Behind the scenes of contemporary Australian composition for the classical saxophone:
A study of selected composers and current trends since 1990

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Declaration

I, Simon James Watts hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that it contains no material previously published or written by another person. This thesis contains no material that has been accepted for the award of a higher degree.

Ethical approval has been granted for the study presented in this thesis from The University Human Ethics Committee. Participating Subjects were required to read and to sign an information document. Informed consent was given individually prior to the collection of data.

Signed: ___________________________ Date: 30/06/2016
Acknowledgments

Firstly, I would like to extend my sincere gratitude to the composers who gave freely of their time to participate in this project and for sharing their insight and ideas, as well as their commitment to compose and work with the saxophone.

Thank you to my mentor, teacher and supervisor Dr Michael Duke who has spent nearly the last 8 years helping form me into the musician I am today.

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Abstract

This study originated from the desire to investigate why an increasing number of contemporary Australian composers are writing for the saxophone in a classical setting. This thesis reveals a trend in recent years that indicates that the classical saxophone is being increasingly embraced by the music scene in Australia.

Furthermore, this study provides clear insight into the compositional process involved in writing for the contemporary saxophone to encourage continued collaboration between Australian composers and performers. Consequently, it is the hope of the researcher to promote the saxophone as a classical instrument worthy of future composition by Australian composers.

Six prominent Australian composers were interviewed following ethics approval from the University of Sydney. Participants were asked specific questions regarding their opinions of the saxophone and their individual compositional processes used for the instrument. These interviews were then transcribed verbatim and the findings collated, contrasted and analysed to discover why and how Australian composers are writing for the classical saxophone.
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Introduction

Despite its initial conception as both an orchestral and band instrument in 1846 by Adolphe Sax, the saxophone has endured a slow and somewhat hesitant road to acceptance amongst the Classical music world. \(^1\) Consequently, it appears in only a small number of symphonic orchestral scores. This is due to a variety of factors, including the young age of the instrument in comparison to other orchestral instruments, and its early reputation. \(^2\) As such, the repertoire for the instrument is still developing and is not as broad in comparison to other instruments.

This gradual acceptance of the classical saxophone is particularly evident in Australia, as illustrated by the fact that the first full-time position of lecturer of Classical saxophone in the country was only established in 2008 at the Sydney Conservatorium of Music. This move indicates the increasing relevance of the saxophone amongst other classical instruments. In contrast, the inaugural position of Professor of Saxophone was appointed to Marcel Mule at the Paris Conservatoire in 1942 and to Larry Teal in 1953 at the University of Michigan in the USA.

Similarly, the Australian repertoire for the classical saxophone is somewhat limited. In recent years however, there has been a clear growth in the number of compositions by Australian composers. Upon searching the online database of The Australian Music

\(^1\) Jessica L. Stearns, "The Rise to Prominence of the Concert Saxophone: Performances, Commissions, and
Centre, a renowned institution for the representation of the work of Australian composers, it is revealed that of the 322 works for the saxophone held by the organisation, 235 have been composed since the start of 1990. This indicates the growing popularity and prominence of the saxophone as a valid instrument worthy of exploration in Australian compositions.

Key champions of the saxophone have been fundamental to the promotion and establishment of the saxophone as a classical instrument. Historically, artists including Elise Hall, Marcel Mule and Sigurd Rascher have been invaluable in this way and will be explored within this thesis. Similarly, contemporary proponents of the instrument have continued to prosecute this cause, and Australian examples will be discussed.

According to the National Library of Australia, “‘Australian music’ is defined as music created by Australians, or published in Australia, or associated with Australia by explicit Australian performance or subject reference”. Furthermore, Australian composers “include those who were born or who have resided permanently in Australia, or who have continued to be recognised as Australian although residence in Australia has not been continuous, or who have been identified through work in Australia as Australian.”

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6 Ibid.
For the purpose of this thesis, the concept of the Classical saxophone will be taken to apply to “… music following long-established principles rather than a folk, jazz, or popular tradition.”

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Purpose of Study and Expected Outcomes

This project aims to investigate the growth in Australian repertoire for the classical saxophone since 1990 to examine the cause of the trend, how the works are being composed, and the implications of these factors for the future of the saxophone in Australia. As a result of the findings, it is believed that this study will show the trend to be indicative of the saxophone’s gradual acceptance into the classical world of music in Australia.

Furthermore, this study will be of benefit in the following ways:

• By providing insight for saxophonists into the compositional process behind Australian works for the instrument.
• By encouraging collaboration between Australian composers and performers.
• By encouraging Australian composers to write more material for the classical saxophone.
• By challenging possible notions of the unsuitability of the classical saxophone as a valid instrument in Australia.
• By promoting the use of the classical saxophone in Australia.
• By providing hope and encouragement to Australian students considering a career as a classical saxophonist in Australia by illustrating that this is increasingly a viable option due to growth in both the popularity of the instrument and its repertoire in the Australian classical music world.
Parameters and Methodology

This study involves a selection of prominent contemporary Australian composers chosen by the researcher, who have provided significant contributions to the repertoire for the classical saxophone. For the purpose of this study, composers were limited to those whose work has been added to the repertoire since 1990. Participants were identified through the Australian Music Centre composer database. A total of six participants agreed to take part in the study. Email addresses and phone numbers were sourced from the composer’s website. Potential participants were selected based on the following criteria:

1. The composer has contributed at least two works to the classical saxophone, and these compositions have been recorded and/or performed by professional saxophonists.
2. The compositions have been written since 1990
3. The compositions are appropriate to a tertiary level of performance
4. The compositions are commercially available.

Due to the resources and time available, this thesis is not intended as a comprehensive comparison of all composers in Australia but rather a sample of the current compositional trend of Australian classical saxophone composition.

Once selected, candidates were approached by the researcher to participate in one-hour interviews. All interviews were conducted with Ethics approval from the University of Sydney. All participants are identified and were notified of this requirement in the
Participant Information Statement to give the study credibility. Although anonymity was offered upon completion of the Participant Consent Form to enable participants to reject this requirement, this would have resulted in the participant being unable to take part in the study. Upon their permission, a meeting was arranged at each participant’s convenience and the interviews were recorded by a mobile device and transcribed verbatim by the researcher. The findings of the interviews were then presented in this thesis with accompanying examination of the evidence.

In order to draw accurate conclusions from the conducted interviews, the following questions were asked of participants:

1. Why are you writing for the saxophone as a classical instrument?
2. Why do you think other composers are writing for the saxophone in a classical setting?
3. Are you aware of an increase in the number and quality of composition for the saxophone in a classical setting?
4. If so, in your opinion, is this trend indicative of the instrument becoming more popular, marketable and accepted as a classical instrument?
5. What is the target audience of your compositions for saxophone?
6. What is involved in the creative process when writing for the classical saxophone?
7. Do you intend to compose for the saxophone in a classical setting in the future?
8. In your opinion what is the future of the classical saxophone in Australia?
9. Is there anything else you would like to add?

Prompt Questions:
1a) Is it because it is a relatively new/unexplored instrument?

1b) Is it due to particular characteristics, such as tone, colour or technical capabilities?

1c) Are these works being commissioned, written for a specific artist, or as a form or creative output?

d) If you work with a saxophonist, how much time is spent with them, and what do you plan to get out of each meeting?

e) If commissioned, are these “admiration”, “Exchange of Services”, or “Paid” commissions? Or a combination of these?

5. Are the compositions intended for a niche of saxophone enthusiasts or the wider music community?

6a) How long is needed for composition?

b) Do you have any influences or inspirations when composing for the saxophone?

c) Do you use extended techniques?

d) How do you gather insight into the technical capabilities of the instrument?

To establish a context for the results and discussion of this thesis a number of subjects will first be covered. A review of the literature is included to examine a selection of the material provided by other researchers, upon which this thesis will be grounded. The compositional heritage will then be investigated, revealing the importance key proponents of the saxophone have had, and provide a setting for the contemporary Australian repertoire. The composers interviewed for this thesis will then be introduced, providing biographical and musical details to establish context for the following results and discussion.
Literature Review

Literature on the saxophone is expanding in number and popularity in recent years. The texts in this review are primarily from the last twenty-five years. This point is consistent with the findings of the review; that the saxophone as a classical instrument is on a forward trajectory. The historical and social parameters of the instrument are dealt with in great detail in both books and dissertations found in this review. These will investigate the humble beginnings of the instrument through to its somewhat begrudging gradual acceptance in a classical music context. The undeniable interrelation of the growth of composition for the saxophone and its acceptance in society will also be made clear. Pedagogical literature will be examined, which may in itself promote the use of the saxophone in composition. The reasons behind the absence of the saxophone from the traditional orchestra are explored in detail through a study on the life of Adolphe Sax and the events surrounding the creation of the new instrument.

The Australian Music Centre, an organisation that exists for the promotion and sustainability of Australian composition, reveals Australian composition for saxophone is on a forward trajectory trend. Their online database catalogues a total of 322 works involving saxophone, both as a solo instrument and in a chamber music setting. For those with published dates, 33 compositions were published before 1990, with the earliest being Margaret Sutherland’s Sonata for saxophone and piano (1942). Since 1990, the

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remaining 235 compositions have been published. During this time period, Australian compositional pioneers of the saxophone have written numerous works, either in a solo or ensemble setting. Barry Cockroft has 12 twelve works published, each of which are regularly performed by saxophonists from high school students to professional standards. Paul Stanhope similarly has five works published. This growth in repertoire raises the possibility of the Australian saxophone gaining credence in a classical setting.

‘The Cambridge Companion to the Saxophone’ is one of the first comprehensive texts on the saxophone. This academic text provides extensive study into an array of topics focusing on the instrument. Topics that are explored include the saxophone in classical, rock and jazz genres, as well as integral repertoire and influential soloists, among others. Thomas Liley documents the invention, and early reception of the instrument in a thorough historical commentary. Claude Delangle and Jean-Denis Michat provide the contemporary analysis of the saxophone, listing by national provenance the contemporary exponents of saxophone performance and composition. A range of countries are listed, from France to Finland, Cuba to Japan, and yet interestingly, the saxophone in an Australian setting was not deemed of significance to this commentary.
Stephen Cottrell provides a scholarly treatment of the saxophone and its reception, reputation and development up to recent times.\textsuperscript{12} He examines the context of the creation of the new instrument around 1840 through a study on Adolphe Sax, the inventor of the saxophone. Cottrell explores the saxophone in different contexts, beginning with the military band and expanding into the classical, jazz and popular music settings. Cottrell provides a thorough outline of the trajectory of the saxophone from its invention to the present. The authors of both texts establish the context of the saxophone from the past to a contemporary global setting. Both texts provide limited study into the compositions for the instrument and provide information about the national provenance of the compositions. These works provide the foundation for a discussion in a specifically Australian context and furthermore for the thesis topic of why and how new repertoire is expanding in Australia since 1990.

Larry Teal,\textsuperscript{13} Paul Harvey,\textsuperscript{14} Jean-Marie Londeix,\textsuperscript{15} Sigurd Rascher\textsuperscript{16}, Daniel Kientzy\textsuperscript{17} and Giorgio Weiss/Marcus Netti\textsuperscript{18} have contributed toward pedagogical literature for the saxophone. These texts illustrate the parameters and characteristics of the saxophone; including range, technical possibilities, and extended techniques. Teal became the first saxophone lecturer in America at the University of Michigan in 1953. In ‘The Art of

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
  \bibitem{c12} S. Cottrell, \textit{The Saxophone} (New Haven, United States: Yale University Press, 2013).
  \bibitem{c14} Paul Harvey, \textit{Saxophone} (London: Kaha & Averill, 1995).
  \bibitem{c17} Daniel Kientzy, \textit{Les Sons Multiples Aux Saxophones} (Paris: Salabert Editions, 1982).
\end{thebibliography}
Saxophone Playing’, Teal brings his experience as a saxophone pedagogue to outline the fundamentals of playing the instrument. The book is targeted toward the beginner to intermediate student and embouchure, tone quality, vibrato, and articulations are addressed in dedicated chapters. Harvey’s book, ‘Saxophone’, encompasses all facets of the instrument, ranging from a description of the instrument with accompanying photographic aids to the history and repertoire of the saxophone. In ‘Hello! Mr. Sax’, Londeix focuses more specifically on advanced saxophone techniques including altissimo, quarter tones, multiphonics and alternate fingerings. ‘Playing the Saxophone’ develops both technique and stylistic interpretation. Each page includes historical information, exercise for technique and musicality and phrasing, followed by a melody by some of the great composers. ‘Saxophone Studying Method’ takes a unique approach to studying the saxophone. The method takes information from the best existing pedagogical works, to draw out the best elements from piano, violin and cello. Rascher in ‘Top Tones’ focuses on the altissimo register of the saxophone and suggests exercises involving overtones to develop flexibility in this area. ‘158 Saxophone Exercises’ contains little explanatory information, containing exercises based around diminished scales which can be used to develop finger, aural and articulation technique. Kientzy catalogues the multiphonics available for the soprano, alto, tenor and baritone saxophones. Each multiphonic is given a fingering and accompanied with the possible pitches. Weiss, an accomplished saxophonist and the composer Netti collaborate in ‘Techniques of Saxophone Playing’. Intended for the advanced performer and composer alike, the critical components of technique and sound are explained and given practical practice advice and applications in the repertoire. These texts provide essential methods for saxophone technique to aid both students and teachers alike.
The availability of the texts by Teal, Harvey, Londeix, Rascher, Kientzy and Weiss/Netti may act as reference material for Australian composers, providing resources for extended techniques, technical capabilities and limitations of the instrument. This may increase the possibility of composers writing for the saxophone in Australia. Smith argues this point further, stating that these pedagogical texts may promote the saxophone in the classical musical world.¹⁹

There is literature provided by American Masters and DMA dissertations, which provide background to the cultural development of the saxophone and its treatment within the classical repertoire from its inception. Connie Frigo concludes that the majority of the standard repertoire for the saxophone was written in the 20th century and were the result of a commissioning process. ²⁰ Frigo categorises the commissions into “Admiration”, “Exchange of Services”, and “Paid” commissions. The writer argues the commissioning process has been crucial not only for the creation of a repertoire but is largely responsible for the establishment of the saxophone in a concert setting. Furthermore, looking forward, “the commissioning of new music for the saxophone plays a critical role in the ongoing effort to strengthen the recognition and respect of the saxophone as a legitimate concert instrument”. ²¹ This point will be investigated further in interviews with participants for this thesis.

¹⁹ Andrew Smith, "Saxophone Promotion through Pedagogical Texts" (University of Sydney, 2010).
²⁰ Connie Marie Frigo, "Commissioning Works for Saxophone: A History and Guide for Performers" (University of South Carolina 2005).
²¹ Ibid.2.
Jessica Stearns investigates the “rise to prominence of the concert saxophone” through analysis of some of the early pioneers of the instrument who used performances, (both solo and ensemble settings) commissions and teaching to establish a foothold for the saxophone in the world of traditional classical music. 22 According to Stearns, social development of the saxophone is undeniably linked to the growing evolution of a repertoire as the “dearth of legitimate repertoire in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries hindered the use of the saxophone in the concert genre of music for orchestra, ballet, and opera”. 23 For Stearns, “over an arduous course of nearly one hundred years, the saxophone emerged from obscurity and gained acceptance as a concert instrument”. 24 This link between repertoire and development will be shown to be imperative in a contemporary Australian context.

Matthew Ferraro investigates the reasons behind the ‘Missing Saxophone’ from the traditional orchestra. 25 Initially conceived as an addition to the orchestra by Adolphe Sax, the “saxophone has found its way into nearly every genre of music with one glaring exception: orchestral music.”26 Ferraro presents two factors that he believes are responsible for this exception. The first is an undermining of the instrument that occurred through opposition from Adolphe Sax’s competitors. These competitors influenced both musicians and composers to reject the saxophone during the crucial years when the

22 Stearns, "The Rise to Prominence of the Concert Saxophone: Performances, Commissions, and Teaching through the Mid-20th Century."
23 Ibid. 29.
24 Ibid. 1.
25 Matthew Ferraro, "The Missing Saxophone: Why the Saxophone Is Not a Permanent Member of the Orchestra” (Youngstown State University, 2012).
26 Ibid. 1.
saxophone could have been embraced by the music world. Secondly, Ferraro believes the wide use of the saxophone in popular music has negatively affected the perceptions of orchestral composers and musicians. As a result, Ferraro highlights the standard repertoire of the saxophone appears nearly 90 after its inception, beginning in the 1930’s.

Fred Hemke investigates the history of the saxophone from the imaginations of Adolphe Sax to its somewhat reluctant acceptance up to the mid 1970’s. Initially conceived by its inventor to fill a void in the orchestra between brass, woodwind and strings, Sax’s opponents were successful in stemming the seemingly inevitable integration of the instrument. Hemke cites a series of written and vocal commentaries from contemporaries of Adolphe Sax who praise the instrument. Some of the most prominent musical figures of the era applauded the instrument’s unique sonority and recognized the inherent effectiveness of the instrument in an orchestral context. Georges Kastner comments concerning the saxophone “It can be used with equal advantage as a solo instrument or in an orchestra or military band”. Rossini praises the sonority of the instrument as having “ … the most beautiful kind of sound I know”. Fétis adamantly presupposes the saxophone “…will soon be introduced into symphonic music where the beauty of its timbre has determined a place for it”. Castil-Blaze concurs, stating the saxophone is “…destined to take an important place in our orchestras and military bands, because of the nobleness and beauty of its sound and because of the immense resources

27 Fred L. Hemke, "The Early History of the Saxophone" (The University of Winsconsin 1975).
28 Ibid. 11.
29 Ibid. 36.
30 Ibid.37.
31 Ibid. 39.
which it presents”.

Despite the saxophone receiving high praise from musical critics both past and present, the saxophone is yet to find a permanent place in the orchestra. The clarinet, invented only a century earlier was successful in attaining permanent residency. Hemke decides “The saxophone arrived slightly too late, it would seem, to become a regular member of the orchestral wind family”.

Hemke demonstrates the undeniable link between the growth and evolution of its repertoire and the social development of the instrument in a thorough descriptive catalogue of orchestral works featuring saxophone from its invention to the early 20th century. This catalogue reveals a slow acceptance of the instrument as a serious instrument through an increased application in orchestral works.

Michael Segell provides a fresh perspective on the saxophone in his book ‘The Devil’s Horn’. The author is a music enthusiast, rather than a professional musician, and also a commercial writer. The tone of the book is more conversational than academic and yet thorough in its approach. Segell compiles the historical and social developments of the saxophone chronologically from the early childhood of Adolphe Sax to its part in mainstream, classical and avant-garde genres in the present. Intertwined in the instrument’s history, Segell also highlights some of the most legendary saxophonists including Sonny Rollins, Branford Marsalis, and Phil Woods. Much of the information presented in the book is gleaned from collaborations with some of the most well

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32 Ibid. 35.  
33 Ibid. 304.  
34 Ibid. 289.  
respected pioneers of the instrument including Jean-Marie Londeix and Claude Delangle. Segell concludes the saxophone has encountered both passionate advocates and critics alike, being praised as both divinely inspired and demonically crafted. The author argues Adolphe Sax created the saxophone with the intention of solving a well critiqued flaw in the orchestra; that of the “tonal disparity between the wind and the strings. In an orchestra, the strings were often overwhelmed by the woodwinds, which in turn were overpowered by the brasses. His saxophone harmonically fused the traits of all three instrumental groups into one. By joining reed and mouthpiece to the metal tube of the ophicleide, a large, conical brass instrument that was the most widely used bass horn of the day and was the forerunner of the tuba, Sax had created an instrument with the tonal qualities of the woodwinds, the projection of the brasses, and the flexibility of the strings”. It is these unique traits of the instrument that have both encouraged and deterred potential composers of the instrument; those that saw the inherent value in the instrument, and those who found the challenge of integrating an instrument capable of filling numerous roles. Ultimately, the saxophone still lies in a degree of obscurity and to what extent the instrument has gained acceptance in the classical music world is debated: “Somehow, despite worldwide popularity, it is still considered a marginal instrument”.

