Baritone Saxophone change to *p* and *ff* respectively. Piano dynamics are *pp* and *ff*.
- Measure 5:** Dynamics for Soprano and Baritone Saxophone change to *mp* and *f* respectively. Piano dynamics are *mp* and *f*. The *slap tongue* technique is used in this measure.

Growling is another extended technique featured in *Fantasia*. The challenge in *Fantasia* is to continuously growl while playing at a strong dynamic level. It will put the saxophonists' endurance to the test. Meanwhile, saxophonists should be mindful of intonation when growling across the range. While the singing pitch is usually inaudible relative to the playing pitch, the effect of distortion is the main goal. If students struggle to growl and play at the same time, Marcus Weiss and Giorgio Netti offered some guidance in their book *The Techniques of Saxophone Playing*.⁹

⁹ Marcus Weiss and Giorgio Netti, *The Techniques of Saxophone Playing* (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 2010).

Blending

Fantasia was written for soprano saxophone and baritone saxophone, which are the two saxophones on the far ends of the spectrum. They share a narrow range of common tones, the shapes of the instruments are different, and they are different transposed instruments. From the lowest note of the soprano saxophone – A-flat3, to the top note of the baritone saxophone – A4, the window is only an octave. There is hardly any instance when both instruments are playing at their comfortable range together.

Besides the difference in size, the baritone saxophone is modified from the original design to play a written low A. The harmonic sequence is then slightly different from the other members of the saxophone family. Moreover, the baritone saxophone has more turns on the instrument than most soprano saxophones. In other words, the soprano saxophone does not take nearly as much air volume to make a sound, hence a quicker response and crisp articulation. On the contrary, the baritone saxophone has a much bigger resonance and longer natural release. In addition, an instrument in E-flat is naturally less than ideal to blend with a B-flat instrument. Given the advancement in instrument manufacturing technology, the two instruments apply two different fingerings for the same concert pitch. As a result, they are less likely to blend naturally because of the acoustic intonation tendencies of the instrument.

CHAPTER 3

THE UNHEARD BY ESTHER WU

Composer Biography

Esther Wu's biography:

Esther Wu is a Hong Kong composer, sound artist and independent singer-songwriter. Her works included electro-acoustic music, instrumental writings, cross-media (audiovisual, scenography, interactive media, sound installations, free improvisation, pop music and film scoring for movies/ TV series). She aims to further explore her compositional crafts and speak through the versatility of different media and its boundaries. She has obtained a Master's degree in Composition from the Royal Conservatoire of The Hague under the full scholarship by The Hong Kong Jockey Club Music and Dance Fund. She holds a Bachelor's degree with First Class Honor in Composition and Electronic music from the Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts.

Recently Wu has been commissioned by Hong Kong New Music Ensemble 15: Sounding Tomorrow (mixed media work), Hong Kong Gaudeamus Dunhuang Ensemble (immersive audiovisual installation), percussion group The Up;Strike, Gaudeamus Muziekweek 2023 (Bagpipe project), Muziekgebouw aan t'IJ: Words and Music 2022 (interactive sound installation), Contemporary Musiking Hong Kong: SOUNDFORM 2020 (audiovisual work), Ear Up Gig On festival 2023, and 「點子計劃 2023」 (Song production). She has been one of the promising young artists in the ULYSSES NETWORK, and participated as a residency artist in IRCAM ManiFeste (France, 2022), Gaudeamus Muziekweek festival (Netherlands, 2022) and IMPULS Academy (Austria, 2023). In these programs, she explored collective improvisation, immersive sound installation, and theatrical, electro-acoustics studies in her presented works respectively.

In singer-songwriting productions, she is currently participating in "Ear up Incubation 2023" to complete her song production ("EVENING") and showcase in 2024. She had released several Cantonese singles, "Blanked Birds" and "Edge of Dance" and performed them with other originals ("Jungles", "Random12", "Neo Tereza") in Ear Up Gig On 2023, which she collaborated with local fashion brand "Royksoppgakkai", founded by fashion designer Brun Chan. By far, her songs have included electronics, ambient, and some influences from metal, psychedelic rock and jazz.