Contributions have also been made in the form of annotated bibliographies. Londeix provides a bibliographic index of concert repertoire for the saxophone from 1844-2012.

36 Ibid.66-68.  
37 Ibid.23.  
38 Ibid.37.  
39 Ibid.66.
This work is held in high esteem by saxophonists as it provides performers with a background to the conception of the select repertoire and how to interpret it.

Michael Lichnovsky recognises the need for a unique Australian identity and voice in the world of classical saxophone. He promotes and investigates the works for saxophone by Australian composer's Dulcie Holland, William Lovelock and Margaret Sutherland as a basis for understanding the Australian saxophonist's setting in the music world. By using these composers as an example he argues “saxophonists in Australia will be able to place themselves in a relevant world context only when they are fully aware of the heritage their instrument has in their own country”. This link is of immense value, and provides the motivation and framework upon which this thesis will be built. However, Lichnovsky’s study is limited by its specificity and does not investigate contemporary composers or current trends in Australia.

The texts in this review share a common conclusion in regards to the historical, social and compositional development of the saxophone from its inception to the present day; the saxophone, although seemingly destined for immediate acceptance in a classical music world, was left displaced from its permanent place in the orchestra and the concert hall. The saxophone was however embraced quite early on by military bands. It was in this state the instrument remained until the early 20th century, at which point the growth in

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42 Ibid. 5.
popularity and the acceptance as a credible classical instrument has been exponential, with the last twenty-five years seeing a dramatic rise in quantity of composition throughout America and Europe. The studied pedagogical texts are written from the mid-20th century, showing a rising demand and popularity for the saxophone. This is just as explicit in an Australian context. The Australian Music Centre reveals seventy percent of compositions in its catalogue of scores involving saxophone have been written since 1990. It is in this context in which the thesis begins; the trend of growth for the classical saxophone will be examined to investigate why and how Australian composers are writing in an increasing manner for the classical saxophone.
Background

Compositional Heritage

It is necessary to first understand the compositional heritage of the saxophone to prepare for a discussion in an Australian context. History reveals that skilled performers of the saxophone have inspired much of the standard repertoire, either through inspiration, commission or relationship with composers. It is these performers and pioneers of the instrument who will be explored.

Adolphe Sax realised the importance of having a foundation of repertoire for his new instrument to be established and grow in popularity. Sax established and ran a publishing house for his music for twenty years from the late 1850’s where he published approximately 200 compositions for his instruments. Included in these were at least 35 commissioned compositions for saxophone (of varying sizes) and piano. The commissioned repertoire comprised “slight, light-hearted pieces that showed off the instrument’s versatility, as well as transcriptions of classical pieces from eighteenth-century masters.” Composers, at first baffled about how to use it, began including it in new scores. Among the commissioned repertoire are the works by esteemed French

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46 Ibid.
47 Segell, The Devil's Horn: The Story of the Saxophone, from Noisy Novelty to King of Cool. 37.
composers Singelée and Demersseman; Several works by the composers in Sax’s catalogue have been recommended as worthy of performance today: Solo sur la Tyrolienne by Leon Chic; Demersseman’s Premier solo, andante et bolero; Jean-Nicholas Savari’s Fantaisie sur des motifs du Freyschutz, and four works by Singelée – the Fantaisie, Op. 89, the 6e solo de concert, Op. 92, the 7e solo de concert, Op. 93, and the Fantaisie, Op. 102. Demersseman’s Premier solo and Singelée’s 6e solo de concert are for tenor saxophone; Singelée’s 7e solo de concert is for baritone and his two Fantaisies are for soprano⁴⁹. Beyond this, Sax also opened a medium sized concert hall across from his workshop and put on concerts to promote his instrument. In this venue, Sax himself performed on his instruments to “display and promote their superiority.”⁵⁰ The appointment of Sax to Professor of Saxophone at the Paris Conservatoire in 1848 also helped to establish the saxophone further.

⁵⁰ Ferraro, "The Missing Saxophone: Why the Saxophone Is Not a Permanent Member of the Orchestra." 11-12.
Early Pioneers

From the mid-19th century a range of musicians emerged as pioneers who maintained the promotion of the saxophone during and after the career of Adolphe Sax. Although these artists did not inspire much of the enduring repertoire, they bridged the divide between the early obscurity of the saxophone and the popularity enjoyed during the early to mid-20th century.

Belgian Henri Wuille (1822-71) gave premier solo performances of the instrument in both England and the USA. As a contemporary of Sax, Wuille was an avid advocate for the new instrument and toured with Antoine Jullien’s famous orchestra in the 1850’s.

Charles-Jean-Baptiste Souallé (1824–death unknown) made adjustments to the existing saxophone, including a single octave key, and adding keys to improve the low register, naming the modified instrument the “Turcophone”. His proficiency on the modified saxophone was applauded by music critics of his day. The "Revue et Gazette Musicale de Paris" in 1857 commented he “played his own music, with both composition and performance completely satisfactory. It is not possible to imagine anything more tender and suave than the sounds that he drew from his Turcophone.”

51 Dryer-Beers, "Influential Soloists."37.
throughout Europe, Australia, New Zealand and Asia where his concerts were greeted with success.\textsuperscript{54}

Louise-Adolphe Mayeur (1837-94) was an esteemed clarinettist, having achieved first prize at the Paris Conservatoire, and was in demand particularly as a bass clarinettist.\textsuperscript{55}

He became an impressive saxophonist after studying with Klosé and Adolphe Sax.\textsuperscript{56}

Mayeur was responsible for widespread teaching and contributed toward pedagogical material in the form of his \textit{Grand Methodé}.\textsuperscript{57} Mayeur was also heavily associated with the Belgian and Paris Operas where “…many renowned composers heard and were inspired by the sound of Sax’s new instrument.”\textsuperscript{58}

Edouard Lefèbre (1834-1911) helped establish the saxophone in the USA from the 1870’s to the 1890’s with his appearances as soloist with the Patrick Gilmore Band and the John Philip Sousa Band, where he was known as ‘The Saxophone King’.\textsuperscript{59} Lefèbre was arguably one of the most influential saxophonists of the 19th century through his commitment to popularizing the saxophone, in a journey that covered “…six decades and three continents, included nearly all facets of performance, pedagogy, and production.”\textsuperscript{60}

\begin{flushright}
Ibid.\\
Nancy Lynne Greenwood, "Louis Mayeur: His Life and Works for Saxophone Based on Opera Themes" (The University of British Columbia, 2005).\\
Dryer-Beers, "Influential Soloists." 37.\\
Ibid. 37.\\
Greenwood, "Louis Mayeur: His Life and Works for Saxophone Based on Opera Themes." 70.\\
Dryer-Beers, "Influential Soloists."37.\\
\end{flushright}
Benne Henton (1867-1938) was born in Shelbyville, Illinois and before taking saxophone was a proficient clarinettist. In 1904, he was chosen by Richard Strauss to perform as saxophonist in the first performance of *Sinfonia Domestica* at Carnegie Hall. By 1916 Henton appeared with the celebrated Patrick Conway’s Band as soloist and in 1919 made his first appearance with the John Phillip Sousa Band.

Rudy Wiedoeft (1893-1940) was one of the most popular saxophonists of the early 20th century, appearing at a time when there was widespread growth of the saxophone, both in production and popularity. Wiedoeft was known for his virtuosity on the C-melody saxophone and his “flair for showmanship”. He took advantage of the advent of mainstream recording and produced over a hundred cylinder recordings, recording many of his original compositions and arrangements, which became the standard repertoire for the many saxophonists he inspired.

This is but a brief selection of the many saxophonists who pioneered the way for the saxophone into the mainstream musical psyche. These artists however carried the saxophone from its inception and inspired a new generation of masters in their own right; some of the most important of which will be discussed below.

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62 Ibid. 48.
63 Ibid. 48-50.
64 Dryer-Beers, "Influential Soloists." 38.
65 Ibid.
66 Ibid.
Central Pioneers

Elise Hall, Marcel Mule and Sigurd Rascher are integral to the promotion and establishment of the concert saxophone during the 20th century. Through performance and pedagogy, Mule and Rascher inspired a generation of new masters in their own right. Mule and Rascher also motivated significant compositions for the concert repertoire: “They have been responsible for both attracting significant contributions from composers and for the dissemination of these works via live performance, broadcast and the teaching studio.” Hall likewise contributed significantly to the standard repertoire of the saxophone through commissions and promoted the instrument through presentation of these works to the contemporary musical elite.

Elise Hall

Elise Hall (1853-1924) holds a unique place in the history of the saxophone. Hall is responsible for the commissioning of Debussy’s *Rhapsodie Mauresque for Orchestra and Principal Saxophone*, a hallmark in the saxophone’s classical repertory. To have a work in the repertory by a composer of this stature is unprecedented to this day. Hall was a wealthy Boston socialite, enthusiastic musician, and amateur saxophonist who, beyond Debussy, commissioned several prominent contemporary composers. It is thought Hall

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67 Ibid. 41-42.
68 Ibid. 37.
69 William Henry Street, "Elise Boyer Hall, America's First Female Concert Saxophonist: Her Life as Performing Artist, Pioneer of Concert Repertory for Saxophone and Patroness of the Arts (Massachusetts)” (Northwestern University, 1983). 53-83.
70 Liley, "The Repertoire Heritage." 53
71 Ibid.
took up the saxophone at the recommendation of her husband (who was an accomplished physician) when she experienced hearing loss after contracting a possible case of typhoid fever.\textsuperscript{72} During this time, Hall sought tuition with the principle oboist of the Boston Symphony, Georges Longy. Shortly afterwards, in 1899 she founded the Boston Orchestral Club which was “comprised of local amateur musicians and members of the Boston Symphony under Longy’s artistic direction.”\textsuperscript{73} It was through this medium that Hall began commissioning compositions and premiering these works herself. Although Hall was not a professional player, contemporary music critics portray her as a proficient soloist who may have indeed inspired composition for the instrument.\textsuperscript{74} Vincent D’Indy and Florent Schmitt are among the French masters who contributed to the standard body of repertoire for the saxophone. The following is a list of the works commissioned by Hall.\textsuperscript{75}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Composer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1900</td>
<td>Divertissement Espagnol</td>
<td>Charles Loeffler</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1902</td>
<td>Premier Concerto</td>
<td>Paul Gilson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1902</td>
<td>Impression (Pièce)</td>
<td>Georges Longy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1903</td>
<td>Choral Varié</td>
<td>Vincent d’Indy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1904</td>
<td>Raspodie (lento)</td>
<td>Georges Longy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1905</td>
<td>Impression d’Automne Légende</td>
<td>André Caplet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1905</td>
<td>Légende</td>
<td>Georges Sporck</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1907</td>
<td>Rhapsodie, Op. 26</td>
<td>Jules Mouquet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1909</td>
<td>Octuor, No. 1</td>
<td>Henry Woolett</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1910</td>
<td>Chant pour saxophone</td>
<td>Paul Dupin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1910</td>
<td>Siberia, Poém Symphonique</td>
<td>Henry Woolett</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\textsuperscript{72}Street, "Elise Boyer Hall, America's First Female Concert Saxophonist: Her Life as Performing Artist, Pioneer of Concert Repertory for Saxophone and Patroness of the Arts (Massachusetts)." 21.
\textsuperscript{73}Stearns, "The Rise to Prominence of the Concert Saxophone: Performances, Commissions, and Teaching through the Mid-20th Century."35.
\textsuperscript{74}Street, "Elise Boyer Hall, America's First Female Concert Saxophonist: Her Life as Performing Artist, Pioneer of Concert Repertory for Saxophone and Patroness of the Arts (Massachusetts)." 53-83.
\textsuperscript{75}Ibid.125.
1911 | Rhapsodie | Claude Debussy |
1911 | Poème Élégiaque | Phillip Gaubert |
1915 | Suite | Gabriel Growles |
1915 | Andante Concertstück | Jean Huré |
1918 | Légende, Op. 66 | Florent Schmitt |
1920 | Fantaisie Mauresque | François Combelle |

**Marcel Mule**

Born in 1901, Mule was introduced to the saxophone at the age of seven by his music enthusiast father. He trained to become a teacher, studying for three years and working for six months before he decided to join the Fifth Infantry Regiment in Paris in 1921 and took residence in the band (French military bands had adopted Adolphe Sax’s Instrument shortly after its invention).\(^{76}\) In 1923 Mule was successful in auditioning for the highly regarded La Musique de la Garde Républicaine, where he succeeded François Combelle (another highly esteemed saxophonist) as solo saxophonist.\(^{77}\) In this role, whilst immersed in the music culture of the Paris in the early 1920’s Mule grew as an artist.

In 1942 Marcel Mule was appointed Professor of Saxophone at the Paris Conservatory; the first professor to occupy this role since Adolphe Sax himself, whose tenure lasted from 1848-1870. In this position, Mule oversaw the creation of many works that have become part of the standard modern repertoire, dedicated to both himself and his saxophone class for the *solos de concours* that were used at the conservatory for competitive juries. Many of these works are still played regularly today.

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\(^{76}\)Hemke, "The Early History of the Saxophone." 203-204.

\(^{77}\)Cambridge Dryer-Beers, "Influential Soloists." 43.
Contest Pieces at the Paris Conservatory 1943-1967

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Composer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1943</td>
<td>Au Pays de Leon et de Salamanque</td>
<td>Henri Busser</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1944</td>
<td>Prélude et Scherzo</td>
<td>Paul Pierné</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1945</td>
<td>Pierrot et Colombine</td>
<td>Edmond Marc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1946</td>
<td>Tango et Tarentelle</td>
<td>Marcel Dautremer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1947</td>
<td>Improvisation</td>
<td>Elsa Barraine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1948</td>
<td>Sonatine</td>
<td>Claude Pascal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1949</td>
<td>Concerto</td>
<td>Henri Tomasi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1950</td>
<td>Concertstück</td>
<td>Jean-Michel Damase</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1951</td>
<td>Concerto</td>
<td>Jeanine Rueff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1952</td>
<td>Cadence, Interlude et Rondo</td>
<td>Henri Martelli</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1953</td>
<td>Rapsodie Bretonne</td>
<td>Robert Bariller</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1954</td>
<td>Musique de Concert</td>
<td>Marius Constant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1955</td>
<td>Concertstück</td>
<td>Pierre-Max Dubois</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1956</td>
<td>Prélude, Cadence et Finale</td>
<td>Alfréd Desenclos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1957</td>
<td>Prélude et Saltare</td>
<td>Robert Planel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1958</td>
<td>Hommage á Sax</td>
<td>René Bernier</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1959</td>
<td>Andante et Fileuse</td>
<td>Pierre Petit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960</td>
<td>Concertino</td>
<td>Eugéne Bigot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1962</td>
<td>Saxiana</td>
<td>Gaston Brenta</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1963</td>
<td>Allegro, Arioso et Final</td>
<td>Pierre Lantier</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1964</td>
<td>Divertimento</td>
<td>Roger Boutry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1965</td>
<td>Fantaisie Caprice</td>
<td>Jules Semler-Collery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1966</td>
<td>Concerto</td>
<td>Ida Gotkovsky</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1967</td>
<td>Sonatine</td>
<td>Georges Dandelot</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Other works were composed specifically for Mule, including standards of the repertoire, such as *Ballade* by Henri Tomasi, *Aria* by Eugéne Bozza, *Caprice en forme de valse* and *Suite* by Paul Bonneau, *Fantasia* by Heitor Villa-Lobos, *Tableaux de Provence* by Paule Maurice, and *Sonata* by Fernande Decruck.  

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78 Stearns, "The Rise to Prominence of the Concert Saxophone: Performances, Commissions, and Teaching through the Mid-20th Century." 47.
79 Ibid.42.
Sigurd Rascher

Born in Germany in 1907, Sigurd Rascher was a contemporary to Mule and an equally integral figure to the development of the concert saxophone\textsuperscript{80}. Rascher initially prepared for a career as a professional clarinettist, receiving a diploma from the Stuttgart Musikhochschule\textsuperscript{81}. Shortly after however, his interest turned to the saxophone and from 1932 he began a career spanning half a century.\textsuperscript{82} Rascher performed first in orchestras throughout Europe before touring Australia in 1938 for three months.\textsuperscript{83} In 1939, in what would be a pivotal moment for the saxophone, Rascher made his American debut with the New York Philharmonic premiering Ibert’s *Cocertino da camera*. This was the first time this orchestra, and indeed an orchestra of this esteem in the Unites States featured a saxophone soloist.\textsuperscript{84} The number of renowned composers who wrote for Rascher attests to both his inspirational artistry and also his likeable personality; the repertoire he promulgated were “products not just of his ongoing commitment to motivate some of the world’s finest composers, but also in part the result of genuine close friendships he developed with so many. Among them were Larsson, Glaser, and von Koch in Sweden; Jacobi, Dressel, and Genzmer in Germany; Haba, Macha, and Reiner in Czechoslovakia; and Benson, Brant, Cowell, Dahl, Erickson, Husa, and Hartley in the United States. And it is not without significance that among all the pieces written for and dedicated to him during his life, not one was commissioned. “He inspired new music, he never needed to

\textsuperscript{80} Dryer-Beers, "Influential Soloists."42.
\textsuperscript{81} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{82} Ronald L. Caravan, "Sigurd M. Rascher (1907-2001),"
http://www.dornpub.com/saxophonejournal/sigurdrascher.html
\textsuperscript{83} Stearns, "The Rise to Prominence of the Concert Saxophone: Performances, Commissions, and Teaching through the Mid-20th Century."22.
\textsuperscript{84} Ibid. 22-23.
purchase it." Glazunov, Milhaud, Martin and Cowell are also among the impressive list of composers who wrote for Rascher.

Selected Works Composed for Rascher

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Composer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1932</td>
<td>Konzert für Alt-Saxophon und Orchester, Op.6</td>
<td>Edmond von Borck</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1933</td>
<td>Konzertstück</td>
<td>Paul Hindemith</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1934</td>
<td>Concerto</td>
<td>Lars-Erik Larsson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1934</td>
<td>Concerto in Eb, Op. 109</td>
<td>Alexander Glazunov</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1935</td>
<td>Concertino da camera</td>
<td>Jaques Ibert</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1936</td>
<td>Saxo-Rhapsody</td>
<td>Eric Coates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1938</td>
<td>Ballade</td>
<td>Frank Martin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1941</td>
<td>Concert</td>
<td>Henry Brant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1949</td>
<td>Concerto</td>
<td>Ingolf Dahl</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1949</td>
<td>Rumba</td>
<td>Maurice C. Whitney</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1950</td>
<td>Allegro, Cadenza e Adagio</td>
<td>Werner Wolf Glaser</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1954</td>
<td>Concertino</td>
<td>Warren Benson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1958</td>
<td>Jephtah</td>
<td>Carl Anton Wirth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>Air and Scherzo</td>
<td>Henry Cowell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>Élégie et Rondeau</td>
<td>Karel Husa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>Introduction and Samba</td>
<td>Maurice C. Whitney</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Mule, Rascher and Hall helped to create a place for the saxophone in the classical music world. Mule and Rascher emerged at a time when the saxophone was mainly used outside the traditional concert hall. In the 1920’s the saxophone found a home through the growth of the recording industry to feed the “public’s post-war” appetite for “novel...”