Performing Notes

Esther Wu's performing notes of *The Unheard* reads:

The piece is composed based on a simple rule/limitation for both performers - during the recording session/performance, two performers are required to put on individual headphones to cancel the sound from the other performer and only listen to their own sound recorded/performed. However, the aim for the two is to try their best to synchronise with each other's pace only visually, looking at their breathe, the fingerings, and counting. With this limitation, two will produced slightly to widely extend of different sound to each other throughout piece, and the unintentional differences we could hear from the result is what the piece aiming for. In the score, two parts are very most the same, but only some parts that the two are written to breathe at different spot so as to make the result sound continuous.¹⁰

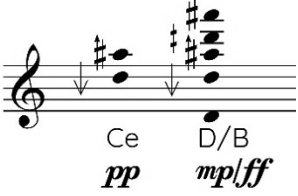
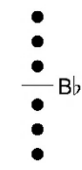
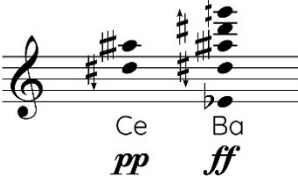
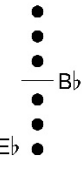
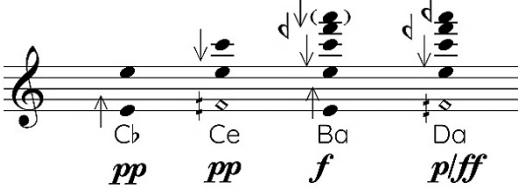
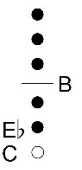
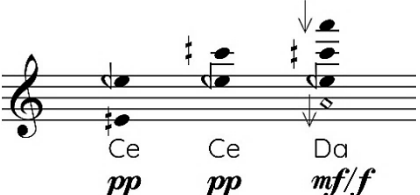
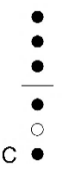
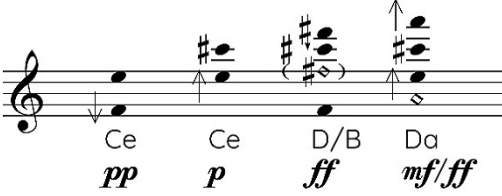
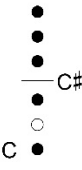
¹⁰ Esther Wu, *The Unheard* (Hong Kong, 2024).

Performance Guide

The Unheard is a challenging piece due to plenty of multiphonics and glissandi in the piece, which is not idiomatic for saxophone. Unlike trombone, string instruments, and voices, saxophones are not innate at producing such techniques. The placement of the tone holes is fixed, and the concept is to prevent glissandi between notes. So, to break the natural acoustic design of the instrument, one must master the skills of voicing. *Voicing: An Approach to the Saxophone's Third Register* by Donald Sinta, and *Saxophone High Tones* by Eugene Rousseau are great resources for students who are interested in learning voicing step by step.

Wu extracted her multiphonic choices from two resources: 1) *The Techniques of Saxophone Playing* by Marcus Weiss and Giorgio Netti. 2) A tutorial video on YouTube by @Sirvalorsax <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cbImDSUIYvw>>. YouTuber @Sirvalorsax demonstrates and explains the ten common multiphonics that he usually cooperates in his performances. The three multiphonic choices that Wu extracted from @Sirvalorsax can be found in Weiss and Netti's book as well. For the convenience of compiling these multiphonics resources for students, I have compared similar fingerings, if not the same, from the two sources, and listed them in the following table.

Table 3. Multiphonics for Tenor Saxophone from *The Unheard*.

Number	Written pitches	Fingering
1	 <p>Ce <i>pp</i> D/B <i>mp/ff</i></p>	
s3	 <p>Ce <i>pp</i> Ba <i>ff</i></p>	
6	 <p>Cb <i>pp</i> Ce <i>pp</i> Ba <i>f</i> Da <i>p/ff</i></p>	
8	 <p>Ce <i>pp</i> Ce <i>pp</i> Da <i>mf/f</i></p>	
9	 <p>Ce <i>pp</i> Ce <i>p</i> D/B <i>ff</i> Da <i>mf/ff</i></p>	

10	 <p style="text-align: center;">Cb Ce Ba <i>pp</i> <i>pp</i> <i>f</i></p>	
26	 <p style="text-align: center;">E C D/B <i>p</i> <i>mp</i> <i>ff</i></p>	
33	 <p style="text-align: center;">Cb Ba Da <i>mp</i> <i>f</i> <i>mf/ff</i></p>	

Weiss and Netti gave extensive information on the properties of each multiphonic for each saxophone, including the quality and ideal dynamics. The letter under each multiphonic symbolizes the quality, intensity, and distortion of the sound. For example, in multiphonic number 1, with different voicing and dynamics, two multiphonics can be produced with the same fingering. The first option is indicated as “Ce” means “Dyad between minor sixth and seventh, stable; *pp-p*.” The second option is indicated as “D/B” means “Wide multiphonic, usually built on a minor ninth (also second), partly oscillating; *mp-ff*.” The following table is a direct extraction from *The Techniques of Saxophone Playing*. If saxophonists and composers wish to learn more about Weiss and Netti’s comprehensive guide on multiphonic, this literature covers a lot of information with online resources for audio files.

Table 4. *The Techniques of Saxophone Playing*, 64-65.

First level	
A	Layer of natural overtones over a fundamental
B	Sound with strong oscillation
C	Wide dyad, stable
D	Aggregate of two or more partials over a fundamental
E	Narrow dyad
Second level	
Ba	Detuned octave and twelfth, creating a stable oscillation, open and fast; <i>p-ff</i>
CE	Dyad between a fourth and fifth, stable; <i>pp-p</i>
Ce	Dyad between minor sixth and seventh, stable; <i>pp-p</i>
Cb	Approximately an octave, with the possible presence of the twelfth, usually unstable; <i>pp-p</i>
C	Between a minor ninth and an eleventh (octave + fourth), stable; <i>pp-mp</i>
D/B	Wide multiphonic, usually built on a minor ninth (also second), partly oscillating; <i>mp-ff</i>
Da	Wide multiphonic, usually built on a ninth (also tenth, third, or fourth), stable; <i>p-ff</i>
E	Thirds; <i>ppp-p</i>
Eb	Seconds, as minor seconds usually oscillating strongly, with the possible presence of a low fundamental tone <i>ppp</i> ; <i>ppp-mp</i>

The fingering is not the sole aspect to guarantee success at multiphonic.

Saxophonists should approach multiphonic with long tone exercises. The air support and voicing must be incredibly precise to execute some of these multiphonics. If one does not spend abundant time on separate practices on multiphonics, the results will tend to be less than ideal in performance. Other variables determine the production of the multiphonic,

such as the embouchure, mouthpiece, reed, make and model of the instrument, and so on.¹¹ I suggest students make notes of which note are they aiming for in terms of voicing. For instance, in multiphonic no. 1, when I play the multiphonic of D and A three-quarter-sharp, I indicate in my score to aim at the A three-quarter-sharp. Since multiphonic is a rapid switch between two or more pitches, the reed has a preference for either note. In my observations, the middle D will speak much easier than the A three-quarter-sharp. For a different multiphonic, I might need to prepare my voicing for a pitch that is not a part of it.

Another suggestion would be to indicate the starting position. Ideally, the different partials would start simultaneously, but the saxophonist should be prepared to start on either the top or bottom of the multiphonic first. The idea is like rolling a chord on a piano but rolling a multiphonic with voicing. For example, for multiphonic no. 26, aim at the altissimo A quarter-sharp as a starting point, then relax the embouchure incrementally to obtain the rest of the multiphonic. One should also make sure the altissimo A quarter-sharp speaks first. Such advice is made based on the strong pull from the A in the staff, and the saxophonist should prioritize the other partials before the A.

It is fascinating to note the change of role for multiphonic in new music. In the early repertoire, multiphonic was an extended technique to represent distorted sounds, noise, or comical effects. In recent years, composers have demonstrated purposeful applications of the technique. Instead of being represented as one identity, composers have utilized different timbre and intensity to depict their sonic imaginations. Therefore,

¹¹ Jean-Marie Londeix, *Hello! Mr. Sax* (Paris: Alphonse Leduc, 1989). 31.

saxophonists are encouraged to study and practice multiphonic in order to gain control on multiphonic. Composers and listeners are no longer settled with any multiphonic, but a precise interpretation is desired. Explained by Weiss and Netti:

"The multiphonic has grown from an isolated sound effect into a complex element in close relationship with its context. What has slowly changed over the years, is the quality of our perception of these sounds, in other words, how we listen to these sounds, and thus, also, listening in general."¹²

¹² Marcus Weiss and Giorgio Netti, *The Techniques of Saxophone Playing* (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 2010). 61.

CHAPTER 4

IF WINTER HAD NO FALLEN LEAVES BY AUSTIN YIP

Austin Yip has written a considerably large number of pieces for saxophone, yet each composition is unique and unmatched. As of 2024, Yip has written at least 14 pieces with saxophone(s) in different configurations. Each piece is unique and unmatched with various tonal concepts, textures, instrumentation, and topics. However, during an interview, Yip revealed that he had not familiarized himself with its repertoire and compositional techniques until he started his graduate degrees at the University of Hong Kong.¹³ With abundant collaboration invitations from his saxophone colleagues, Yip has started the first of many further collaborations and creative productions in the future. In 2011, Yip wrote his first work with the instrument, *The Discourse Upon Warlords* for flute, alto saxophone, viola, cello, piano, and percussion. In 2012, he devoted his artistry to two major works for saxophone: *The Unspoken Chant* for alto saxophone and piano, and *City* for solo saxophone and symphonic band. Since then, Yip has included saxophone in his compositions almost every year.