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85 Caravan, "Sigurd M. Rascher (1907-2001)."
86 Dryer-Beers, "Influential Soloists."42.
87 Stearns, "The Rise to Prominence of the Concert Saxophone: Performances, Commissions, and Teaching through the Mid-20th Century."41.
entertainment”, including vaudeville, dance and jazz. Mule and Rascher “engendered fine pieces for the saxophone and this in turn encouraged others to play classical repertoire”. Hall similarly pioneered the saxophone and achieved “significant notice amongst musical high society during the early 1900’s” at a time where the instrument was generally thought of as unworthy of the classical orchestral world.

The significance of the performer-composer relationship is displayed in the career of Mule, Rascher and Hall. These relationships and the subsequent commissions demonstrate how new and idiosyncratic sounds are created and a standard repertoire is formed. Mule and Rascher achieved this through inspiring composers to compose for the saxophone out of admiration for their virtuosity as well paid commissions. Hall achieved this similarly through performances, as well as using her influence with the musical elite of her day.

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89 Ibid.23.
90 Dryer-Beers, "Influential Soloists."38.
91 Stearns, "The Rise to Prominence of the Concert Saxophone: Performances, Commissions, and Teaching through the Mid-20th Century."41,47.
92 Street, "Elise Boyer Hall, America's First Female Concert Saxophonist: Her Life as Performing Artist, Pioneer of Concert Repertory for Saxophone and Patroness of the Arts (Massachusetts)."59.
The Australian Saxophone

The above pioneers established the compositional foundation of the saxophone in a classical setting. It is from this establishment that the Australian saxophone has developed; Australian saxophonists have inherited this legacy and are forming their own identity. The saxophone in Australia has a limited heritage in both performance and composition from the 20th century compared to the continents of Europe and America: “But what of the saxophone heritage in Australia? Where are the great virtuosi who have inspired great and long lasting art? Unfortunately the history of classical saxophone in Australia is not as proud or illustrious as in the other nations…”93 There is however a lesser known heritage of accomplished performers and pedagogues within Australia. The Cambridge Companion to the saxophone dedicates one small paragraph to the Australian saxophone performers Clive Amadio and Peter Fraser in the chapter ‘Influential Soloists’ paralleled with the numerous accounts of European and American Virtuosi.94 Although not mentioned in this source, Dr Peter Clinch was also integral in the fields of performance and pedagogy in promoting the saxophone in Australia.95

Clive Amadio (1904-83) was ‘Australia’s foremost clarinettist and saxophonist’ who was immensely popular as a performer in the ‘Clive Amadio Quintett’ and on ABC national radio.96 He “pioneered the saxophone as a serious instrument in Australia” 97 and gave

94 Dryer-Beers, "Influential Soloists."41.  
97 "Clive Amadio and His Ensemble," The Canberra Times, Tuesday 12 June 1951.
many Australian public performances of saxophone works which have since become standards of the repertoire including Debussy’s *Rapsodie* and Ibert’s *Concertino da camera*. Amadio also had many works written for him by Australian composers, including the *Sonata for Eb Alto Saxophone and Piano* by Dulcie Holland, a preeminent composer. From 1942-45 Amadio became the first Professor of Clarinet and Saxophone at the Sydney Conservatorium of Music (at the time known as the NSW State Conservatorium of Music).

Dr Peter Clinch (1930-95) was a world-class performer, educator and pioneer of the saxophone. Clinch held residences as the Head of the Music Department at the Melbourne College of Advanced Education and Associate Dean in the Faculty of Music at the University of Melbourne. In these roles, he would inspire and mentor a new generation of Australian classical saxophonists including Barry Cockroft, Jason Xanthoudakis, Ian Godfrey and Tony Hicks. Clinch possessed incredible technique and true musical flair, which inspired compositions from Australian composers including William Lovelock’s *Sonata*. The sonata “displays many of the characteristics for which Dr. Clinch was best known: lyrical expression through the full regular range of the instrument, executive levels of technical ability and an overall formal structure requiring excellent interpretive and musical skills.”

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99Ibid.
100Ibid.
101"Peter Clinch".
102Ibid.
Like Mule, Rascher, and Hall, Amadio and Clinch pioneered the classical saxophone in Australia. Building upon the foundation from the United States and Europe, Amadio and Clinch have inspired new generations of performers and pedagogues which continues with increasing strength to this day.
The Composers

Matthew Orlovich was born in 1970. Based in Sydney, Matthew completed his studies at the University of Sydney. He was awarded a BMus (Hons) with a University of Sydney Medal in 1993, and a PhD in 2000 under the tutelage of Eric Gross and Peter Sculthorpe. Outside Australia, his music has been performed around the world; Including Europe, the Middle East, USA, and New Zealand. Performances of his music have been presented by esteemed ensembles including RompDuo, the United States Navy Band, the Scottish Chamber Orchestra, Sydney Philharmonia and the Sydney Symphony Orchestra. Orlovich composes for a wide variety of instrumentation, however he has an affinity for choral music, having written 30 works for SATB choir.

Orlovich has composed six works for saxophone, Crazy Logic, Flying Colours, Flight of Fancy, Whirled Music, Carnival Capers, and Air Traffic Control. Three of these, Air Traffic Control, Flight of Fancy, and Crazy Logic appear on the Australian Music Education Board syllabus. Orlovich’s saxophone music is full of energy and his use of chromatic harmony with repetition of motifs with slight changes works to great effect: “In Matthew’s work there’s a kind of continuum, it’s very evocative, it creates an atmosphere, a spell, a kind of timelessness just by a repetition of certain things and subtle

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105 http://mattheworlovich.com/.
In this way, Orlovich incorporates his jazz influences, particularly that of Bebop. Matthew Hindson AM (1968) is one of the most commissioned and performed composers of his generation. His music has been performed by every major Australian symphony orchestra, and internationally by ensembles and orchestras including the London Philharmonic, the Los Angeles Philharmonic and the Royal Philharmonic. Hindson’s music has also found a home in dance, having been set by Sydney Dance Company, Birmingham Royal Ballet, San Francisco Ballet and the National Ballet of Japan.

Hindson’s music often incorporates his popular music influences into a classical framework, from Game Boy music to Metallica, and as such, his music is incredibly diverse: “Hindson has amazing range. He could probably wring a concerto from the sound of a doorbell. His source material ranges from classical to Metallica to soothing melodic riffs that may have been extracted from an elevator.” Hindson’s saxophone music is no exception to this style. He currently has 8 pieces published for saxophone and piano; *Song for Sophie, Granny Town, Siegried Interlude No. 2: “Nothung! Nothung! Niedliches Schwert!”*, *Jungle Fever, Night Pieces, Ignition: Positive, In Search of Ecstasy*, and *Repetepetition*.

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In Search of Ecstasy is influenced by the genre of techno music, seen in the repeated syncopated motifs. This work is frequently performed as part of young saxophonist’s HSC music performance examinations and the 8th grade AMEB saxophone examinations.\textsuperscript{111} Video Game Dreaming for saxophone quartet draws influence largely from video game music Hindson incorporated after spending many hours playing games during his postgraduate studies. \textsuperscript{112}

From 2004-2010 Hindson was the artistic director at the Aurora Festival, which is dedicated to the promotion of living composers. He currently resides as Acting Head of School and Acting Associate Dean, Learning and Teaching at the SCM. \textsuperscript{113}

Ross Edwards was born in 1943, and has enjoyed a celebrated and esteemed career as one of Australia’s most well known composers. Edward’s music takes inspiration from the Australian natural habitat, particularly that of birdsong and insect drones. Through his compositions, Ross seeks to “reconnect music with elemental forces and restore its traditional association with ritual and dance.” \textsuperscript{114}

Edwards graduated from the Universities of Adelaide and Sydney, studying under Peter Sculthorpe and Richard Meale, and also with Sir Peter Maxwell Davies in Australia and London. \textsuperscript{115}

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{112} interview by Simon Watts, 24th June 2015, 2015, Sydney Conservatorium of Music.
  \item \textsuperscript{113} “Matthew Hindson”.
\end{itemize}
Edward’s compositions are performed both domestically and internationally and include “five symphonies, concertos, choral, chamber and vocal music, children’s music, film scores, a chamber opera and music for dance.” Edwards included a part for tenor saxophone performed by Sandy Evans in his Dawn Mantras and has arranged works for saxophone including solo works Ulpirra, Raft Song at Sunrise and Water Spirit Song.

Recently, Edwards has taken the saxophone into the concert hall with new compositions written for Australian saxophonist Amy Dickson. Full Moon Dances, a concerto for alto saxophone and orchestra premiered on 7th June 2012 with the Adelaide Symphony and soloist Amy Dickson. This thirty-minute work features dramatic elements including lighting, costuming and movement and characterisation of Amy as a Moon Goddess. This work abounds in environmental symbolism of birdsong, insect drones as well as chants from the indigenous peoples of Australia and abroad. Frog and Star Cycle, a double concerto commissioned for Amy Dickson, percussionist Colin Currie and the Sydney Symphony will receive its premiere performance in July 2016 at the Sydney Opera House. This work will again incorporate dramatic elements and feature Amy as an Earth Spirit, and Colin a shaman in keeping with the underlying ecological narrative contained within the work.

Brenton Broadstock AM (1952) is a Melbourne based composer who has enjoyed a decorated career, winning numerous awards for his compositions. Broadstock has taken the first place prize in the Townsville Pacific Festival’s National Composition
Competition and the Paul Lowin Song Cycle Award, and has been awarded The Albert Maggs Award, Two APRA Music Awards, and four Sounds Australian National Music Critic’s Awards. In January 2014, Broadstock received a Member of the Order of Australia for “significant service to music as a composer, educator and mentor”.119

Broadstock’s music has been performed by every major Australian Orchestra and has been regularly performed in England, Russia, Germany, Tokyo, Korea, New Zealand, Canada, Sweden, Spain and China.

Broadstock has written 6 symphonies, several orchestral works as well numerous instrumental and choral solo and ensemble works. His works for saxophone include *I Touched Your Glistening Tears* (1998) for soprano saxophone and piano, *Not Too Near...Not Too Far* (2005-2006) for alto saxophone and piano, *Twelve* (2011) for saxophone ensemble, and a saxophone concerto for ensemble (2013).120 His works for saxophone are imbued with similar characteristics seen in his compositions for other mediums: “serialised, prickly modernisms and rich neo-tonalities…”121 Broadstock’s music is influenced by his social and environmental convictions and is raw and emotional in mood: “his music stems from themes of personal anguish (Symphony no.1 ‘Towards the Shining Light’), concern with the environment (Deserts Bloom ... Lakes Die), or vivid

Elena Kats-Chernin is a leading Australian female composer of her generation. Born in 1957 in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, Elena received music training at the Gnessin Musical College in Moscow before immigrating to Australia in 1975. She continued her studies at the New South Wales State Conservatorium of Music (now the SCM) in piano and composition under Richard Toop, graduating in 1981, and then in Hanover, Germany with Helmut Lachenmann.

Having composed in almost every genre Kats-Chernin is an extremely versatile composer, producing works from light-hearted novelty to heavy melancholy and combining elements of genres including cabaret, tango, ragtime, klezmer. She has been commissioned by the Australian Chamber Orchestra, the Adelaide, Tasmanian and Sydney Symphony Orchestras, City of London Sinfonia, Swedish Chamber Orchestra and the North Carolina Symphony. In 2000, as part of a collaboration with Australian choreographer Meryl Tankard, “Deep Sea Dreaming” appeared on the world stage as part of the opening ceremonies of the Sydney Olympic Games. Kats-Chernin’s work has reached further audiences through the medium of TV and cinema. Eliza Aria from the ballet Wild Swans remains as the music for Lloyds TSB advertising campaign “For the

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journey…”. *Russian Rag* also became the theme for the Claymation film “Max & Mary”.127

Kats-Chernin has included saxophone in many of her works. As a great admirer of the instrument, she will always include saxophone when she has the opportunity.128 Parts for saxophone are found across her operas, orchestral works, chamber and solo pieces, and music for dance, film and theatre. The alto saxophone features prominently in the score for her greatly acclaimed ballet *Wild Swans*, representing the evil and seductive stepmother.129

*Prelude and Cube* (2014) was commissioned for the 25th anniversary of the Australian Brandenburg Orchestra. This work utilises period instrumentation and features the soprano saxophone as a quasi-solo instrument.130 *Five Chapters* (2014) for saxophone quartet and orchestra received its world premier on May 22, 2014 by the Raschèr Saxophone Quartet and the Sinfionetta de Lausanne at the Salle Métropole in Lausanne, Switzerland.131 Kats-Chernin’s newest saxophone concerto, *Macquarie’s Castle* for alto saxophone and orchestra received its world premier on the 8th of April 2016 by Dr. Michael Duke.132

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127 Ibid.
129 Ibid.
130 Ibid.
132 “Interview with Elena Kats-Chernin.”
Katy Abbott’s (1971) music has been performed, broadcast and recorded both within Australia and internationally in the UK, Europe, Asia and the USA. Domestically her compositions have been presented by eminent Australian ensembles including several major symphony orchestras, The Song Company, HD Duo, Syzygy Ensemble, Ironwood Chamber Ensemble and Halycon. Her work has also appeared in music festivals, most notably at the International Alliance of Women in Music (IAWN), conference in Beijing, and the Melbourne and Perth International Festivals. Her works are represented on the AMEB, ANZCA and VCE/HSC syllabi.

Abbott’s music is accessible and engaging, often contrasting modern elements against a traditional framework. She has written for numerous mediums, including orchestral, chamber, instrumental solo, and choral—an area where she has a particular affinity. Abbott’s saxophone music exhibits choral characteristics through exploring the lyrical capabilities of the instrument. For Abbott, the sonority of the saxophone is akin to that of the voice. Autumn Song (1995/rev. 2001) for saxophone and piano, Egyptian Wish (2001) for three soprano saxophones, and Undercurrent (2011) for soprano saxophone and piano are demonstrative of this.

Abbott completed a PhD in 2007 and currently resides as Lecturer in Composition at Melbourne Conservatorium of Music whilst maintaining freelance composition.

134 Ibid.
135 Ibid.
138 Ibid.
Results and Discussion

Why Australian composers are writing for the Saxophone

Questions were asked of participants to investigate why composers are writing for the saxophone in a classical setting. Questions were primarily directed at the personal reasons behind composition as well as their opinion on why other composers may be writing for the instrument in a similar setting. The primary questions that were asked of participants to achieve these aims included the following:

1. Why are you writing for the saxophone as a classical instrument?
2. Why do you think other composer’s are writing for the saxophone as a classical instrument?

In most cases further questions were asked to prompt the participants. The most common included:

1. Are there any characteristics of the saxophone that draw you to write for it?
2. Are there particular players that you have either written for or been inspired by?
3. If so, has a commissioning process been part of this relationship?
4. If so, has there been a workshopping process with the performer?

The following sections will discuss the participant’s responses to these questions.

Perceptions of the saxophone as a classical instrument

The participants stated that they are writing for the saxophone in a classical setting because of their training in classical music, however they were in agreement that the saxophone is not perceived of as only or primarily a jazz instrument anymore. It was
unanimous that the saxophone has become grounded in the classical tradition. Kats-Chernin argues, “For me the saxophone is part of the classical instruments of today. It’s no longer for me connected to jazz, I think its kind of earned its place in the classical, that’s why its been used”.\footnote{Elena Kats-Chernin, ibid., 10/07/15.} The composers also said unanimously they felt they could ask for the saxophone in an orchestral or chamber work without too much opposition, as Orlovich argues: “So I think its definitely an established classical instrument of choice for me as a composer and I’d be surprised if I was writing say an orchestral piece and wanted a saxophone I’d be surprised if was, to be put in the too hard basket these days, I think its definitely an option— a good option.”\footnote{Matthew Orlovich, ibid., 5th June 2015, Sydney Conservatorium of Music.} Hindson agrees, arguing “If you want to write a piece and put a saxophone in it, no one would blink an eye, because there’s great players around and the instrument has a reputation now”.\footnote{Matthew Hindson, ibid., 24th June 2015.} This points to the growing acceptance of the saxophone amongst the larger music community. The saxophone seems to have reached a point where ensembles and orchestras are comfortable with including a saxophonist.

Broadstock objected to the saxophone as ever being primarily identified as a jazz instrument:

“I thought that was an interesting question, the fact that you put classical there, the premise of that is that it’s not a classical instrument. My immediate response is well it is a classical instrument; it always has been a classical instrument since Sax invented it. So, maybe it’s been used in jazz

\footnote{Elena Kats-Chernin, ibid., 10/07/15.} \footnote{Matthew Orlovich, ibid., 5th June 2015, Sydney Conservatorium of Music.} \footnote{Matthew Hindson, ibid., 24th June 2015.}
settings in more recent times, but right from the very beginning, right from the 1850’s when it kind of was a fully formed instrument, its always been a classical instrument. So, to use it in a classical setting, you know, there’s some fantastic precedence, of course going back to Debussy, from 1901, with his Rhapsodie, so we now kind of have a 160 years of classical repertoire, from some amazing composers, people have used it since Prokofiev, right up to John Adam’s concerto of recent times. So, it kind of begs the question, why wouldn’t you write for the saxophone as a classical instrument, it is a classical instrument, and you know, its ideally suited to a classical setting, depending on the kind of context you use it in.”

**Current Trends**

Although responses to the previous questions began highlighting the composers’ perception on the saxophone as a classical instrument, two further questions were asked to further ascertain their opinion on this matter and also the current growth of contemporary Australian composition for the saxophone:

1. Are you aware of an increase in the number and quality of composition for the saxophone in a classical setting?

2. If so, in your opinion, is this trend indicative of the instrument becoming more popular, marketable and accepted as a classical instrument?

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141 Brenton Broadstock, interview by Simon Watts, 26th June, 2015.
All participants concurred that there is a growth in both number and quality of composition and this highlights a trend that is indicative of the saxophone becoming an established classical instrument.

Orlovich is confident that more saxophone music is being written now than when he began. He believes this can be traced to a “lively atmosphere” that has developed as more students are studying both within Australia and overseas and experiencing performances from other saxophonists. He sees this process as an encouragement to students to approach composers for new music, something he has experienced firsthand: “…if they’ve heard a performance of one of my pieces they get in touch pretty quickly and want to know about it or maybe ask me for some new music, so maybe it’s like a snowball effect”.

Hindson is adamant there is has been an increase in both number and quality of compositions and references Matthew Orlovich and Stuart Greenbaum as composers who have written extensively for the instrument: “Yeah, it’s exploded, over the last twenty years. The numbers have just increased… so I think the quality of pieces yes, which includes saxophone is increasing…It never seems to stop—which is good.” Hindson sees the inclusion of saxophone in chamber and orchestral settings in an increasing manner as pointing to a development in quality in composition. He references Christina Leonard performing as soloist with the Australian Brandenburg Orchestra regarding this.

142 Orlovich, ”Interview with Matthew Orlovich.”
143 Matthew Hindson, ibid., 24th June 2015.
point. Hindson is alluding that it’s quite remarkable to see a saxophonist performing with one of the leading Australian period music ensembles. In 2014, Leonard appeared as soloist in Prelude and Cube, written by Elena Kats-Chernin for the 25th anniversary of the Australian Brandenburg Orchestra. Having a composer of her stature composing in such a setting highlights the quality of composition that is appearing for saxophone.

Broadstock recognises a growth in quantity and quality of composition for the saxophone. He finds a correlation between an increase in saxophonists and composers over the last twenty-five years: “So you’ve got high quality saxophone players being trained, you’ve got a large number of high quality composers who are being trained and they’re kind of all connecting together, so I guess you’re going to get more works, and you’re going to get more works of higher quality...”

Edwards sees this growth in composition as pointing to the saxophone becoming established as a classical instrument and anticipates the popularity of the saxophone growing further: “As more and more works are written and some of them make it into the repertoire I don’t see why it wouldn’t become as popular an instrument of the concert hall as the flute or clarinet.”