¹³ Dennis Tsz Kiu Kwok, *The Saxophone Music of Austin Yip* (DMA dissertation, The University of Iowa, 2022). 38.

Table 5. Complete List of Saxophone Works by Austin Yip.

Title	Instrumentation	Year
<i>If Winter Had No Fallen Leaves</i>	2 alto saxophones and piano	2024
<i>The Night I Left Knutsford Terrace</i>	Alto saxophone and piano	2023
<i>Sprint</i>	Saxophone quartet and piano	2021
<i>This is All About That Monster</i>	Baritone saxophone and electronics	2021
<i>Koto</i>	Alto saxophone, 2 guitars, and left-hand piano	2019
<i>Halt Fail</i>	Saxophone quartet	2018
<i>Zerstreutes Hinausschaun</i>	Soprano saxophone, alto saxophone and orchestra	2017
<i>The Emperor's Soliloquy</i>	Guitar and alto saxophone	2017
<i>Letters: Five Miniatures for Nine Saxophone</i>	Saxophone ensemble (SsSSAATTBB)	2015
<i>Concrete</i>	Alto saxophone and piano	2015
<i>Peninsula</i>	saxophone Octet (SSAATTBB) / quartet (SATB)	2015
<i>Three</i>	Violin, alto saxophone, piano, and string orchestra	2013
<i>The Unspoken Chant</i>	Alto saxophone and piano	2012
<i>City</i>	Solo saxophone (baritone – alto – soprano saxophone) and symphonic band/piano	2012
<i>The Discourse Upon Warlords</i>	Flute, alto saxophone, viola, cello, piano and percussion	2011

In my research of repertoire for two saxophones and piano, I came across *Zersteutes Hinausschaun* for soprano saxophone, alto saxophone, and piano, which was the inspiration for the Project Blakeana. The work is constructed with thematic materials in pentatonic scales and highlights the serene and vocal quality of the instruments.

Composer Biography

Austin Yip's biography:

As a composer and interdisciplinary artist, Austin Yip's works investigate the relationship between literature and sound, the interplay between acoustic sound and electronics, as well as the meaning of connotation and denotation through musical and visual means. Recent works include "Por Por" (2019-2022), a chamber opera in Cantonese; "Koto" (2019), a chamber theatre work inspired by Yasunari Kawabata's novel of the same title; "City Beats" (2019), a work for harpsichord, electronics and video that challenges musical connotation; "Miles Upon Miles" (2018), a work for amplified violin and electronics that juxtaposes violin and Xinjiang Uyghur Muqam; "Project 'Ballet de la nuit': Eurydice" (2017), an hour-long electroacoustic work that investigates on the 17th century's cross-casting tradition; and "Metamorphosis" (2016), an orchestral work that portrays Kafka's novel musically.

Yip is a MacDowell Fellow (as a Gardner & Vail Read Fellow), and also the recipient of CASH Golden Sail Music Award, HKADC Award for Young Artist (Music), New Music USA Creator Fund, Chou's Annual Composition Commission Award, James Kitagawa Memorial Music Scholarship, Regents' and Chancellor's Scholarship, Henry Holbrook Scholarship, James King Scholarship, Eisner Prize, Milton C. Witzel Memorial Prize, University Postgraduate Fellowship and Rayson Huang Scholarship. Yip received his master and doctorate degree in music composition at the University of Hong Kong, and a bachelor degree at the University of California, Berkeley.¹⁴

¹⁴ "Bio," accessed February 26, 2025, <https://austinyip.com/bio/>.

Program Notes

Austin Yip's program notes for *If Winter Had No Fallen Leaves* reads:

“If Winter Had No Fallen Leaves” is a very personal work that I wrote in 2024, the first piece I completed after a few months of pause in artistic creation. I titled the work “If Winter Had No Fallen Leaves” mainly because I have always been overoccupied since I began my composition career, and I never had the chance to witness the changing of seasons. While planning the piece, I realized that the only three times I was able to slow myself down were exactly the three times I picked up a maple leaf (and framed them) during winter. I still have the three leaves hanging on my wall now. The first was in 2003, when I left home to study in the United States. I was so unsure of what I wanted, except that leaving my hometown was such a life-changing experience. I picked up a maple leaf the next morning after my arrival at my uncle's place, and I have kept it with me since then. The first movement, “The First Leaf,” is inspired by the school hymn of my high school, and I gradually developed it into a piece that reminds me of the good memories as a student. The second leaf was picked in 2022, after I decided to take a long vacation with my wife in the United States. The second movement is a long crescendo that builds tension from the beginning until almost the end, and suddenly the energy fades away. I picked the third leaf in 2023, after my son was born. The third movement is inspired by a Cantonese lullaby (which was based on Brahms' Lullaby) that I sing to my son all the time. If winter had no fallen leaves, I would not be able to pick up the three maple leaves.¹⁵

¹⁵ Austin Yip, *If Winter Has No Fallen Leaves* (San Jose, 2024).