144 Ibid.
145 Elena Kats-Chernin, ibid., 10/07/15.
146 Broadstock, “Interview with Brenton Broadstock.”
The Performers

A common theme that emerged in interviews was the role that saxophonists have had, and continue to have in composers writing for the saxophone. In every case the participants emphasised the importance the performers had in personally inspiring them and other composers to write for the saxophone, either as an admiration initiative or a commissioning process. The Australian saxophonists Barry Cockroft, Michael Duke, Christina Leonard, James Nightingale, Amy Dickson, Nicholas Russoniello and Peter Clinch are among the performers referenced in this regard.

Although Edwards has enjoyed a long and decorated career, he admitted he hadn’t considered composing for the saxophone before hearing Amy Dickson play. Although he has previously included a tenor saxophone part for Jazz saxophonist Sandy Evans in his Dawn Mantras (2000) and transposed a few of his other works for saxophone, Edwards admitted, “…until a few years ago I’d associated the saxophone more with smoke filled basements than concert halls.”148 With Dickson, Edwards saw the potential for the saxophone to occupy the concert hall; “After she’d won the Young Performers Award in 2004, Amy Dickson began corresponding with me. She was seeking to extend the ‘classical’ repertoire of the saxophone and was hoping I might consider composing for her…Years later, my London publisher sent me one of Amy’s recordings. I was impressed and excited and immediately wanted to meet her.”149 Having begun this

148 Ibid.
149 Ibid.
journey with Dickson, Edwards has now composed several works for her, including saxophone in chamber and concerto concert settings.

Broadstock commented he believes composers are very opportunistic, and with virtuosic Australian saxophonists accessible, writing for the saxophone is a compelling option; “composers are willing to write for anything, you know, the opportunity arises and take the opportunity, and if you get a good player that comes to you, whether it be on kazoo or saxophone, it doesn’t really matter. Someone says–and they are kind of an expert in their field– I’d like you to write something, you kind of jump at the opportunity, because being a composer is about expressing your creativity in whatever form is kind of possible. So, when I’ve been asked to write for saxophone I kind of jump at the chance, because often you know its been fantastic players, like Barry Cockroft, or Michael Duke, and you say well, you’re not going to get a better performance, so why wouldn’t you write for the saxophone?”.  

Abbott, Orlovich, and Broadstock note Barry Cockroft has been a major inspiration of their composition for saxophone, especially through him seeking out compositions from them. Cockroft is one of Australia’s leading saxophonists and has created popular repertoire that combines popular elements within a classical setting, often with the use of extended techniques. He runs his own publishing company, Reed Music, where he has helped build an Australian Repertoire. Hindson comments on the advantage of Reed Music from a composer’s perspective: “…they’ve got this entire infrastructure set up for

150 Broadstock, "Interview with Brenton Broadstock."
woodwind, but it’s really for saxophone most of all, so if I write a piece and send it to him, then it’ll get published, so then we have all this access to my music being out there, much more than if for example if I wrote a piece for bassoon and piano, even, or for flute and piano.”

A common trend the participants highlighted was the enthusiasm and proactive nature of Australian saxophonists, which has resulted in new compositions and continues to produce new works. Kats-Chernin notes “I think the players are very innovative in the way they elevate the instrument, and they seem to work harder than say a cello player of a violin player to make the instrument known, because the others don’t have to work on that. So every saxophone player I know is incredibly proactive in approaching composers, and making new pieces be written, making up concerts, making up the ensembles.” Abbott likewise argues “saxophonists tend to be really proactive in approaching composers and proactive in developing repertoire for their instrument and proactive in recording and performing, so I think its really attractive for composers to be writing for these people because the piece isn’t just performed once and popped in a draw, its usually recorded and performed multiple times, and performed to an excellent level, so I think that would be my guess.” The composers commented how attractive proactive and enthusiastic performers were, and when approached by such people they would be willing to work together.

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151 Hindson, "Interview with Matthew Hindson."
152 Elena Kats-Chernin, ibid., 10/07/15.
Commissions

The composers were in agreement that commissions have been part of their creation of new compositions for saxophone. Participants mentioned both paid and “exchange of services”/ “admiration” commissions.  

Edwards organised a commission for his saxophone concerto Full Moon Dances and the recently completed double concerto Frog and Star Cycle for saxophone and percussion through a patronage relationship. Kats-Chernin’s saxophone concerto Five Chapters, Prelude and Cube (written for the Australian Brandenburg Orchestra, featuring soprano saxophone) and Macquarie’s Castle (2016) were paid commissions. Broadstock composed I touched your glistening tears and Not too near...Not too far for Barry Cockroft as an exchange of services commission, however his saxophone concerto written for Michael Duke was a paid commission. Broadstock commented the form of commissions are often varied; “...sometimes you get a commission, and sometimes it’s a commission where someone will say I’d really like you to write something, or maybe something’s coming up, some kind of opportunity, and say you know I’d like you to write something for this.”

Abbott pointed to the creation of her early compositions for saxophone as being a “quid pro quo” relationship with Barry Cockroft; “there was no actual money changing hands but Barry said can you write this piece, and I wrote it for him, and he performed it, 

156 Kats-Chernin, “Interview with Elena Kats-Chernin.”
157 Broadstock, “Interview with Brenton Broadstock.”
158 Ibid.
published it, toured it, so in a way its sort of how that relationship started off.”\textsuperscript{159}

Following this, Abbott received paid commissions, including \textit{Undercurrent} for HD Duo.\textsuperscript{160}

**Characteristics of the Saxophone**

Participants responded unanimously that certain characteristics of the saxophone drew them to compose for the instrument. Responses fell predominantly into two categories; Technical ability of the instrument and its’ unique sonority.

Broadstock finds the technical versatility of the instrument one of the most compelling attributes of the saxophone, particularly its vast dynamic range. This combined with its tone and timbral qualities make “writing for the saxophone a real joy”.\textsuperscript{161}

Hindson likewise appreciates the “vast range of technical capabilities”, arguing the saxophone is equally comfortable in fulfilling different roles from Jazz and funk to lyrical motifs; “It’s capable of very soft stuff and also the very loud stuff. And I think also, you know you asked about Jazz, but there is the possibility the saxophone sounds good doing a wide range of things, you know, it can do sort of funky stuff, rhythmic things, it can do very lyrical things and the instrument itself sounds really wonderful with everything like that and in between.”\textsuperscript{162} Due to these characteristics, Hindson also finds the saxophone

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item\textsuperscript{159} Abbott, ”Interview with Katy Abbott.”
\item\textsuperscript{160} Ibid.
\item\textsuperscript{161} Broadstock, ”Interview with Brenton Broadstock.”
\item\textsuperscript{162} Hindson, ”Interview with Matthew Hindson.”
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
capable of a “wide range of expressive qualities”, a flexibility that “…has a great sense of power, but is also capable of great beauty.”

Kats-Chernin regards the saxophone as one of her favourite instruments. Like Broadstock she finds the versatility of the instrument a major attribute; “So yeah, I’m kind of hooked on saxophone, it’s just really fabulous, versatile, it can do really fast, it can be do really slow, it can be very long notes, it can be very beautifully vibrato. Just a lot of richness of colour, you know? And it’s just fun to write for.” In an orchestral setting, Kats-Chernin commented how she will always try and include saxophone if possible to give the sound a greater texture and because she personally loves the sound; “I tell you what, it gives glamour to an orchestra. That sound it lifts the whole texture somehow.”

As a vocalist, Abbott finds the saxophone akin to the sonority of the human voice, especially the soprano saxophone. Because of this, she finds composing for the saxophone a natural process; “I think I can say the same type of things—the same kind of lyrical lines that I would potentially ask the singer to do— I feel I can also ask the saxophone to do.” Interestingly, Abbott has some knowledge of the technical aspects of the saxophone as she played it for a year in her undergraduate degree.

163 Ibid.
164 Elena Kats-Chernin, ibid., 10/07/15.
165 Ibid.
167 Ibid.
168 Ibid.
Orlovich also finds the saxophone a natural instrument, as he owns and plays one as an amateur, meaning when he is composing he can test passages on the instrument.\textsuperscript{169} Orlovich also played flute throughout school years and finds the fingering system akin to that of that saxophone. These elements combined helped him towards composition for the saxophone; “So the up and down fingering of the saxophone sort of made, my brain you know was already sort of wired in a little bit of a way for that having learnt the flute, so, that helped to get me going with the saxophone music composition.”\textsuperscript{170}

The sound of the saxophone also drew Orlovich to compose for the saxophone. As a great admirer of Jazz, his music combines elements of jazz within a classical framework. Although trained as a classical composer, his music is “…walking the line if you like between genres”\textsuperscript{171} Orlovich commented he has listened to a lot of jazz music by Charlier Parker, Art Pepper and Stan Getz, and has always enjoyed the sound of the saxophone.

Upon hearing Amy Dickson play, Ross Edwards began to see the potential of the saxophone as a classical instrument. He was particularly drawn to the finesse and musicality of Amy’s playing and “Hearing Amy play refined pianissimos in a “classical” style made (albeit on a soprano instrument) me aware of the vastly greater potential of the saxophone”.\textsuperscript{172}

\textsuperscript{169} Matthew Orlovich, ibid., 5th June 2015, Sydney Conservatorium of Music.
\textsuperscript{170} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{171} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{172} Edwards, "An Interview with Ross Edwards."
The participants gave strikingly similar responses to the questions regarding why they are composing for the instrument, and some overarching tendencies became clear. The participants are composing for the saxophone in a classical setting due to the classical training they have received and they were in agreement that the saxophone is no longer an obscure instrument within the classical tradition. Responses unanimously stated there has been a growth in both number and quality of composition, and this trend is indicative of the saxophone becoming more established as a classical instrument. The influence of the performers was made clear as each participant emphasised the importance performers had in personally inspiring them and other composers to write for the saxophone, either through an admiration initiative, “exchange of services” or paid commission. Lastly, the characteristics of the instrument, especially its’ technical ability and unique sonority encouraged every composer to write for it.
How composers are writing for the classical saxophone

Participants were asked questions pertaining to how they compose for the saxophone. The main questions asked to give insight into this process included the following:

1. What is the target audience of your compositions for saxophone?
2. What is involved in the creative process when writing for the classical saxophone?
3. How long does this process take?

Often, further questions were asked to supplement question number 2:

2.1: Do you have any influences or inspirations when composing for the saxophone?
2.2: Do you use extended techniques?
2.3: How do you gather insight into the technical capabilities of the instrument?

Target Audience

The composers agreed that their target audience does not differ when composing for the saxophone versus other instrumentation. Broadstock argues, “…well I think you should take the bit for saxophone off, because I don’t think it makes any difference whether it’s for saxophone or anything else.”

Broadstock, Kats-Chernin, and Hindson remarked that they don’t think about tailoring their music too much to an audience, rather they

[173] Broadstock, "Interview with Brenton Broadstock."
write to the best of their ability, and the “creative expression comes first”. Broadstock finds a composer concerning himself too much with an audience problematic, as little control over the audience who hears their work is possible:

“If I write a piece for Michael Duke, and he plays it in the conservatorium, then the target audience is a bunch of music students and maybe a few others, but then if he goes to the World Saxophone congress and he plays it for saxophone aficionados, but then he might go to some little church in Germany or somewhere and play and so you get a whole different audience altogether, but you know as a composer I don’t have any control over the audience, I cant control who’s going to listen to my music either in live performance or in broadcast performance, so all I can do is write a piece that expresses whatever it is I want to express and time, give it to the performer and in a way it kind of becomes the performers responsibility too, to present that to an audience.”

Hindson argues this point further, stating, “I mean the music itself comes first, and if an audience doesn’t like it, well I can’t help that. It’s always a thing as a composer, if you start writing for an audience, then it’s a bit of a problem. You’re better off just writing the best piece you can, and then you know, see who likes it and who doesn’t, after its done. So, yeah, I’m trying to work with the player, not necessarily for an audience, but actually the main audience is myself.”

Ibid.
Ibid.
Ibid.
Hindson, ”Interview with Matthew Hindson.”
Rather than tailoring their music to specific audiences, Broadstock, Hindson and Kats-Chernin were more in agreement that they are more conscience of the performer. Hindson discusses how both the first performer of the work and the subsequent players influence his writing: “…well I do think of the player and I think about what they’re good at, and I think about other players, and I want music to be enjoyable to play lots of the time…”\textsuperscript{177} Kats-Chernin argues, “I don’t think about target audiences because I’m just writing a piece, I can’t think about the audiences, I just always write the best I can. I always write a piece I want to write, and also a piece that I think will fit a particular player.”\textsuperscript{178} She discusses this process in her recently composed concerto for Michael Duke, illustrating the role the performer has in her creative process: “…while I was writing I was imagining Michael playing it, so I just go into this kind of inner world. I go inside myself and I try to imagine.”\textsuperscript{179} Interestingly, although Kats-Chernin at first states she doesn’t think about the audience when composing, she goes on discuss how the audience functions in her creative process: “I imagine the audience that comes to hear my pieces. They like my work maybe, or maybe likes the works on the programme, or maybe likes the soloist, or maybe they like the orchestra, maybe they like the venue. I don’t know who they are. They’re usually people who like classical music and I think most of them accept saxophone.”\textsuperscript{180}

In contrast with the other composers, Orlovich, Abbott and Edwards discuss how an audience influences their compositions. Edwards attempts to be as inclusive as possible in

\textsuperscript{177} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{178} Elena Kats-Chernin, ibid., 10/07/15.  
\textsuperscript{179} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{180} Ibid.
his writing: “I’m composing for, but not down to, as wide a slice of the musical community that is prepared to listen responsively.”\textsuperscript{181} He sees a benefit in this method, stating, “In this way more new saxophone repertoire will be disseminated as widely as possible – I’m definitely not interested in niche markets!”\textsuperscript{182} Orlovich thinks more specifically in tailoring his work for audiences, describing a more methodological approach: “When I sit down and write a piece, I actually sort of position my imagination in the venue, or an imagined venue, and so if the piece is going to be at a big concert type hall or something like that then that kind of influences the sort of music I write. On the other hand, if it’s a piece for say an exam recital –or something like that– or an AMEB type exam, then different things might come to mind.”\textsuperscript{183} Abbott follows a similar method, thinking in terms of degree of difficulty: “Different audiences for different pieces. I wouldn’t say I had one audience. Certainly one audience is the student saxophonists. Grade 4 to 7 AMEB level, and that’s come about through Reed Music. But also professional, with Michael (Duke) and Barry (Cockroft) in particular, who have got these pieces off the ground”.\textsuperscript{184} Abbott states she desires to create music that is “challenging and fun for the performer to play, and yet accessible to the general audience”.\textsuperscript{185} She categorises her audiences as “general” and “new music” audiences, stating she is more interested in writing music for the former. Abbott clarifies her perceived general audience in the following: “I’m thinking of my mum, or my cousin who aren’t in that scene, to try and demystify classical music to that audience in a way

\textsuperscript{181} Edwards, ”An Interview with Ross Edwards.”
\textsuperscript{182} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{183} Orlovich, ”Interview with Matthew Orlovich.”
\textsuperscript{184} Katy Abbott, ibid., 6/09/15.
\textsuperscript{185} Ibid.
that’s not necessarily challenging in its harmony, but opens ears in other ways; that might be through using extended techniques in context, so its sort of still virtuosic or challenging for the player, but not necessarily alienating for the audience.”

**Creative Process**

The composers unanimously stated that the creative processes involved in composition for the saxophone did not differ from that of other instrumentation. The methods involved in composition did however differ from one composer to the next. Broadstock begins with working out the ideological basis, structure and harmonic elements. He then considers the technical abilities and limitations of the saxophone in regards to register, and difficulty in certain crossing of fingerings. He contemplates the sonority and timbral qualities of the saxophone, which have to be considered in the blend of accompanying instrumentation that is given or will be chosen. He goes on to discuss the saxophone in different ensemble settings, contemplating some of the challenges and benefits of each: “so if you’re using a small ensemble with saxophone, it’s a very loud instrument, if you have, you know, a flute or a harp or something, the saxophones going to stand out like a sore thumb. So it’s that kind of subtlety you have to kind of bring to bear in the way you use saxophone in kind of ensemble, it’s about finding the right balance in how you use it. If its in a larger ensemble, I guess that’s why it works so well in kind of jazz bands, and wind ensembles, because it kind of fits in with the greater loudness of those ensembles. And as a saxophone quartet, or saxophone ensemble, it

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186 Ibid.
works really well, because you have this kind of wonderful homogenous blend of sound from all the instruments, its absolutely gorgeous, as good as a string quartet. And with an orchestra of course it works really well, because you have the kind of big body of sound behind it, and with a piano also it will lend well. But when you get the kind of more intimate ensembles it’s a bit more difficult, so that’s going to affect your creative process in the way you use the instrument. So I guess you have to be aware of you know of the nature of the instrument itself, in order to make the creative process kind of work.”

Broadstock comments that he rarely workshops with performers but instead corresponds with the soloist before and during the composing to gather insight into expectations and limitations. By this stage, Broadstock notes that he is already aware of most of the capabilities of the performer, having heard them before: “when I’ve written for a soloist you kind of ask them the kind of things, you know are happy to do or not happy to do, you also have an idea of what they’re capable of in the first place because you’ve probably heard them, you know them, you’ve spoken to them. So it’s a kind of talking and understanding the kind of musician, what kind of player they are.”

Kats-Chernin uses her composition for Michael Duke and the Rascher Quartet to illustrate her creative process. She begins with research consisting of listening to the performer and other recordings of that specific instrument, but the bulk of the composing flows naturally: “I don’t know how I write, I just write it on piano and I don’t think too much. I just write it and think how will the saxophone be sounding with this ensemble, or with this orchestra. So I’m hopefully listening inside myself, and playing the whole piece

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187 Broadstock, “Interview with Brenton Broadstock.”
188 Ibid.
and thinking.” This concept of listening inside oneself is something Kats-Chernin refers to a few times, describing a process where she uses her imagination to conceptualise her composition: “while I was writing I was imagining Michael playing it, so I just go into this kind of inner world. I go inside myself and I try to imagine. I imagine the audience that comes to hear my pieces…”

The process of placing the saxophone in orchestral and ensemble compositions is something that Kats-Chernin discusses in some detail. The main difficulty she finds in acquiring saxophone for ensembles is the expense of the players. As they aren’t a regular part of the traditional orchestra, and the budget of the ensembles is normally low, she finds she has to justify her reasons for including saxophone: “they will ask me why do you want it and you have to have a good reason. I mean I can’t indulge it constantly in having saxophones in every single piece. It feels like its a luxury a little bit, because its not always part of an ensemble.” She continues to explain that the saxophone for her is “not a luxury, for me it’s a necessity, and I like it, I want it, but you have to explain..” If, however the piece has been commissioned, but not for saxophone, Kats-Chernin finds it rude to insist, and yet “I think if you explain and you say it’s absolutely essential then they will go with it”.