Performance Guide

If Winter Had No Fallen Leaves was written for two alto saxophones and piano. The piece was written within the reach of advanced pre-collegiate students. Both alto saxophone parts were written within the normal range of the instrument, and they did not require any extended techniques throughout the piece. The three movements are named "The First Leaf," "The Second Leaf," and "The Third Leaf" respectively.

I. The First Leaf

As Yip has stated, he quoted the school hymn of his secondary school in the first movement as a reminiscence of his fond memory as a student and nostalgia of being far away from home. The excerpt was brief, but it can be found in mm. 8-10 in the alto saxophone 1 part, mm. 49-50 in the alto saxophone 2 part, and m. 53 in the alto saxophone 2 part.

Figure 3. *The First Leaf*, mm. 8-10.

The musical score for Figure 3 shows three staves: A. Sx. 1, A. Sx. 2, and Pn. The score is in 4/4 time and begins at measure 6. The key signature has one sharp (F#). The piano part features a melodic line in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand. The alto saxophone parts have rests in measures 6, 7, and 8. In measure 9, the A. Sx. 1 part has a half note F#4 and a quarter note G4, marked with a piano (*p*) dynamic. The A. Sx. 2 part has a quarter rest followed by a quarter note G4 in measure 9, also marked with a piano (*p*) dynamic. The piano part continues with a melodic line in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand, including a triplet in measure 10.

Figure 4. *The First Leaf*, mm. 46-55.

The image displays a musical score for three instruments: two saxophones (A. Sx. 1 and A. Sx. 2) and a piano (Pn.). The score is divided into two systems, starting at measure 46 and ending at measure 55. The key signature is one flat (B-flat major or D minor), and the time signature is 4/4. The piano part features a complex accompaniment with chords and melodic lines. The saxophone parts are written in a style that emphasizes articulation and phrasing, with a 'rit.' (ritardando) marking at measure 51. The score concludes with a *pp* (pianissimo) dynamic marking.

Due to the vocal nature of the work, there are no phrasing slurs in the saxophone parts. The approach to the notation is closer to vocal music. In other words, it relies on the musician's judgment in identifying the phrasings while articulating each note. Hence, the musician's attention towards articulation is exceptionally important in this movement. I suggest that saxophonists should analyze the structure, indicate the phrasings, and apply legato articulation to obtain smooth and linear playing.

Table 6. The Harmonic Structure of *The First Leaf*.

Measure numbers	Starting key	Ending key	Type of cadence
1-8	C major	A minor	Half cadence
9-16	A minor (VI7)	E-flat minor	V/V
17-25	E-flat minor	F minor	PAC
26-33	F minor	B-flat minor	Half cadence
34-39	B-flat minor	D-flat major	Half cadence
40-49	D-flat major	D-flat major	PAC
49-55	Elongation of the I chord		

In the elongated section at the end, it is worth mentioning that alto saxophone 1 plays the final statement around the tonic chord, while alto saxophone 2 outlines the predominant and dominant chord progression.

Figure 5. *The First Leaf*, mm. 51-55.

The musical score for measures 51-55 of *The First Leaf* is presented in three staves. The top staff is for Alto Saxophone 1 (A. Sx. 1), the middle for Alto Saxophone 2 (A. Sx. 2), and the bottom for Piano (Pn.). Measure 51 begins with a tempo marking of *rit.* (ritardando). The piano part features a series of chords in the left hand and a melodic line in the right hand. The saxophones play melodic lines that interact with the piano accompaniment. The score concludes with a *pp* (pianissimo) dynamic marking and a fermata over the final notes.

II. The Second Leaf

The piano introduction in *The Second Leaf* reminiscent of Philip Glass's "Opening" from *Glasswork*. The piece started with ripple texture in the piano with constant sixteenth-notes, and the saxophones take turns to play the soaring lines on top of the texture. As the piece unfolds, the saxophones lines intertwine, and the piano texture thickens. The chord progressions are elongated across a few measures, ranging from four to ten measures at a time. Around the middle section, the harmony changes every four measures, which intensify the climactic moment. At the end, the music calms down, the texture is lighter and arrives at the final open fifth chord without slowing down.