189 Kats-Chernin, "Interview with Elena Kats-Chernin."
190 Ibid.
191 Ibid.
192 Ibid.
193 Ibid.
Kats-Chernin states how collaboration with performers in the process of composition is important for her, having done this with Michael Duke and Christina Leonard especially. Speaking of her work with Christina, Kats-Chernin commented “we have done that on a few occasions by now. And, I’m doing the same with Michael; it’s just really great, it’s very important…”\textsuperscript{194} She uses the example of the concerto *Five Chapters* for saxophone quartet and orchestra to illustrate the need to have correspondence and understanding between performer and composer. She discusses how the Rascher Quartet requested her to extend the use of the altissimo register and create more virtuosic material in *Five Chapters* after sending them the initial score: “He wrote back and said, ah but we can play much higher, we can play a whole octave above what you’ve written, I mean you didn’t push the instrument far enough.”\textsuperscript{195} This raises a problem for Kats-Chernin, as she prefers to use the altissimo register sparingly, finding “squeaking” for the sake of pushing the boundaries of the instrument unappealing: “So the question is do I write to showcase an instrument or do I write to make a piece of music. Those are the questions I always ask myself. Do I want to push the boundaries and then have a lot of squeaky sounds and the piece will not be necessarily attractive?”\textsuperscript{196} Kats-Chernin discusses how she corresponded with Christina Leonard in the process of writing *Five Chapters* to gain clarity on the issue: “I remember when I was writing that piece I asked Christina a few times, oh what do you think of this comment? The Rascher player said: “You can challenge us much more, at the moment the piece is not difficult enough.” In my mind the piece was actually quite hard already and at times very virtuosic. However, I took on board those comments

\textsuperscript{194} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{195} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{196} Ibid.
and then at the premiere of the concerto I did not enjoy some of those really high sounds. So, I revised the piece after the premiere and made use of altissimo register only very sparingly. It is a much better piece now and I am happy with it how it is currently.”¹⁹⁷

The use of altissimo, and expectations from performers and composers is something that Kats-Chernin has to increasingly navigate in the composition process. She finds that extended use of the altissimo register is becoming an expected technique in composition: “if you don’t write in that range, people will just say ah, you don’t know about saxophone, or you didn’t push far enough, and if it’s a concerto it has to go that way.”¹⁹⁸

Hindson begins his compositional process with gaining an understanding of context, as this varies from one work to the next. There’s a “whole lot of starting points” that need to be addressed, including instrumentation, the format the piece is intended for; “am I writing for a student’s HSC? Or am I writing for a Musica Viva tour?”— which will determine the technical possibilities of the work, and also what the performer(s) intends for the piece; “like is it in memory of someone, is it a celebratory piece, is it just a piece to write whenever you want.”¹⁹⁹

Hindson argues there are no unique processes involved in composing for the saxophone— the same issues have to be dealt with: “these concerns are common to writing a piece for any instrumentation. There’s nothing particularly special about writing for the saxophone as opposed to writing for any other instrument. It’s just another instrument, it’s another sound, set of sound sources, another set of technical possibilities that you deal with.”²⁰⁰

These technical possibilities Hindson says do however need to be addressed and researched, both in the inaugural writings for

¹⁹⁷ Ibid.
¹⁹⁸ Ibid.
¹⁹⁹ Matthew Hindson, ibid., 24th June 2015, Sydney Conservatorium of Music.
²⁰⁰ Ibid.
saxophone and subsequent compositions. Register and tone are listed as examples. Tonguing is also something which Hindson reviews in preparation for composing: “How fast really can people really tongue, is it all single tonguing, is it double tonguing, like, I mean I may have known it once I’ve forgotten it now. So I’d want to refresh myself on those sort of things.” These technical possibilities need to be reviewed to guide the musical ideas that develop and Hindson finds composing for the strengths of the instrument important: “so then if I do have musical ideas that come to me, then I can think, well actually no that’s not going to work on the instrument, maybe if I did this instead. What are the strengths of the instrument, what is it going to sound good doing? It’s important for any composer, to work with the strengths. I mean if you work against the instrument, you might get a different effect I suppose, but the piece more than likely won’t sound very good.”

Hindson states that he finds workshopping with performers a useful process. This helps to establish what sounds good and provides an opportunity for the performer to give feedback and advice to the composer; something that Hindson finds important: “I think it’s a good thing to do…then we’ll play through it, and that doesn’t sound any good, what about this, and, I think it’s always good to be open to performer suggestions as a composer. They might say, well this is ok, but what about if I did it like this? Ooh that’s interesting, mind you I don’t think it’ll work because that sort of comes out of this figure, but I’ll think about that for later.” Workshopping also helps establish the technical

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201 Ibid.
202 Ibid.
203 Ibid.
abilities of the instrument/performer, where there might be specific questions for the performer, such as “how good are you at singing and playing at the same time? Or…ok so if I’m playing down here and… how many alternate fingerings do you have for this note?”

Hindson discusses his influences and how they develop in his music. Popular, electronic, metal, and video game music have direct influence in Hindson’s music, being genres which Hindson enjoys: “And it was death metal, and don’t forget death metal, that was really new then, and electronic music… but I thought well that’s the music that I want to listen to, I enjoy the virtuosity, I enjoy the engagement, I’m not interested in the other stuff, I don’t want to write music like that.” Beyond his enjoyment of these genres, Hindson also feels compelled to compose music that is accessible, as “I’m always interested and always had been interested in music being relevant to us as Australians in contemporary society.” Although In his early days of composing Hindson made the conscious choice to write music in this way, now he finds these influences have become ingrained in his style: “I’m sort of known for the popular music influences in my music but actually a lot of my music doesn’t have that. There’s heaps that doesn’t but a lot of it does. And now days, I don’t consciously in most pieces set out to write music like this, or like this style or something, it’s just over the years… those influences have just become part of me now. So I write a piece and yes you can trace it back.”

204 Ibid.
205 Ibid.
206 Ibid.
207 Ibid.
Orlovich discusses a rather methodical approach in his composition process. His compositions begin with an opportunity, availability of time and space, and a motive to compose. He states this can be for a specific performer, or the performance audience in general: “just to sort of write it and then get it out there in the world”.

Orlovich then considers the context, and tries to listen critically as an audience member, examining instrumentation and duration. At this point Orlovich reviews past material for influence and considers it for development in the new work: Then at that point I’ll be starting to think about the previous pieces that I’ve written, and how I might sort of use them like a springboard from my previous work into something that’s a new piece. That’s often a good way to get started; is to sort of take some like inspiration or jumping off point from another piece, and then taking it in the new direction or exploring it a bit further.”

Once these processes are completed, Orlovich gives himself time to ponder the work while moving on with other work in case he finds new inspiration or decides to make adjustments to “improve a little bit of that melodic lines or a rhythm or extend the section.”

Orlovich discusses how he often edits up to “10 different polishing drafts”, where he finally reaches a point where only small changes are being made and the score is sent to the performer. The changing of minute details such as the addition of a breath mark, or the altering of a few notes is all that remains at this point.

Orlovich enjoys a workshopping with performers, however as this normally occurs near the completion of the work, the process is rather general. Orlovich comments how for the


208 Matthew Orlovich, ibid., 5th June 2015.
209 Ibid.
210 Ibid.
211 Ibid.
most part he is satisfied in allowing the creative process to unfold and workshopping small details with the performer at the end of this. He will work on the composition every day, relating the formation of the piece akin to building a puzzle: “And when I’m writing a piece, like during the actual creation of all of the music and the harmonies and things I tend to know what I want and just go for it, you know every day, from sort of you know nine o’clock in the morning until however long it takes when I want to stop that day and then the next day the same and the next day the same. It’s just everyday until I finish the thing. It’s just sort of like you get into a frame of mind where everything starts to form, sort of like a jigsaw puzzle forming– it’s a picture. And so at that point I’m pretty happy to just work on it on my own. But definitely when that picture has formed and I show it to the performers it’s sort of helpful to get their input.”

He states that his basic ability on the saxophone allows for most of the technical aspects to be established, allowing for focus on the overall sound: “I sort of feel like that my playing of the saxophone, even as basic as it is, gives me a little bit of a head start with regard to the fingering and breathing and possibilities. So the workshopping tends to be shaping the overall sound of the performance a little bit, and just helping out if I can correct any little details that make it easier for the performer, which doesn’t you know occur to me when I’m writing it.”

This is a time rather for Orlovich to set tempos and make other small changes: “I especially like going to a bit of a rehearsal before a premier just to set the tempos and things like that. Sometimes If I’m writing for an accompanying instrument that might be a bit new to me, then I like to make sure that the tempos are right, that’s the main thing

\[212\] Ibid.
\[213\] Ibid.
for me.” Small details that may be altered include putting a note up an octave to enable it to speak more easily, or changing a note to allow for a breath.

Orlovich has some diverse influences in his music. Jazz and Indonesian music are two of the main genres from which his instrumental music is derived. Orlovich comments how his years of listening to bebop music have allowed jazz to become ingrained in his compositional style, and yet he is also very comfortable with the classical genre. For him, “It’s all about walking the line along those two genres”. This is instantly recognisable to him and flow naturally as he composes: “I definitely know when I’m stepping over into the jazz territory, which is really easy for me to do as a piano player my finger just naturally want to fall on the jazz chord, and so I enjoy that, because I know I can have that there as a resource…with a piece like Crazy Logic I can straight away see the bebop type melodic and rhythmic influence coming in and I was very aware of that when I was writing it”. Indonesian Gamelan is also immersed within Orlovich’s music, a genre that he studied whilst at Sydney University: “I studied in a performance ensemble called The Gamelan, and Indonesian music kind of filtered into my musical compositional style. And so in pieces like Crazy Logic with the calm sections of that piece there’s a little bit of the sort of Indonesian style ostinato happening and also with pieces like Flight of Fancy, there’s that element coming into it– there’s pentatonic type scales.” Interestingly, This compositional style is unique to Orlovich’s instrumental music. The other context for which he writes regularly is that of choral music, and yet these

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214 Ibid.
215 Ibid.
216 Ibid.
217 Ibid.
influences are not found. “It’s almost like a different composer has written each of them.”

Abbott recounts a fairly structured compositional process. She begins by establishing any requirements (“the brief”), and context of where and what the piece is intended for. She will then negotiate with the performer the inclusion of ideas she feels strongly about, checking that there are no objections. The next stage is to immerse herself in the sound of the performer. This is achieved by attending concerts, listening to recordings and then “maybe spend a couple of hours with that person; with their sound, with their tone, and to see their playing, and see the sort of things they’re interested in writing for, and also the things that sort of appeal to me about their playing that I can feature.” The first draft will develop from this point, keeping in mind the abilities and limitations of the instrument, before passing the piece over to the performer “with a bit of tweaking in the rehearsal period if it needs it”.

Abbott comments on how composition would vary slightly from works intended for live performance, and those for recording. The main difference in these formats is the change of resonance: “I’d be aware of the space it’d be performed in, but also I’ve noticed that some of the pieces that I’ve recorded have been tricky to record because I rely on resonance or piano peddling, holding over, and things that don’t have defined clear

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218 Ibid.
220 Ibid.
breaks; or pieces that don’t have clear defined silences I should say, are more difficult to record”.

Abbott relied on workshopping in her earlier compositions for the saxophone especially, and maintains this in her current compositional process. Writing for Barry Cockroft, she notes the importance of this process; “particularly early on when I wasn’t as familiar with the saxophone, especially the extended techniques and things. I probably spent quite a lot of time pre-composing, just listening to Barry play, just going through systematically some of the things the saxophone does and doesn’t do.” Abbott notes this is a cycle which she uses in writing for saxophone, with further workshopping often finishing the process: “I will sketch out a few things, take it back to the instrumentalist, play it through, see if it sits well, and then I’ll go and write the piece. Following writing the piece, in the rehearsal phase there’s a little bit of workshopping and adjustment, but by the time it’s complete it’s mostly there with just a few tweaks needed I’d say.”

Ross Edwards provides insight into his compositional method when he discusses the process of composing Full Moon Dances. Edward’s concertos for saxophone have been aided by commissions: “I’m very fortunate in having some patrons who take an interest in my work and who regularly commission me to write for the Sydney Symphony – five substantial pieces since 1995. They were very willing to fund a concerto for Amy, and following its premiere in 2012, Amy and I approached them about their commissioning a

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221 Ibid.
222 Ibid.
223 Ibid.
double concerto for her and the Scottish percussionist Colin Currie. This has recently been completed; titled *Frog and Star Cycle*, and will have its premiere with the SSO in July 2016.”

In the case of the saxophone, Edward’s composition style is largely based around collaboration with the performer. In reference to the composition of *Full Moon Dances*, Edwards recounts how he and Amy Dickson “exchanged hundreds of emails with questions and answers” and met occasionally for Dickson to play the solo line as it developed. The collaboration effected the development of the concerto as Dickson encouraged and revealed to Edwards the potential of the saxophone: “She wanted to be challenged to the limit and beyond, and encouraged me to explore the full virtuosic potential of the instrument as well as its capacity for lyricism and profundity. I was further encouraged by hearing Amy perform my oboe concerto *Bird Spirit Dreaming* (2002) on soprano saxophone with the Canberra Symphony. I knew then that I could write what I felt without worrying about the limitations of either instrument or performer. I went for it with great gusto, exploiting the extremes of range and velocity, and she negotiated them all, seemingly without effort.” Such was the effectiveness of collaboration and correspondence in the development of this work that “only one or two phrases had to be altered to make them sound more effective”.

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224 Edwards, "An Interview with Ross Edwards."
225 Ibid.
226 Ibid.
227 Ibid.
The use of dramatic and theatrical elements is something that Edward’s has employed in both concertos for saxophone. In *Full Moon Dances* Edwards and Dickson “discussed giving the concerto a theatrical dimension and devised plans for lighting, movement and costume”. 228

**Duration**

As an extension to the investigation into the creative process, participants were asked about the length of time taken to compose their works for saxophone.

Duration of the composition process varied from one composer to the next, as one would predict from the diversity in composition styles and techniques. Edwards is unsure of actual time taken to compose a work for saxophone, but he states that the process has become easier as he has become more familiar with the instrument. He has found the saxophone a natural instrument to compose for, and the ability to work with a performer in the calibre of Dickson has also simplified the process: “Having a performer like Amy to work with helps enormously, of course. I seem to have a natural facility with wind instruments, and the saxophone, with a uniformity of timbre throughout its range, makes it much easier to compose for than the other winds. It’s actually easier to write for saxophone than string quartet, notwithstanding my long experience with that medium.” 229

Orlovich states how each piece varies, but overall the composing is normally a quick process. He will take as much time as he is given, but has composed works in as little

228 Ibid.
229 Ibid.
time as a week or two: “I’ve often written a piece say in a week or two because I’ve had to. Perhaps an opportunity’s come up and it’s a really good one but I don’t have much time so I can actually get it done and I’m happy with it.”

Interestingly, longer timeframes can be more difficult: “Sometimes if I’m given like a year in advance then I’d probably give myself more of a hard time because I’m thinking I can get even a better start than this and oh I’ve got another nine months I’m sure I can come up with even better than this so I’d probably waste a few ideas and maybe even overwork something if I’m given a bit too much time.”

Orlovich comments that the average duration of his compositions are “a couple of months”, referring to a five-minute piece for saxophone and piano; “Two months would be very comfortable and good.” If however the work involves orchestration, then that would be a longer process, as “you’ve got like a week just to proof read parts.”

Hindson spends proportionally more time thinking about the composition than actual notation of the score. Typically this preparation time is three to five months, in which time he is pondering “…ideas and trying to work out what the structure is, what am I going to do, what’s this piece about, and what’s some good things that sound amazing.” The actual process of writing for Hindson takes no longer than a month, and he clarifies this as “it’s not five days a week, because I don’t have that luxury. So, you’ll spend a lot of time thinking about it before hand, so when I say a month, that’s a month

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230 Orlovich, "Interview with Matthew Orlovich."
231 Ibid.
232 Ibid.
233 Ibid.
234 Matthew Hindson, ibid., 24th June 2015.
actually of putting notes down.”

Again, Hindson explains this example of duration is characteristic of his music for instrument and piano, whereas scoring for saxophone concerto and large ensemble is much more time consuming: “I mean, instrument and piano is different from instrument and orchestra. If I was writing a saxophone concerto for the wind symphony for example, it’d probably take me a lot longer, because I don’t really know that much yet about wind symphonies…But then some pieces will take a couple of years, because you’ve got to do more research.”

Abbott recognises herself as a slow composer. She points to her commitments with work and family as part of the reason for this, however “even before a family and a job, I’ve never been fast… So I’m always talking in months, I’m never talking in weeks.” She is quick to gather her initial material: “That’s not ever a problem”– but she provides herself with time to allow the piece to develop: “I really like to sit with the material for a long time, because it sort of develops in my head over time and either I’m able to sort of create more sophisticated or meaningful pieces with more time.” Abbott comments that she requests as much time as possible as the “composing time is always scant”. Similarly to the other composers, a distinction remains between composition time of a short saxophone and piano piece versus saxophone and orchestra. Furthermore, the longer a composition, the longer the compositional process: “it really depends on the length of the piece. A five-minute saxophone and piano piece isn’t going to take as long as a twenty

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235 Ibid.
236 Ibid.
237 Ibid.
238 Ibid.
239 Ibid.
minute one, and then if it’s for orchestra and saxophone for example that’s a big deal, depending on the duration.”

Kats-Chernin discusses her concerto for Michael Duke, providing insight into duration of composition for saxophone in an orchestral setting. She states the whole process would normally take four to six months, however she clarifies that she is unable to work on the composition every day: “I have concerts in between, I perform, I travel, I need to have space and time over a period of time.” Furthermore, Kats-Chernin met a delay whilst waiting for files from a third party, resulting in a gap in composition. This has provided a challenge for her as she seeks to reengage with the work: “but when you had a gap and written two operas in the mean time, I feel like I’m seeing an old friend again and I have to reconnect and find new ground. I might change my mind about certain things and then sometimes I say what was I thinking? And I just change everything. But sometimes I’ll look at it and I just think oh no it’s actually ok, everything was fine, except for a few things.”

Similarly to the other composers, Broadstock comments how different ensemble settings vary composition duration quite widely. He states a work for instrument and piano is a “little bit more easy to deal with” whereas a work with orchestral accompaniment is “kind of a lot slower, because you just have to take time to go through the whole thing, so

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240 Ibid.
241 Elena Kats-Chernin, ibid., 10/07/15.
242 Ibid.
you kind of, practical elements involved. You’ve got more instruments to write for.” In the case of an instrumental concerto, “it can be anything from months to a year”. In contrast, Broadstock discusses the creation of a work for saxophone and piano, *Not too near...not too far*, written for Barry Cockroft, which took a month to complete. “It just depends” summarises Broadstock’s thoughts on factors influencing duration of composition. Availability of time, focus, ease of creative flow all determines the length of composition. In reference to his concerto for Duke, Broadstock comments “it was very difficult for some reason, and sometimes the music, its got nothing to do with the instrument, its just got to do with sometimes that cold creative flow, its just not easy. And, so it’s a bit of a struggle sometimes to get it out.”
The future of the saxophone in Australia

Participants were asked questions pertaining to their opinion of the future of the saxophone in Australia.

These included the following:

1. Do you intend to compose for the saxophone in a classical setting in the future?
2. In your opinion what is the future of the classical saxophone in Australia?
3. Is there anything else you would like to add?

Composition in the future

The composers were in agreement that they would compose for the saxophone in the future, with some revealing they are currently already underway in this process. Broadstock can foresee composing for Barry Cockroft and Michael Duke once again in the future, and “…I guess for anyone else for that matter. It all depends on that sort of opportunity that comes up.” As he argued before, with the current quantity and quality of composers paralleled with performers in the same vein, such opportunities will become increasingly apparent: “there’s certainly a great number of composers now writing, so both of those two players (Cockroft and Duke) in particular, you know have large opportunities to have pieces written for them.”

246 Ibid.
247 “Brenton Broadstock”.

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Kats-Chernin is emphatic she will continue to compose for the saxophone and has already begun this process. As discussed, she is currently underway on an alto saxophone concerto for Michael Duke. Furthermore she comments that two of her operas that are currently underway also include saxophone: “Mind you there’s also another opera being recorded for television right now. And yet saxophone is part of that too, that’s a mixture of tenor and alto… my opera now in Germany, Snow White, it also has alto saxophone. So I’m placing saxophone everywhere…”248 Kats-Chernin is actively attempting to place saxophone in her orchestral works, which, as discussed, can be problematic at times as “not every orchestra says yes, so I’m having my fight over my next big piece.” Kats-Chernin comes to the realisation that every work she has competed this year has included saxophone: “but actually I didn’t even think about it, but it’s true, it’s amazing— except for flute concerto.”249

Abbott is assured she will continue to compose for the saxophone, being an instrument she has a great affinity for; “Yes, absolutely, I love it. I think it’s a really versatile, colourful instrument.”250 Although she currently has no immediate plans, having “other pieces on the boil”, Abbott finds the notion that she wouldn’t compose for the saxophone in the future troublesome: “but yes I would be sad to think I wasn’t going to write another saxophone piece, that would be very sad.”251 Of interest to her is composition for the saxophone quartet or saxophone ensemble, a setting for which she has never composed,

248 Kats-Chernin, "Interview with Elena Kats-Chernin."
249 Ibid.
251 Ibid.
however she’s “not busting to do that, but I feel that would be good at some point, but I do like the idea of saxophone as a solo instrument.”\textsuperscript{252}

Orlovich similarly is looking to compose for the saxophone quartet, again because “its something I haven’t done yet.”\textsuperscript{253} He cites Michael Duke as compelling him to compose for saxophone in this format: “I do have a sown seed in my mind from Michael Duke who suggested some of my SATB choir music might be good for saxophone quartet. As soon as he mentioned it I thought I’ll have to keep that in mind and so whether or not I use the SATB music that I’ve written for sax quartet or just write some more sax quartet, I’m certain that I’ll be writing some soon, because I’m fired up for it, I’ve just got to find some time and space to get it done.”\textsuperscript{254} Having composed two concertos for saxophone thus far, Orlovich is determined to continue writing in this setting, which combines his passion for saxophone and orchestration: “I also like the idea of writing concertos because it kind of combines orchestration which I love and so I imagine I might not stop at two, I think I’ve got to do more than that. They take a while to do, but yeah they’re good fun.”\textsuperscript{255}

Hindson is contemplating the potential to compose for the saxophone in the future. He has been requested by Michael Duke to compose a concerto for the instrument, and he states “the next piece I’m going to write will be saxophone concerto for Michael.”\textsuperscript{256}

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\textsuperscript{252} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{253} Matthew Orlovich, ibid., 5th June 2015, Sydney Conservatorium of Music.
\textsuperscript{254} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{255} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{256} Matthew Hindson, ibid., 24th June 2015.
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However, uncertainty is exhibited in Hindson’s responses, as he ponders the future of his composition for saxophone: “part of me feels like, well I’ve already written heaps of music for saxophone, why would I do another one?” He continues to remark “I’ve never written for the baritone saxophone, except in the quartet, maybe that’s something I could do in the future, I don’t know, but I think writing a concerto, as long as it gets played, that’d be really quite cool, so I’ll wait and see what happens.”\(^{257}\) This process of contemplation is underway, as Hindson reveals he is pondering potential material for a concerto for Duke: “funnily enough I am going down to Tasmania to do a workshop with some students for the TSO and I wrote a little teaching piece and it’s just like a whole lot of orchestration experiments. But, it actually sounds like the orchestra part of a concerto without the soloist, and I thought, well that’s interesting, because it’s like 10 minutes long, and I thought ooh, that could be the backing of the saxophone concerto, and it might actually work really well. I’ve got to fix it up a bit however.”\(^{258}\)

Edwards has recently been immersed in composition for the saxophone. As discussed, he has recently completed a double concerto, *Frog and Star Cycle*, for Amy Dickson, Colin Currie and the Sydney Symphony.\(^{259}\) Edwards is also underway on a commission for Musica Viva’s 2017 Sydney Festival involving Dickson and British string quartet ‘Elias’.\(^{260}\) This work will consist of a “…a repository of songs and dances which can be played right through (about 30 minutes) or used as a resource from which single items or groups can be drawn.” He also comments “Amy intends to tour it internationally with

\(^{257}\) Ibid.
\(^{258}\) Ibid.
\(^{259}\) Ibid.
\(^{260}\) Edwards, "An Interview with Ross Edwards."
both the Elias Quartet and other ensembles”. Whether or not Edwards will continue to compose for the saxophone is unclear at this point, as he highlights once his new work is completed, “I will have composed about 85 minutes of saxophone music, so I might give it a rest for a while!”

**Future Prospects**

The participants foresee a bright future for the saxophone in Australia. When asked the above question, Edwards states “exciting… As more and more works are written and some of them make it into the repertoire I don’t see why it wouldn’t become as popular an instrument of the concert hall as the flute or clarinet.” Broadstock believes the popularity of the classical saxophone will continue to grow as more and more saxophonists are trained, which in turn will result in development of repertoire: “they’re just going to keep on growing, they’re going to obviously produce students, and they’re all going to want to play saxophone music.” He states the classical saxophone will exist as long as the players exist, and “I don’t think that’s going to change in the next 30, 40, 50 years. Because … there is a much greater interest in classical saxophone in recent years”.

Broadstock also points to the relatively young age of the instrument as appealing to future composers: “The great thing about writing for saxophone is that because it is a relatively new instrument, you know, 150 years, a lot of the music is kind of new, which is fantastic, so it’s one of those instruments that’s kind of really nice to

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261 Ibid.
262 Ibid.
263 Broadstock, "Brenton Broadstock".
264 "Interview with Brenton Broadstock."
write for because it is still kind of finding its way in the world as an instrument, so I think has huge potential."\[^{265}\] Abbott argues, “I think the future of classical saxophone in Australia is probably pretty bright”. She sees this potential in a collection of talented and motivated teachers and performers who are connecting with composers, creating a situation where the saxophone is being promoted: these saxophonists are “connected to composers, who are bugging composers to write, and commissioning, and being very mindful of the composers needs I would say; in giving multiple performances, or recordings that’s could have broadcasts. I think there are really good performer-composer relationships that are out there that work well to promote the saxophone.”\[^{266}\] Furthermore, Abbott sees the saxophone as an attractive instrument, and foresees a development of the repertoire in the future: “it’s an instrument that most people can relate to in some way, and I’m thinking audiences here. I think you can imagine in the next 50-100 years Australia could have a really huge base of great saxophone music.”\[^{267}\] Hindson ponders the present foundation of the saxophone in Australia, discussing the institutionalisation of the instrument in universities, the saxophone quartet as an established medium, the range of motivated performers looking for opportunities, the World Saxophone Congress, and the emergence of Australian saxophone concertos.\[^{268}\] With this present situation, he ponders whether the saxophone will continue in growth or remain as it is: “Have we reached, have we reached peak saxophone, you know the peak saxophone time? Is it going to plateau, or is it going to grow, or is it going to go backwards? I don’t think it’ll go backwards… So I think it’s firmly established, whether it grows anymore, I don’t

\[^{265}\] Ibid.
\[^{266}\] Abbott, "Interview with Katy Abbott."
\[^{267}\] Ibid.
\[^{268}\] Matthew Hindson, ibid., 24th June 2015, Sydney Conservatorium of Music.
Hindson desires to see the saxophone become increasingly embraced in the broader musical community, in such settings as Musica Viva tours, as this is a key to sustained growth: “I hope that the audience for the saxophone music continues to grow. That will ensure a bright future.”

Kats-Chernin is optimistic of the saxophone growing in popularity and use, which is currently “multiplying at an amazing rate… (and) is gaining momentum everywhere.” She points to the proficient saxophonists that exist within Australia as the primary reason for this, as they continually inspire composition: “it’ll be silly for composers not to use saxophone, it’s just there, people play it so well, and sensationaly well.”

Ibid.  
Ibid.  
Elena Kats-Chernin, ibid., 10/07/15.  
Ibid.
Conclusion

This study has outlined some of the key motives and methodology for modern Australian composition for the classical saxophone. Due to the scope and resources of the project, the number of participants involved limits the study, and yet a convincing argument has been made which can serve as a basis for further exploration. Each participant was interviewed independently and yet offered for the most part unanimous arguments over key issues of why and how compositions are occurring. It has thus been revealed decisively that the saxophone has grown and become established as a modern classical instrument within Australia over the last 25 years. Indeed, the composers have revealed the saxophone is no longer an obscure instrument in the classical genre, either personally, or within the wider musical community. The saxophone is now part of the composer’s normal palate of sound scape.

The centrality of the Australian virtuosic performers in motivating the composers writing for the instrument has been illustrated in depth. This inspiration has included commissions based on admiration, mutual agreements, and monetary imbursement. Having built upon the foundation set by earlier pioneers, both within, and outside Australia, these modern performers are creating new ground in promoting and expanding the saxophone as a classical instrument. This process will only continue as new students come under the mentoring and inspiration of these proficient performers and teachers.

The unique and attractive characteristics of the saxophone have also been demonstrated as compelling for composers, including the sonority and the availability of a high level of technical dexterity; characteristics which composers are still expanding and challenging.
It has been revealed that the composers often have diverse methods of compositional styles and processes resulting in creation of works for the saxophone that have been performed recently.

The composers were unanimous in their optimistic view of the future of the classical saxophone in Australia. Due to the positive nature of the growing popularity of the classical saxophone and the enthusiastic willingness of some of the nation’s most esteemed composers to write for it, I hope this study should encourages both saxophonists and other composers to continue in the pursuit of more musical excellence in this instrumental medium. This should include increased vigour and excellence in performance, composition and collaboration between both.
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APPENDIX A: ETHICS APPROVAL

Research Integrity
Human Research Ethics Committee

Friday, 8 May 2015

Dr Michael Liston Duke
Woodwind Unit, Sydney Conservatorium of Music
Email: michael.duke@sydney.edu.au

Dear Michael Liston

I am pleased to inform you that the Conservatorium of Music Low Risk Subcommittee has approved your project entitled “Behind the scenes of contemporary Australian composition for the classical saxophone. A study of selected composers and current trends since 1990.”

Details of the approval are as follows:

Project No.: 2015/164
Approval Date: 08th May 2015
First Annual Report Due: 08th May 2016
Authorised Personnel: Duke Michael Liston; Reid Anna; Watts Simon;

Documents Approved:

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HREC approval is valid for four (4) years from the approval date stated in this letter and is granted pending the following conditions being met:

Condition/s of Approval

- Continuing compliance with the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Research Involving Humans.

Research Integrity
Research Portfolio
Level 6, Jane Foss Russell
The University of Sydney
NSW 2006 Australia

T +61 2 8627 8111
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sydney.edu.au

ABN 15 211 513 464
CRICOS 00028A
• Provision of an annual report on this research to the Human Research Ethics Committee from the approval date and at the completion of the study. Failure to submit reports will result in withdrawal of ethics approval for the project.

• All serious and unexpected adverse events should be reported to the HREC within 72 hours.

• All unforeseen events that might affect continued ethical acceptability of the project should be reported to the HREC as soon as possible.

• Any changes to the project including changes to research personnel must be approved by the HREC before the research project can proceed.

• Note that for student research projects, a copy of this letter must be included in the candidate’s thesis.

Chief Investigator / Supervisor’s responsibilities:

1. You must retain copies of all signed Consent Forms (if applicable) and provide these to the HREC on request.

2. It is your responsibility to provide a copy of this letter to any internal/external granting agencies if requested.

Please do not hesitate to contact Research Integrity (Human Ethics) should you require further information or clarification.

Yours sincerely

Dr Jennifer Rowley
Chair
Conservatorium of Music Low Risk Subcommittee

This HREC is constituted and operates in accordance with the National Health and Medical Research Council’s (NHMRC) National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007), NHMRC and Universities Australia Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research (2007) and the CPMP/ICH Note for Guidance on Good Clinical Practice.
APPENDIX B: PARTICIPANT INFORMATION STATEMENT

Behind the scenes of contemporary Australian composition for the classical saxophone. A study of selected composers and current trends since 1990

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION STATEMENT

1. What is this study about?

You are invited to take part in a research study that aims to investigate the growth in Australian repertoire for the classical saxophone since 1990 to examine the cause of the trend, how the works are being composed, and the implications of these factors for the future of the saxophone in Australia. As a result of the findings, it is believed that this study will show the trend to be indicative of the saxophone’s gradual acceptance into the classical world of music in Australia.

You have been invited to participate in this study because of your significant contribution to repertoire for the saxophone in a concert setting. This Participant Information Statement tells you about the research study. Knowing what is involved will help you decide if you want to take part in the study. Please read this sheet carefully and ask questions about anything that you don’t understand or want to know more about.

Participation in this research study is voluntary. So it’s up to you whether you wish to take part or not.

By giving consent to take part in this study you are telling us that you:

- Understand what you have read
- Agree to take part in the research study as outlined below
- Agree to the use of your personal information as described.

You will be given a copy of this Participant Information Statement to keep.

2. Who is running the study?

The study is being carried out by Simon Watts and will form the basis for the degree of MMus(Performance) at The University of Sydney under the supervision of Dr Michael Duke, Senior Lecturer in Saxophone at the Sydney Conservatorium of Music.
(3) **What will the study involve for me?**

As part of the study, participants will be asked to attend no more than a one-hour interview in an agreed-upon public place. During the interview, participants will be asked questions regarding their individual compositional processes for the saxophone. With your consent, the interviews will be filmed on video camera to ensure accurate transcription of advice and will be published in a thesis as part of the Master of Music (performance) degree.

In the case of interstate participants, interviews can be conducted over the telephone, or via video conferencing at a mutually-convenient time. If you agree to take part in this study, please respond via email, providing your phone details and convenient times for the researcher to call you. Alternatively, you may opt to contact Dr Michael Duke to organise a time for an interview. Phone interviews will be recorded with your consent only to ensure accurate transcription and the results of the interview will also be published with your written consent.

The advantage of the phone interview is to ensure that the interview takes only an hour of participants’ time and follows the same pattern as the interviews conducted in person. This is therefore the preferred method over a questionnaire, which may take more time for the participants. Furthermore, music is a subjective entity that cannot always be explained fully in writing and it is much more beneficial to gain information aurally that can later be transcribed.

There will be an opportunity for you to review interview transcripts as well as final publication of the thesis. At your request, a meeting can be arranged at an agreed-upon public location to review any written material pertaining to your interview.

(4) **How much of my time will the study take?**

Each participant will be asked to meet with the researcher for a maximum of one hour only at their own convenience. Video conferences and phone interviews will also be limited to one hour.

(5) **Do I have to be in the study? Can I withdraw from the study once I’ve started?**

Being in this study is completely voluntary - you are not under any obligation to consent and - if you do consent - you can withdraw at any time without affecting your relationship with the researches or anyone else at The University of Sydney.

In the case of participants who attend interviews in person, you may stop the interview at any time if you do not wish to continue, the audio recording will be erased and the information provided will not be included in the study.

If you decide to take part in the study and then change your mind later, you are free to withdraw at any time. You can do this by email or phone correspondence to the researcher or the supervisor.

**INTERVIEWS**

You are free to stop the interview at any time. Unless you say that you want us to keep them, any recordings will be erased and the information you have provided will not be included in the study results. You may also refuse to answer any questions that you do not wish to answer during the interview.

"Behind the scenes of contemporary Australian composition for the classical saxophone: A study of selected composers and current trends since 1990". Version 3: 23/4/15
(6) Are there any risks or costs associated with being in the study?

Aside from giving up your time, we do not expect that there will be any risks or costs associated with taking part in this study.

(7) Are there any benefits associated with being in the study?

We cannot guarantee or promise that you will receive any direct benefits from being in the study.

(8) What will happen to information about me that is collected during the study?

The types of information that will be collected and used in the study are the thought processes, opinions and methods of composing for the saxophone in a classical setting.

Video and/or audio recording will be used to transcribe interviews only for the purpose of interpretation, analysis and finally publication in the student’s thesis. Recordings themselves will not be published.

To give the findings credibility, you will be named as a participant in the thesis. You will also be identified and referenced for quotes for inclusion within the thesis.

Any personal information that may arise in interviews and/or correspondence will be kept confidential and you will have full access to any personal information that is collected for the study.

Any video/audio as well as transcriptions and subsequent analysis will be published in the student’s thesis. Data will be stored by the chief supervisor Dr Michael Duke.

By providing your consent, you are agreeing to us collecting personal information about you for the purposes of this research study. Your information will only be used for the purposes outlined in this Participant Information Statement, unless you consent otherwise.

Your information will be stored securely and will only be disclosed with your permission, except as required by law. Study findings may be published, and you will be identified in these publications if you decide to participate in this study.

(9) Can I tell other people about the study?

Yes, you are welcome to tell other people about the study.

(10) What if I would like further information about the study?

When you have read this information, Dr Michael Duke will be available to discuss it with you further and answer any questions you may have. If you would like to know more at any stage during the study, please feel free to contact Dr Michael Duke, Senior Lecture in Saxophone, +61404052975, michael.duke@sydney.edu.au

(11) Will I be told the results of the study?

"Behind the scenes of contemporary Australian composition for the classical saxophone A study of selected composers and current trends since 1990". Version 3. 23/4/15
You have a right to receive feedback about the overall results of this study. You can tell us that you wish to receive feedback by ticking the relevant box on the consent form. This feedback will be in the form of a one page lay summary. You will receive this feedback after the study is finished.

(12) What if I have a complaint or any concerns about the study?

Research involving humans in Australia is reviewed by an independent group of people called a Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC). The ethical aspects of this study have been approved by the HREC of the University of Sydney [INSERT protocol number once approval is obtained]. As part of this process, we have agreed to carry out the study according to the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007). This statement has been developed to protect people who agree to take part in research studies.

If you are concerned about the way this study is being conducted or you wish to make a complaint to someone independent from the study, please contact the university using the details outlined below. Please quote the study title and protocol number.

The Manager, Ethics Administration, University of Sydney:
- Telephone: +61 2 8627 8176
- Email: ro.humanethics@sydney.edu.au
- Fax: +61 2 8627 8177 (Facsimile)

This information sheet is for you to keep.
APPENDIX C: PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

Sydney Conservatorium of Music

ABN 15 211 513 464

Dr Michael Duke
Senior Lecturer in Saxophone

Room 1147
C41-Sydney Conservatorium of Music
The University of Sydney
NSW 2006 AUSTRALIA
Telephone: +61 2 9351 1436
Email: michael.duke@sydney.edu.au
Web: http://www.sydney.edu.au/

Behind the scenes of contemporary Australian composition for the classical saxophone. A study of selected composers and current trends since 1990

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

I, .............................................................. [PRINT NAME], agree to take part in this research study.

In giving my consent I state that:

✓ I understand the purpose of the study, what I will be asked to do, and any risks/benefits involved.

✓ I have read the Participant Information Statement and have been able to discuss my involvement in the study with the researchers if I wished to do so.

✓ The researchers have answered any questions that I had about the study and I am happy with the answers.

✓ I understand that being in this study is completely voluntary and I do not have to take part. My decision whether to be in the study will not affect my relationship with the researchers or anyone else at the University of Sydney now or in the future.

✓ I understand that I can withdraw from the study at any time.

✓ I understand that I may stop the interview at any time if I do not wish to continue, and that unless I indicate otherwise any recordings will then be erased and the information provided will not be included in the study. I also understand that I may refuse to answer any questions I don’t wish to answer.

✓ I understand that personal information about me that is collected over the course of this project will be stored securely and will only be used for purposes that I have agreed to. I understand that information about me will only be told to others with my permission, except as required by law.

“Behind the scenes of contemporary Australian composition for the classical saxophone. A study of selected composers and current trends since 1990”.
Version 3. 23/4/15
I understand that the results of this study may be published, and that I will be identified in these publications.

I consent to:

- Audio-recording
- Video-recording
- Being contacted about future studies
- Reviewing transcripts
- Being identified in the study

Would you like to receive feedback about the overall results of this study?

YES ☐  NO ☐

If you answered YES, please indicate your preferred form of feedback and address:

☐ Postal: __________________________________________

________________________________________

☐ Email: ________________________________________

________________________________________

Signature

________________________________________

PRINT name

________________________________________

Date

\* Behind the scenes of contemporary Australian composition for the classical saxophone. A study of selected composers and current trends since 1990*. 