Since the texture is very transparent, excellent intonation is crucial for the saxophones. The large leaps mostly consist of perfect fourths and fifths, which is intriguing to match both the intonation and nuance. For the intertwined texture, the effect of a single saxophonist playing in an echo chamber is desired.

Figure 6. *The Second Leaf*, mm. 44-52.

The musical score is divided into three systems, each containing staves for two saxophones (A. Sx. 1 and A. Sx. 2) and piano (Pn.).

- System 1 (mm. 44-46):** The key signature has two sharps (F# and C#). The time signature is 3/4. The piano accompaniment features a steady eighth-note pattern in the right hand and a bass line with chords in the left hand.
- System 2 (mm. 47-49):** The key signature changes to one sharp (F#) and the time signature changes to 4/4. The piano accompaniment continues with a similar eighth-note pattern, but the bass line includes some chromatic movement and rests.
- System 3 (mm. 50-52):** The key signature changes to one flat (Bb) and the time signature changes to 3/4. The piano accompaniment maintains the eighth-note texture, with the bass line providing harmonic support.

The musical time remains strict and machine-like because of the continuous sixteenth notes in the piano, which could limit the flexibility of musical expression through the medium of time. It challenges the musician's ability to be creative about phrasing, timbral changes, vibrato, articulation, and releases.

The second leaf also symbolizes a time when Yip admired Philip Glass's work. Therefore, listeners may recognize the minimalistic compositional style. For instance, "Opening" from *Glassworks* by Philip Glass had similar features – 1) continuous sixteenth-notes texture with repeated intervals, 2) slow harmonic progression, 3) mild dynamic changes.

Intonation is a top priority for chamber music making. While it is important under any circumstances, this work particularly challenges the saxophonists' skillset in hearing and tuning. When students struggle with intonation, I usually recommend *The Saxophone Intonation Workbook* by Trent Kynaston, and *De La Justesse D'Intonation (On The Exactness of Intonation)* by Jean-Marie Londeix. Londeix stated:

"The ability to accurately judge intonation is not innate. It has to be learned. It is a problem concerning more the player than the instrument played, more the player's ear than his techniques. Intonation is not absolute, but relative. In other words, to play in tune is to play correct intervals."

In *De La Justesse D'Intonation*, Londeix provided fingering suggestions for intonation adjustments, as well as tuning exercises in the format of duet playing. That way, students should practice with their colleagues or teachers and refine their intonation

as well as tone blending. In *The Saxophone Intonation Workbook*, Kynaston provides dozens of tuning exercises intended to be practiced with a drone in all 12 keys. The goal is to train one's ability to play with just intonation. In my experience, Londeix's book is more suitable for younger players when they are still developing the skill to tune. Hearing the correct pitch based on another saxophone will help with the perception of just intonation to be clearer than with a drone. Taking time to tune the intervals is parallel to memorizing the distances on the fingerboard for string players. This aids students to play in tune "vertically," meaning in the context of the chords and intervals. After the students make progress, Kynaston's book will further enhance the foundation of playing in tune in a line or melody.

III. The Third Leaf

Like the first movement, Yip quoted another tune for vocals in the trio. *The Third Leaf* starts with the motives from Brahms's "Lullaby" from *Wiegenlied* Op. 49 No. 4. This popular tune is also a popular children's song in Hong Kong, and it represents the joy of being a father. The quote in this work is in the same key as Brahms. Although Yip only quoted the opening motive of the *Lullaby*, the listener will have no trouble identifying it. The following three excerpts are where the *Lullaby* is quoted: mm. 8-11, 40-42, and 49-51.

Figure 7. *The Third Leaf*, a Quote from Brahms Lullaby, mm. 8-11.

Musical score for Figure 7, measures 5-11. The score is for Alto Saxophone 1 (A. Sx. 1), Alto Saxophone 2 (A. Sx. 2), and Piano (Pn.).

Measures 5-8: A. Sx. 1 has a whole rest. Pn. plays a melody in the right hand and accompaniment in the left hand. A dynamic marking *p* is present at the end of measure 8.

Measures 9-11: A. Sx. 1 and A. Sx. 2 play a melodic line. Pn. continues with accompaniment. A dynamic marking *p* is present at the beginning of measure 9.

Figure 8. *The Third Leaf*, a Quote from Brahms Lullaby, mm. 40-42.

Musical score for Figure 8, measures 39-42. The score is for Alto Saxophone 1 (A. Sx. 1), Alto Saxophone 2 (A. Sx. 2), and Piano (Pn.).

Measure 39: A. Sx. 1 and A. Sx. 2 play a melodic line. Pn. plays accompaniment. A dynamic marking *p* is present.