Version 2. 24/3/15
Interview with Matthew Hindson

SW: Interview number two with Matthew Hindson on the 24th of June 2015. Thank you again for your time again Matthew. So the first question I had for you is why are you writing for the saxophone as a classical instrument?
MH: As opposed to?
SW: As opposed to a purely Jazz...
MH: Oh because I’m not a jazz composer, so my background is in classical music so that’s how I write, like I don’t have the facility to write for jazz, it’s completely different I think and completely different skills. So if you ask me to write a jazz piece for saxophone I wouldn’t even know what to do. So that’s yeah, that seems to answer that.
SW: Yeah, so that your training and that’s obviously just how it evolves from that.
MH: That’s right. I grew up playing violin and violas and played in orchestras so my degrees are in classical music composition, so that’s what I do. Despite using some influences, and I don’t think I’ve ever used influences from jazz, I have used influences from other sorts of music, as you’d know, but it’s always meant to be concert music that you sit down and listen to, mind you most jazz is like that too, but its definitely within a classical music tradition.
SW: Hmm, and what do you think draws you to…
MH: Oh sorry, one more question, one more answer. And the saxophonists with whom I work are also from the classical tradition, so yeah.
SW: Sure, and why do you think, what is it about the saxophone that has drawn you to write for it?
MH: Ok, so in a number of cases it’s the player. So ‘In Search of Ecstasy’ for example it was a player, Deborah Kemp at, when I was teaching at MLC School and she needed a HSC piece, and there weren’t very many- no ones that were suitable for her- so the opportunity was there and I knew that she was going to play it. And I thought, well you know there seems to be an increasing number of saxophone players around. So working with her, I’ve done arrangements and written pieces for James Nightingale. So, ah, did I write…No Loretta Palmeiro she performed it, she recorded it, but she didn’t play it, I didn’t write for her. Sorry my memories not great, these things, all these things are some time ago. So yeah, you’ve got all these saxophonists who firstly are not just willing to play your music, they want to play your music, and as a composer that’s a great situation to be in, so that’s a great motivator. And even here, Michael Duke, always asking me for a saxophone concerto, so, or a piece for sax orchestra, so the players tend to be very proactive and they’ll play your music, so you’re more likely to do that than something else I think, all being equal, because there’s more chance of it being performed, and recorded. And secondly, and there are many saxophonists around, and they’re looking for things to do.
SW: Great, so primarily the player, is there anything to do with the instrument, like tone colour or technical capabilities that…
MH: Well, it does have a vast range of technical capabilities, and that’s something that you learn about when you’re learning to write for saxophone, what works and what doesn’t. It’s capable of very soft stuff and also the very loud stuff. And I think also, you
know asked about Jazz, but there is the possibility the saxophone sounds good doing a wide range of things, you know, it can do sort of funky stuff, rhythmic things, it can do very lyrical things and it sounds, the instrument itself sounds really wonderful with everything like that and in between. And it can be quite an inherently a loud instrument, as well, like if you do key, no slap tongue, you know you can really hear it, where as if you do it on a flute it’s a bit more subtle. So I think it does, it has a great sense of power but it also is capable of great beauty. So it has a wide range of expressive possibilities.

SW: Sure, great.

MH: So it just means you can write more than one piece for it (Laughs). Like there’s a wide range of things, plus with all the different instruments in the family, so you write for soprano sax you’re going to write a different piece to if you write for baritone sax even if you’re using many of the same techniques, it’s just a different colour. And then there is the saxophone quartet, and I mean it seems to be from, I mean maybe a brass ensemble is similar but no, it’ like the wind equivalent of a string quartet- four instruments pretty much the same but different. So, and again there are all these saxophone quartets around looking for things, so it all adds up to a lot of attractive things for composers to bear in mind.

SW: hmm, Sure. When you’re writing with the extended techniques and things like that, how are you…like where is your information coming from on what’s possible and what works?

MH: Ah, well some of was from dealing with players and talking to players. There were you know, there’s those textbooks like ‘Hello Mr. Sax’, and, did Londeix did he write that one? I can’t remember anymore. And there’s a few other ones, but actually largely it was players, because, I mean there’s books, yeah there’s books on multiphonics you can look up and so on and so forth. But players, no, you know you tend to know what they can do, and like we, here at the Conservatorium we run, I make sure every couple of years Michael Duke for example gives a class on how to write for saxophone, and in fact every year with the first years, Katia Beaujolais does you know extended techniques for the saxophone for you know, two lessons and plays through their piece, so all that stuff refreshes what’s possible. And you know I remember when circular breathing first started to happen, you know people didn’t use to do it before I don’t think, and then I think Jim started showing me, or someone else was showing me and I thought, whoa that’s really interesting. So the techniques seem to be developing, though there they are sort of set I suppose, but the standard is getting increasingly good, and you have people like Amy Dickson playing Ross Edward’s concerto in the Opera House, and the John Adam’s saxophone concerto, so yeah there’s lots of possibilities there, and you’re hearing what people do and that’s the best way to learn I think.

SW: Hmm, Great. So in your opinion why do you think other composers might be writing for the saxophone in the same sort of concert setting?

MH: Umm, I think because they’ve heard what other people have done, and think it’s, and they’re really impressed by what the possibilities are, and that’s in addition to all the things I’ve already said- there are players out there looking for repertoire, providing opportunities, and they’re of a really good standard, and as a composer you look for opportunities, particularly if you’re an emerging composer in particular, you really are, you’ve got to be hungry and go out there and make contacts and make connections. And then there are people that think things like Reed Music run by Barry Cockroft, and people know well ok, they’ve got this entire infrastructure set up for woodwind, but it’s really for saxophone most of all, so if I write a piece and send it to him, then it’ll get
published, so then we have all this access to my music being out there, much more than
if for example if I wrote a piece for bassoon and piano, even, or for flute and piano. I
write a piece for saxophone and piano, well these days there’s actually much more
competition because there’s a lot, a lot of music now, but back in the day there wasn’t
much, so you could write an amazing piece and you have all these players to take it up.
Now there’s a bit more competition, but having that infrastructure to support you,
through a publisher, is again an attractive proposition for a composer when they’re
considering if they’re going to write a piece.
SW: Yeah, great. Are you aware also, in an increase in the number and quality of
compositions for the saxophone in this same setting?
MH: Yeah, it’s exploded, over the last twenty years, the numbers have just increased,
and there are people like Matthew Orlovich or Stuart Greenbaum who are, write a lot
for saxophone, so they’re contributing a lot of material there, but I think its pretty broad
in number, and I would say, I don’t know but, just from, this is completely anecdotal,
people including saxophones in chamber pieces, or even orchestral pieces, I mean
orchestral pieces is a bit more rare, but including them in a chamber music context, I
mean you have the Brandenburg orchestra with Christina Leonard playing in it. So I
think the quality of pieces yes, which includes saxophone is increasing, I think, but
although I don’t know, but I presume it is, because there’s more music being written. It
never seems to stop, which is good, yeah.
SW: So do you think this is a trend which indicative of the saxophone becoming more
popular and accepted as a classical instrument?
MH: Yeah, that’s what I was just saying, absolutely, in the context, definitely. If you
want to write a piece and put a saxophone in it, no one would blink an eye, because
there are great players around and the instrument has a reputation now. But there’s
quality music written for it, and you’re going to get whatever you write played well. I
remember many years ago, there’s a composer that I was working with in my role at the
school, and that person was writing a piece, and we said well we don’t have French
horns, can you put saxophones in instead, and they’re like I don’t know, I’m not really
sure about that, and the composers most insistent that they want the saxophone played
with a French sound, not like a jazzy sort of sax, and I was like no, actually, like you
can say whatever you want, they won’t put in growl tones in everything if its not
appropriate, unless you mark it on there, and I don’t think that would happen much, I
think that would be a really quite rare attitude these days. It’s a much more accepted
instrument. Particularly in a chamber and solo context.
SW: So when you’re writing, what’s your target audience for saxophone?
MH: Target audience… well I do think of the player and I think about what they’re
good at, and I think about other players, and I want music to be enjoyable to play lots of
the time, but I mean not exclusively, I mean the music itself comes first, and if an
audience doesn’t like it, well I can’t help that. It’s always a thing as a composer, if you
start writing for an audience, then it’s a bit of a problem. You’re better off just writing
the best piece you can, and then you know, see who likes it and who doesn’t, after its
done, yeah. So, yeah, I’m trying to work with the player, not necessarily for an
audience, but actually the main audience is myself.
SW: Ok. What is involved in the process of composition for the saxophone?
MH: Well, it depends, its different on each piece, and it depends on the instrumentation.
Depends on the context in which its being played-am I writing for a student’s HSC? Or
am I writing for a Musica Viva tour, you know you’ve got to know the technical
possibilities of the player for whom you’re writing it…the group. You’ve got a whole lot of starting points and also talking to them, what sort of piece are they looking for. I mean is it in memory of someone, is it a celebratory piece, is it just a piece to write whenever you want. So you’ve got all those sort of things, and that look, these concerns are common to writing a piece for any instrumentation. There’s nothing particularly special about writing for the saxophone as opposed to writing for any other instrument. It’s just another instrument, it’s another sound, set of sound sources, and another set of technical possibilities that you deal with. So, but, you do need to know, you do need to as a composer the first time you write for it, you’ve got to investigate the range and the different characters and the tone in different registers and things like, things that I still don’t have a handle on, like the tonguing. How fast really can people really tongue, is it all single tonguing, is it double tonguing, like, I mean I may have known it once I’ve forgotten it now. So I’d want to refresh myself on those sort of things, so then if I do have musical ideas then, that come to me, then I can think, ah well actually no that’s not going to work on the instrument, maybe if I did this instead. What are the strengths of the instrument, what is it going to sound good doing? It’s important to work, for any composer, to work with the strengths. I mean if you work against the instrument, you might get a different effect I suppose, but the piece more than likely won’t sound very good.

SW: You mentioned writing for specific performer. When you’re writing for them, are you workshopping with them?

MH: Ah, sometimes. It, yeah it depends on the player, but, its hard to know actually because if, I think it’s a good thing to do, but often what I like to slot throughout the music and then we’ll play through it, and that doesn’t sound any good, what about this, and, I think its always good to be open to performer suggestions as a composer. They might say, well this is ok, but what about if I did it like this? Ooh that’s interesting, mind you I don’t think it’ll work because that sort of comes out of this figure, but lets, I’ll think about that for later. And the funny thing is, you know, when you are working with a performer, or, often they’ll warm up, and they’ll do these things, and it’s like, what’s that?! What’s that you’ve just done? That’s incredible! That might find your way into a piece as well. And again, why are they doing that? Because that’s what performers are good at and there getting ready, and they’re just noodling around on what they’re good at, and typically that sounds pretty good. But yes, there might be specific things, like how good are you at singing and playing? Or, for example, see there are technical questions like, ok so if I’m playing down here and I really want to, have you got…how many alternate fingerings do you have for this note? Oh, you don’t have any? And occasionally I do get emails from people, students saying, because there’s a D in In Search for Ecstasy, and apparently there’s no alternate fingering for that, and I didn’t know. But sometimes they say that, but then other people seem to manage it, so I’m not quite sure, you know, I think its different from player to player. So, Beethoven said, oh one of, there’s a story that a violinist said to Beethoven, look your music’s really hard, he said do you think I think about your puny instrument when I’m writing my music? So the music does have to come first, but I think that, I think that yeah, if you can work with the player it’s a good thing.

SW: And how long, I know it changes depending on the context, but on average how long would it take you to write a piece?

MH: It’s impossible to say, but I mean no longer than a month. For, I mean, instrument and piano is different from instrument and orchestra. If I was writing a saxophone
concerto for the wind symphony for example, it’d probably take me a lot longer, because I don’t really know that much yet about wind symphonies, but yeah, maybe a month or two. But then some pieces will take a couple of years, because you’ve got to do more research and, just doesn’t work, I tend to be quite a fast writer.

SW: Yeah, that’s quite quick.

MH: But also it depends, when I say a month, its not five days a week, because I don’t have that luxury. So, you’ll spend a lot of time thinking about it before hand, so when I say a month, that’s a month actually of putting notes down, but you’ll think about it, I typically think about it for like three or four months, five months even before I actually start writing it. Just getting ideas and trying to work out what the structure is, and what am I going to do, and what’s this piece about, and what’s some good things that sound amazing.

SW: Hmm, sure. You’ve already touched on this, and we’ve talked about, you know, the boom in the last twenty years or so, but in your opinion, what do you think the future of the classical saxophone is in Australia.

MH: I don’t know, I don’t know. Look, because its institutionalised, its in the universities, you have the sax quartet as a established medium, I mean it was before, but even more established. You’ve got all these players out there wanting to do things. Have we reached, have we reached peak saxophone, you know the peak saxophone time? Is it going to plateau, or is it going to grow, or is it going to go backwards? I don’t think it’ll go backwards, although perhaps now, with the, there will be even more established, like a canon of Australian pieces. Like there’s a canon of violin pieces, you’re a saxophonist, do you think, there must be certain pieces that already get played more regularly than others.

SW: Certainly, yes.

MH: And then you get, you’re getting these concerto’s written and so forth, which gives you an even greater angle, and I don’t know, the international saxophone congress seems to be pretty amazing, a lot of people there. So I think it’s firmly established, whether it grows anymore, I don’t know, but I think there’s all these young players such as yourself coming through, and what are you going to do with it? I don’t know. It’d be really great to, it’d be really great to get to the stage where for example we have a saxophone quartet doing a Musica Viva tour, or you know, sax and piano doing a Musica Viva tour, and that’s seen as the done thing. You know, particularly saxophonists play so much contemporary music because they have to, and because they want to, but also because they have to, as contemporary become more accepted in their broader community, broader musical, audience community, I think, I hope that the audience for the saxophone music continues to grow. That will ensure a bright future.

SW: I hope so. You often arrange some of your other works for saxophone, or you’ve done a saxophone quartet. Is that because people are asking for it, or you just think it might work?

MH: Actually, some of those pieces, I just think this is going to work well on saxophone. Sometimes it’s people will ask for it, like Rush for example, Christina Leonard asked for it to be arranged, and because the range of the soprano is so close to the oboe, you write it for oboe you may’s well do it for saxophone because you’re more likely to get it played and it’ll probably sound good. So yeah, I do arrangements though, and sometimes its because people ask. But also because the players are there and I can try it out, I can send it off and say there’s this work, and also I’m also aware of these young saxophonists out there who are hungry for repertoire, and I’ll just do an
arrangement and maybe someone will play it. There’s some of the stuff that I don’t think anyone’s ever played, of mine, that I’ve done but I just did on spec, but its sort of fun to be honest. So, I just think if you, Peter Sculthorpe taught me this, and it really comes from Bach, that if you’re writing music which is about the music that’s not necessarily aligned to the particularly timbering instrument, and it’s a good piece, then why not do arrangements of them and you get it heard by more people, played by more people, its sort of a good thing. But, like, for example, In Search of Ecstasy, can I arrange that for other instruments, its pretty hard, because you know it requires the big fat sound, and what other instrument has that? And the range, and the facility? Not many. So perhaps that’s another reason why, I mean it’d be very hard for me to do an arrangement of that piece. I could do it for clarinet probably… oboe, pretty hard, flute-no way, horn-no, trumpet, no-oh maybe trumpet. So there are possibilities, but, I think the Ignition Positive for example, which I did initially write for trumpet- I arranged that for saxophone, so because its, again, it’s such a versatile instrument, it can do so many things, I think it lends itself to being arranged for. Because you’ve got a piece, and oh will that work for saxophone? Yeah, probably would, its much more that way than the other way around.

SW: I remember, so 2010 we went to China and we took Gameboy music, and I believe you arranged that for saxophone at that point? Because it’s originally clarinet…?
MH: No, no its originally saxophone quartet, yeah that’s from a piece called five pieces for saxophone quartet, which I later re-arranged for a piece called Video Game Dreaming, that yeah, that piece is originally composed for saxophone quartet, and then I did a version for clarinet and piano, because they were looking for HSC pieces and I thought, oh yes, that’d work. So yeah, the saxophone version came first.

did a version for clarinet and piano, because they were looking for HSC pieces and I thought, oh yes, that’d work. So yeah, the saxophone version came first.

SW: So we haven’t talked about your influences yet too much. So in a piece like that, there’s clearly popular music elements in it, and in a lot of your music.
MH: Well, that piece Gameboy music is based on Gameboy music, that’s what that’s influenced by, yeah.
SW: Yeah, so these elements coming out, are they just because that’s the music that you like listening to and…
MH: Yeah, particularly back… I was looking for my own voice, and I mean I had a voice, but I was looking for something that, I mean you’ll read this elsewhere, but I was, back in the 90’s when I was studying my masters, early 90’s there was a certain style of music you had to write in, so I thought I’d try it, and I did and couldn’t stand it, and I thought hang on, if I’m supposed to write like this as a composer I’m not interested, what music am I interested in? And it was death metal, and don’t forget death metal, that was really new then, and electronic music, early 90’s, like you know it only been around for about, you know, right on time was 1989, that was the thing that first number 1 dance hit. That was the sort of Kylie Minogue, Stock Aitken Waterman productions before then, but not really in this way. So that was the sort of music I was interested in, and so I though why… and I had done it before actually, in about 1990, I wrote a piece called Elvis, and the last movement was a house and it was for 12 singers, and the last movement was a house track for voices. And, but I thought well that’s the music that I want to listen to, I enjoy the virtuosity, I enjoy the engagement, I don’t, I’m not interested in the other stuff, I don’t want to write music like that. So, that’s why, and a lot of my Master’s I did spend a lot playing Nintendo, don’t tell Brenton, because he was my supervisor. But yeah, I was living in Victoria, and yeah, we had a Nintendo entertainment system, and I’d go down to the video shop and hire a cartridge and play it.
for days on end- I was thinking of my thesis at the time. But, so, from my perspective, you know, that music for example in Gameboy music, the music on those sort of video games then, the video consoles had a really distinctive character, and I wanted to make reference to that, because I’m always interested and always had been interested in music being relevant to us as Australians in contemporary society.

SW: Was that…at first was it a bit of a risk?

MH: Oh, it was a huge risk, no one did it, no one was doing that. I mean, there were composers like Carl Vine and Ian Shanahan, but you, oh not Ian Shanahan, Carl Vine and Graham Koehne doing things. You know Graham Koehne was doing his Powerhouse I think around that time, but I remember writing the piece called Chrissietina’s Magic Fantasy for two violins, and I was sitting down there and I was really using these elements of electronic dance music and death metal in that piece, that was the first one I really did that full on. I remember thinking no one else really does this, this isn’t the done thing. ’Cause there was very much, you know, a sort of music mafia at that time, you had to write in a certain way, or otherwise you didn’t get your music played. And no one did that, and I thought, well you know what, no one else does it, well I’m going to do it and if no one else likes it, then bad luck, they can just…”cause I want to hear this. And so they did it and people would say to me, with that piece for example that’s impossible, that’s impossible to play that and about 3 or 4 years later the students in year 9 students are playing it for their music exams. So there is, for me it was really a good sense of the merits of doing what you believe in rather than what you’re told. And I was told you had to write music in certain way and I rejected that and I wrote music the way I wanted to write it and you know it paid off. And I’m sort of known for the popular music influences in my music but actually a lot of my music doesn’t have that. There’s heaps that doesn’t but a lot of it does. And now days, I don’t consciously in most pieces set out to write music like this, or like this style or something, its just over the years- ‘cause don’t forget, that was, Chrissietina’s Magic fantasy is 21 years ago so that’s a long time. Those influences have just become part of me now. So I write a piece and yes you can trace it back. That’s a large part of my influences actually.

SW: Sure. Do you intend to compose for saxophone in the future?