Measure 40: A. Sx. 1 and A. Sx. 2 play a melodic line. Pn. plays accompaniment. A dynamic marking *p* is present.

Measure 41: A. Sx. 1 and A. Sx. 2 play a melodic line. Pn. plays accompaniment. A dynamic marking *p* is present. The tempo marking *a tempo* is present above the staff.

Measure 42: A. Sx. 1 and A. Sx. 2 play a melodic line. Pn. plays accompaniment. A dynamic marking *p* is present.

Figure 9. *The Third Leaf*, a Quote from Brahms Lullaby, mm. 49-51.

The musical score for Figure 9 consists of three staves: Alto Saxophone 1 (A. Sx. 1), Alto Saxophone 2 (A. Sx. 2), and Piano (Pn.). The music is in 3/4 time and E major. Measure 47 begins with a piano introduction in E-flat major. The saxophones enter in measure 48 with a melody in E major. A 'rit.' (ritardando) marking is placed above the saxophone staves, with an arrow pointing to the end of the phrase in measure 51. The dynamic marking 'pp' (pianissimo) is indicated at the end of the phrase for all instruments.

The structure of *The Third Leaf* is straightforward. Each phrase is eight measures long. After the piano introduction in E-flat major, alto saxophone 1 leads with the melody in E major. Yip harmonized the following phrase in a chord progression of I-V6-IV-I. I interpret it as a similar implication of the “magic chords” from Felix Mendelssohn’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*. The reverse of a traditional chord progression symbolizes walking back in time. Perhaps it is the composer’s intention to forever not let that memory fade.

Figure 10. *The Third Leaf*, “Magic Chords” in Piano, mm. 9-12.

The musical score for Figure 10 consists of three staves: Alto Saxophone 1 (A. Sx. 1), Alto Saxophone 2 (A. Sx. 2), and Piano (Pn.). The music is in 3/4 time and E-flat major. Measure 9 begins with a piano introduction in E-flat major. The saxophones enter in measure 10 with a melody in E-flat major. A 'p' (piano) dynamic marking is indicated at the beginning of the phrase. The phrase concludes in measure 12.

During the middle section, the two saxophones were chasing one another by playing a series of sequences, which kept the momentum of the music moving forward. Then, Yip leads us back with a recapitulation of the opening melody in the dominant key of B-flat major and concludes it with the home key E-flat major.

Table 7. The Harmonic Structure of *The Third Leaf*.

Measure numbers	Starting key	Ending key	Type of cadence
1-8	E-flat major	E major	Half cadence
9-16	E major	A minor	Half cadence
17-24	A minor	F minor	Pivot chord
25-32	F minor	B-flat minor	Interrupted
33-40	B-flat minor	B-flat minor	Half cadence
41-51	B-flat major	E-flat major	PAC

Out of the three movements, it is more obvious that the two saxophones are written in a call-and-response manner. Knowing which of the two saxophonists is leading would benefit the forward motion in music. To play with rubato and express via fluctuation of musical time is strongly encouraged in *The Third Leaf*. Ideally, performers shall model how a vocalist would perform these parts.

The Third Leaf is very approachable to intermediate and advanced musicians, mainly because of the accessibility of alto saxophones, and the intermediate level of technical difficulty. While the aspect of the technique is not as challenging, the piece

becomes very transparent with intonation, matching timbre, and musicianship.

Meanwhile, comparing our pedagogy to the other areas, the amount of effort that saxophone teachers spend on harmony analysis is less than sufficient. Any of these movements will serve as great pedagogical material for students for harmonic analysis.

The structures of the pieces are symmetrical and straightforward, often based on units of four-bar or eight-bar phrasings. Collegiate students should be able to quickly identify the types of chords, cadences, and tonal centers.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

The saxophone inherits the repertoire and technology of the other woodwind instruments, who have a longer history, to further expand and promote new music. To fill in the gap of repertoire choices, the saxophone community has been very active in commissioning living composers. It inspires a lot of composers to write incredible new works that represent their culture and times. “The saxophone has so many characteristics which are not classical in the Apollinarian or traditional sense of the world, that it is in fact one of the most original instruments, and it is capable of satisfying even the most extensive musical and technical demands made of it.”¹⁶ On the other hand, the large family of saxophones allows us to play wide variety of voices. Unlike the string players, it is much more challenging to transition to another string instrument. Each saxophonist would lean towards one or two specific saxophones, but with the appropriate setup, one should not have trouble switching between all saxophones. As a result, composers have a lot of flexibility when it comes to writing for saxophone.

I had the privilege to work with Austin Yip prior to this commission project. The Hong Kong Saxophone Ensemble performed *Summer in a Folder*, and Opus a la Carte commissioned *Halt Fail* and premiered it. For each of the collaborations, I learned a lot about his insights in the works, and perhaps a portion of his creative process. A key lesson is how little the sheet music conveys, no matter how detailed it is notated. Since

¹⁶ Jean-Marie Londeix, *Hello! Mr. Sax* (Paris: Alphonse Leduc, 1989).

then, my approach to score study changed. I believe that the scores only show 30-40% of what the composer wishes to express. For the rest of 60-70%, it depends on the performer's comprehension of the information given. Some works allow the performer's own interpretation more than others. It is still crucial to extract as much information as possible from the score, but I believe that there is more than that has not been said. In collaboration with another chamber musician, an even greater idea can be achieved.

The collaboration is very positive overall because it was a humbling and enriching experience. Each of the composers has brought unique perspectives and imagination to these works. Meilina Tsui studied in Hong Kong, London, and Michigan. As an emerging composer in the United States, she tours around the globe to receive commissions and collaborations. However, she only wrote one other saxophone a long time ago, called *Midnight Doze Fantasies for Piano Trio*. It is for clarinet or saxophone, cello, and piano. When I initiated the conversation about Project Blakeana with Tsui, I did not give her any restrictions, instead, I was curious about what she would come up with. It turns out to be a special piece, not only because of the artistic value but also because she wrote it after her incredible honeymoon trip in Kyoto.

Esther Wu had only one piece for saxophone prior to this project as well, which is called *Re-reenact* for alto saxophone, bass clarinet, and piano. At first, I commissioned Wu to write for two saxophone and piano as well. After having a long conversation with her, we shifted the focus to a piece for two saxophones and electronics. Wu explained that she was looking for new inspiration and hoping to use electronics instead of piano. Without hesitation, I agreed with that for two reasons: 1) Wu is an expert in electronic

music. 2) Wu is passionate about experimental music. She desires to be innovative and unique while fully embracing her aesthetics.

Even though Tsui and Wu have not written much for the saxophone before, the works turned out very successful. I am incredibly proud to have commissioned works for saxophones from these two emerging composers. Now the saxophone community has just received two phenomenal chamber works in their collection. Different than Tsui and Wu, Austin Yip has written many works for the saxophone. With his wide variety of compositional styles, I was very curious about two things – 1) Which style am I going to receive? 2) What is his perception of my saxophone playing? For the first question, Yip has written something undoubtedly lyrical and stunning. During an interview, he revealed that lyricism was not his focus. But during his graduate degrees, he challenged himself to be better at writing "horizontal lines" instead of "vertical" rhythms. To answer the second question, I must bring up another story of Yip. Austin Yip and I went to the same high school, even though we did not cross paths. The way Yip quoted the *School Hymn* was an enlightening touch to me. During a different interview, Yip said, "Recently, my biggest inspiration has been the performers I collaborate with. I observe their appearance, the way they speak, and these allow me to imagine what they will like from my music." Indeed I enjoyed recording the commission too. It is fascinating that Yip tailored this to me. Yip said that he "observe people's faces like a Feng Shui expert (fortune teller) before I start composing."¹⁷ It makes this project engaging and enlightening for me.

¹⁷ Dennis Tsz Kiu Kwok, *The Saxophone Music of Austin Yip* (DMA dissertation, The University of Iowa, 2022). 40.

This is not the first time I have commissioned composers, and it certainly will not be the last one. I have personally enjoyed having a unique collaboration with the composers and exchanging ideas. Through conversations, we have often sparked new ideas and timbral concepts that had never been achieved before. Each commission project takes tremendous amounts of planning and communication. One should always allow abundant time for each party to work on their crafts, and the result will often be very rewarding. I wish this project to be an inspiration for further collaboration in the future, for both me and other saxophonists and composers.

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APPENDIX A
TRACK LIST

Track Number	Title	Composer	Duration
1	<i>Fantasia for Two Saxophones and Piano</i>	Meilina Tsui	6:12
2	<i>The Unheard</i>	Esther Wu	7:20
	<i>If Winter Had No Fallen Leaves</i>	Austin Yip	9:34
3	I. The First Leaf		3:09
4	II. The Second Leaf		3:02
5	III. The Third Leaf		3:23

Track 1, 3, 4, and 5:

The recordings were made on March 18 and 19 of 2024 at Bates Recital Hall at The University of Texas at Austin. The performers were Dennis Kwok on alto saxophone and baritone saxophone, and Pierre Tang on piano.

Track 2:

The saxophone recording was made on February 3 and 4 of 2025. The electronics was made by Esther Wu in February, 2025.