Well as I said Michael Duke wants me to write a saxophone concerto and funnily enough I am going down to Tasmania to do a workshop with some students for the TSO and I wrote a little teaching piece and it’s just like a whole lot of orchestration experiments. And, but, it actually sounds like the orchestra part of a concerto without the soloist, and I thought, well that’s interesting, ‘cause its like 10 minutes long, and I thought ooh, ooh, that could be the backing of the saxophone concerto, I could put the saxophone, and it might actually work really well. So I’ve got to fix it up a bit but, yeah, so the next piece I’m going to write will be saxophone concerto for Michael, but who knows when that will happen, and I’ve got to write a few other pieces as well, like, I’m pretty booked up until 2018, so, it’s a bit hard to squeeze in a whole concerto, but id love to. I’d love to, I mean the problem is there’s all these really interesting things to do, and part of me feels like, well I’ve already written heaps of music for saxophone, why would I do another one? I’ve never written for the baritone saxophone, except in the quartet, maybe that’s something I could do in the future, I don’t know, but I think
writing a concerto, as long as it gets played, that’d be really quite cool, so I’ll wait and see what happens.
SW: That’s very exciting to hear. I’m sure it will get played.
MH: Well, I hope so. Because you know, I heard the John Adams concerto, was it last year? When I heard the John Adams saxophone concerto, I thought well id do something quite different than that, and even Ross’s music, I’d do something quite different. So that’s the exciting thing about being a composer, when you can imagine different possibilities. You think, yeah ok, and maybe the opportunity might arise where you can explore those different ideas.
SW: Excellent. So I think we’ve covered everything that I was after. Is there anything else you’d like to add?
MH: No.
SW: Great, well thanks very much for your time.
MH: Yeah, good luck with your research.
SW: Thank you.
Interview with Ross Edwards

1. Why are you writing for saxophone as a classical instrument?
After she’d won the Young Performers Award in 2004, Amy Dickson began corresponding with me. She was seeking to extend the “classical” repertoire of the saxophone and was hoping I might consider composing for her. I hadn’t seriously considered composing music for saxophone, although I’d written a part for the jazz saxophonist Sandy Evans in my Dawn Mantras (1999). Years later, my London publisher sent me one of Amy’s recordings. I was impressed and excited and immediately wanted to meet her. We met in Sydney soon after and started to plan a collaboration. I organized a commission to write her a concerto for alto saxophone and the SSO and this work, Full Moon Dances, was completed in 2011. Throughout the project Amy was hugely enthusiastic and helpful. We would meet occasionally and she would play bits of the solo part as it evolved. We also exchanged hundreds of emails with questions and answers. She wanted to be challenged to the limit and beyond, and encouraged me to explore the full virtuosic potential of the instrument as well as its capacity for lyricism and profundity. I was further encouraged by hearing Amy perform my oboe concerto Bird Spirit Dreaming (2002) on soprano saxophone with the Canberra Symphony. I knew then that I could write what I felt without worrying about the limitations of either instrument or performer. I went for it with great gusto, exploiting the extremes of range and velocity, and she negotiated them all, seemingly without effort. Only one or two phrases had to be altered to make them sound more effective. We discussed giving the concerto a theatrical dimension and devised plans for lighting, movement and costume. The piece has had at least ten performances, one of which has recently been released live on an ABC Classics CD which will later be taken up by Sony International. The making of Full Moon Dances has been fully documented in my article The Moon and I, which appears under Resources on my website www.rossedwards.com

2. Why do you think other composers are writing for saxophone in a classical setting?
I have to admit that until a few years ago I’d associated the saxophone more with smoke filled basements than concert halls. I’d heard the Ibert concerto a long time ago and considered it a lightweight, though effective, novelty, but with the emergence of energetic and tenacious virtuosi like Amy, who are attracting large followings, it’s no wonder the instrument is being extended into a classical setting. The rise of the concert saxophone is a similar phenomenon to the growth in popularity of percussion, especially marimba, which has taken place over several decades due to the tireless advocacy of such performers as Michael Askill and Synergy, Claire Edwardes, Evelyn Glennie and Colin Currie. The classical guitar, too, has reached vast new audiences as a result of John Williams, Tim Kain, Karin Schaupp and many others. The vibrant presence of “new” instruments in the concert hall has refreshed audiences and attracted new ones, just as Mozart and Weber did for the clarinet.

3. Are you aware of an increase in the number and quality of compositions for the saxophone in a classical setting?
Yes, and I’m also aware of their extraordinary diversity. One of Peter Sculthorpe’s last pieces, Island Song, was composed for Amy Dickson. I’m aware of Harrison Birtwistle’s Panic, but not yet heard it. I did hear the first performance of John Adams’ concerto last year. Other composers, like Brett Dean, have converted their own music, originally composed for other instruments, to be suitable for the saxophone. Amy has
done successful transcriptions of Philip Glass, Michael Nyman and John Tavener. Today’s composers are acquiring the same attitude as those of the Baroque towards arranging their own works for other instruments and ensembles. A few decades ago this practice would have been frowned upon, but today it’s seen as both healthy and practical. I’ve found that transcribing my own music for an instrument I’ve not had much experience with – e.g., marimba for guitar or saxophone – can be a helpful exercise in getting to know the less familiar instrument. Bach and Handel would’ve agreed.

4. If so, in your opinion, is this trend indicative of the instrument becoming more popular, marketable and accepted as a classical instrument?
Certainly. As more and more works are written and some of them make it into the repertoire I don’t see why it wouldn’t become as popular an instrument of the concert hall as the flute or clarinet.

5. What is the target audience of your compositions for saxophone?
I’m composing for, but not down to, as wide a slice of the musical community that is prepared to listen responsively. I’ve recently completed a double concerto, *Frog and Star Cycle*, which will be premiered in July 2016, for Amy Dickson, Colin Currie and the Sydney Symphony. Once again it will be a semi theatrical event as well as an ecological statement – Amy is an Earth Spirit (as in Full Moon Dances) and Colin a shaman who performs an age-old ritual of renewal by drumming the universe into existence. I’m hoping this will help in some small way to draw attention to the crisis of the environment – as well as the rebirth of the saxophone! I’m about to sign a contract with Musica Viva to compose another new work for their 2017 Sydney Festival. This will be for Amy and the (visiting British) Elias String Quartet. It will be a repository of songs and dances which can be played right through (about 30 minutes) or used as a resource from which single items or groups can be drawn. Amy intends to tour it internationally with both the Elias Quartet and other ensembles. In this way more new saxophone repertoire will be disseminated as widely as possible – I’m definitely not interested in niche markets!

6. What is involved in the creative process when writing for the classical saxophone?
I feel I’m getting on top of it now so it’s no different to my normal process.

7. Do you intend to compose for the saxophone in a classical setting in the future?
Yes! (See my answer to 5).

8. In your opinion what is the future of the classical saxophone in Australia?
Exciting.

9. Is there anything else you would like to add?
No, but further questions are welcome.

What about Amy’s playing impressed you so much on first hearing her?
My London publishers sent me a CD of Amy playing solos. I was impressed by her musicality and finesse – I hadn’t heard the saxophone played like that before. It seemed that she could play anything and thrived on new challenges.

Beyond your collaboration with Amy, are there any characteristics of the saxophone that also drew you to want to compose for it?
I hadn’t considered composing for it before, although I’d made one or two arrangements – actually just transpositions – of pieces I’d written for other woodwinds. Apart from these, my only other experience of writing for saxophone was for Sandy Evans in
my *Dawn Mantras* (1999), in combination with shakuhachi and didjeridu, as well as children’s and men’s voices and percussion. This was pre-recorded and then mimed on the sails of the Sydney Opera House as part of the internationally telecast millennium celebrations. At the time, Sandy explained to me that in jazz, a tenor saxophone rarely plays less than mezzo forte. Hearing Amy play refined pianissimos in a ‘classical’ style made (albeit on a soprano instrument) me aware of the vastly greater potential of the saxophone.

Would you be interested in composing for other performers besides Amy or non-commissioned works for the general saxophone community?

At present I’m working on a new commission for Amy and the (British) Elias Quartet. When completed it will consist of (probably) nine pieces and will have a total duration of about 30 minutes. Some of the pieces are arrangements of other works of mine – for example, I’ve just finished re-making *Binyang*, originally for clarinet and percussion, and I’ve also found a way to reduce the *Sanctus* from *Full Moon Dances* (and before that my *Mass of the Dreaming*, for 8 part chorus). In each of these reconstructions, the performers will double on percussion - clapping sticks (*Binyang*) and bell (*Sanctus*). Other movements will be especially designed for the quintet medium. In writing this collection of pieces, which are likely to be toured worldwide, I’m hoping to help expand the repertoire and and attract other performers. By then I will have composed about 85 minutes of saxophone music, so I might give it a rest for a while!

If so, are you aware of any other Australian performers who you might consider working with?

I’m certainly aware of an increasing number of other Australian performers and I hope very much they’ll be interested to take up my existing works.

How long on average would you say the compositional process takes when writing for the saxophone?

I’ve never actually timed the process, but it gets easier as I get more confident and gain facility. Having a performer like Amy to work with helps enormously, of course. I seem to have a natural facility with wind instruments, and the saxophone, with a uniformity of timbre throughout its range, makes it much easier to compose for than the other winds. It’s actually easier to write for saxophone than string quartet, notwithstanding my long experience with that medium.

You mentioned you organised a commission for *Full Moon Dances*, could you give an insight into this process?

I’m very fortunate in having some patrons who take an interest in my work and who regularly commission me to write for the Sydney Symphony – five substantial pieces since 1995. They were very willing to fund a concerto for Amy, and following its premiere in 2012, Amy and I approached them about their commissioning a double concerto for her and the Scottish percussionist Colin Currie. This has recently been completed - *Frog and Star Cycle* – and will have its premiere with the SSO in July 2016.
Interview with Matthew Orlovich

SW: Interview number one with Matthew Orlovich on the 5th of June 2015. Thank you Matthew again for joining us.
MO: That’s my pleasure, thanks for having me along.
SW: No worries. So the first question I had for you was why are you writing for the saxophone as a classical instrument?
MO: I think the primary reason is to do with the list of works I have been creating over the years. Up until about 2000, I was concentrating quite a lot on choral music - acapella choral music - and around 2000 I started thinking I’d like a little bit of a change towards the instrumental music again, and so I started writing a bit more instrumental music. Just an idea out of the blue, I wrote a saxophone piece and sent it to Barry Cockroft in Melbourne who got me to write some more music over the years. And as always, when I write a piece, whether it be for choir or instruments, once it gets performed, just by word of mouth it gets around, and so one thing leads to another and I end up writing more music for the performers.
SW: Hmm, sure, so that was a sort of collaboration with Barry?
MO: That’s right, yes.
SW: Was there anything to do with the instrument, maybe characteristics like, you know the tone of it, or the capabilities of it as well that drew you to it?
MO: Yeah definitely, I actually played the saxophone for a few years, that’s probably the reason why when I was interested in getting into more instrumental music I choose the saxophone because I had one in my music room at home. So when I’m writing I can actually get it out, I can test things out on it. And also when I was younger I really got into jazz in a big way and naturally the saxophone came up a lot. I was listening to a lot of Charlie Parker, and art pepper, and Stan Getz, and those kind of Jazz artists. When I was at uni I came to the Sydney Conservatorium to see Lee Konitz when he was here, and he gave a little talk and played some of his music with us, so I think I’ve always liked the sound of the saxophone, and I’ve enjoyed playing it as an amateur. Also I think, I guess one of the things I like about writing for it is the fingering system is a little bit like the flute, and I played the flute all the way through school years as well. So the up and down fingering of the saxophone sort of made, my brain you know was already sort of wired in a little bit of a way for that having learnt the flute, so, that helped to get me going with the saxophone music composition.
SW: So do you think you might have written for that saxophone even if, say, you know, you weren’t in contact with Barry?
MO: Yes, I think I would have. What happened was, I went to Melbourne. I saw an advertisement for the National Academy of Music in Melbourne, they were running a composers course, and it was a short course, and after that I got to know a few other Melbourne composers, and I asked them who was playing the saxophone, you know, that I could send something to, and Katy Abbott, who’s a Melbourne composer, suggested Barry’s name. And so, I didn’t know him at all but I just came home and wrote the piece ‘Air Traffic control’, and sent it off, so that’s how contacts were made, but I think having the saxophone at home, and enjoying the sound of it, and playing it, would have undoubtedly ended up composing something. But I think it’s been really
advantageous having a performer at Barry’s level playing it around the world, and I’m in no doubt that that’s helped my saxophone music become well known.

SW: Sure, so, when you were working for Barry, was this at first a commissioning process?

MO: At first, it was unsolicited, it was certainly just a off the cuff kind of contact that I made out of the blue, but his reaction was to encourage me, and also, I think after I wrote a couple more pieces for him, then I met up with him and we talked about some of the extended techniques and things you can do on the saxophone. And he also, I think gave me a bit of an idea about the music he was interested in performing, so that was yeah, helpful. You know when a commission came along, I think he commissioned a piece called Crazy Logic, and I really enjoyed writing that, and then I think I wrote another piece for him, I don’t think it was commissioned, but he often encouraged composers to write music that would be suitable for performance in exams- like AMEB exams- and I think from memory I must have just decided to write a little piece for sax and piano called Flight of Fancy. I just sent that in and Barry published that, and I understand it’s in the syllabus for a few different exams.

SW: Yes it is, my students play it every year.

MO: Right, that’s terrific. Then he got me to write some band music for Sam Seabrook, and that was for junior band, and that was interesting because it just allowed me to put my toes in the water with the band instrumentation. So that was three little pieces, like a suite for junior band, and not long after that I wrote the Flying Colours for band and saxophone, so it was a little bit of a progression, starting with solo sax, and sax and piano, and then some band, and then sax and band, and then, I do remember being asked, you know, how was I at writing orchestral music, I said I love writing orchestral music but not a lot of people ask me for it, and yet it was my favourite subject at uni-studying orchestration- and so the idea was to write a piece for the Scottish Chamber orchestra, for the World Sax Congress, and I really enjoyed writing that too, and that was a commission.

SW: Great, thank you. My next question is why do you think other composers are writing for the saxophone in this same classical setting?

MO: I think it’s becoming a popular instrument to write for because as from a composer’s point of view I think it’s a really versatile instrument. You know there’s a lot of different things you can explore on the instrument. When I mentioned earlier about having a sort of almost like a little mini workshop with Barry showing me some of the extended techniques and things. Those kind of things I always have on my desk when I’m writing saxophone music-just not necessarily to make sure I tick them all off, in fact I hardly ever use the full vocabulary of the sax in any one piece but I just love to have like the knowledge of what’s there that I can use and so that’s important to me. But I think other composers may hear other concerts and saxophone performers doing amazing things and performing really well, that encourages them to write for saxophone. And I know from listening to lots of saxophonists in Australia, like for example at the conservatorium with the Australasian Clarinet and Saxophone festival. I was amazed that the students were taking on the lessons and the teaching of the all of the students was such a high level, that from a composers point of view, that really attracts me. It makes me write music because I know the students are going to perform it well. So I think that’s the same for other composers too, if they see a body of students that are being really obviously well taught and performing really well you naturally want to write for them.
SW: Yeah sure, great answer. Are you aware of an increase in the number and quality of composition for the saxophone in a classical setting?

MO: I think definitely. I think definitely I know of more saxophone music being written now than I did when I started. I’m not sure really whether its just I’m more aware of the saxophone community and their names and who they are and what they’re playing, but I would have a guess that there would be more saxophone music being composed now and I understand a lot of saxophone students are studying in Australia and also taking study opportunities overseas and then coming back and so there seems to be a really lively sort of atmosphere. You know of playing and learning going on so I think that’s encouraging saxophone players to ask composers to write for them. Because, for instance when the choir world get in touch with me it’s usually because of a performance that they’ve heard, so now I find it’s the same with the saxophone community, if they’ve heard a performance of one of my pieces they get in touch pretty quickly and want to know about it or maybe ask me for some new music, so maybe it’s like a snowball effect.

SW: Sure, great. So in your opinion if we record a trend, do you think this is an indication of the saxophone becoming more popular, or marketable or accepted as a classical instrument?

MO: Yes, I think its definitely being more accepted as a classical instrument. I think as a commissioned composer one of the things you get to learn is to ask for the sort of instrumentation that you need, and that inspires you. So when you’re writing for something, if you really want to use a saxophone, then you eventually get courageous enough to ask for what you want. And it ends up being that you write a good piece because you know you’ve communicated well. So I think the saxophone is definitely something that I feel very free to be able to ask for because there are so many good players who are keen to help. So I think its definitely an established classical instrument of choice for me as a composer and I’d be surprised if I was writing say an orchestral piece and wanted a saxophone I’d be surprised if was, to be put in the too hard basket these days, I think its definitely an option- a good option.

SW: That’s good to hear. So what is your target audience of your compositions for saxophone?

MO: I think that varies a little bit from piece to piece. When I sit down and write a piece, I actually sort of position my imagination in the venue, or an imagined venue, and so if the piece is going to be at a big concert type hall or something like that then that kind of influences the sort of music I write. On the other hand, if it’s a piece for say an exam recital -or something like- or an AMEB type exam, then different things might come to mind. But at the fundamental level I think the notes and how I string them together has just got to appeal to my ear really, and there’s sort of like a fingerprint on most of my music-for instrumental music- that I think you can see on all the pieces that I write, whether it be the chromaticism or the harmonies or if I’ve used the piano, as a piano player I tend to write in a certain way because its sort of the way I play the piano.

SW: What is involved in the creative process when you’re writing?

MO: I think it starts with an opportunity to write a piece- so there needs to be a bit of time and space, and after that there’s the reason for writing it, which may be to write it for a particular performer or to write it for the whole world of performers in general, just to sort of write it and then get it out there in the world. So then, sometimes, as I
mentioned, I’ll put myself in the situation of listening to it as the audience will be, and I’ll think of things like instrumentation and the duration of the piece. Then at that point I’ll be starting to think about the previous pieces that I’ve written, and how I might sort of use them like a springboard from my previous work into something that’s a new piece. That’s often a good way to get started-is to sort of take some like inspiration or jumping off point from another piece, and then taking it in the new direction or exploring it a bit further. And then, I’ve often like finished a draft of a piece, I’ve got it to a certain point and then let it lie for just a little bit, just so if I’m doing something completely different I’ll suddenly think I can improve a little bit of that melodic lines or a rhythm or extend the section or something. So just a little bit of space to let it sort of settle in my mind, and then polish it- I do a lot of polishing of drafts- and sometimes I might do maybe ten different polishing drafts, and eventually by the tenth one I’ve got to the point when I’m not really changing much at all, and then it’s a matter of sending it to the performer and do a little bit of editing or that kind of thing if necessary. It’s usually small tiny details, like a little breathing space somewhere, or it might be like a note or something, you know here or there, but by the tenth draft I’m usually pretty convinced about what I’ve written, and then yeah then the performance generally follows that. So that’s kind of like a bit of a timeline of how I start writing.

SW: How long do you think from beginning to end, how long does that normally take for the saxophone?
MO: It can be pretty quick, you know it depends, I find that I’ll take as long as I’m given and its strange because I’ve often written a piece say in a week or two because I’ve had to. Perhaps an opportunity’s come up and it’s a really good one but I don’t have much time so I can actually get it done and I’m happy with it. Sometimes if I’m given like a year in advance then I’d probably give myself more of a hard time because I’m thinking I can get even a better start than this and oh I’ve got another nine months I’m sure I can come up with even better than this so I’d probably waste a few ideas and maybe even overwork something if I’m given a bit too much time. So probably the average duration, the average time it takes for me to write a piece without too much stress would be maybe a couple of months. If it’s a big orchestral thing that might be a little different, because you’ve got like a week just to proof read parts. But for a maybe like a five-minute piece for saxophone and instrument. Two months would be very comfortable and good.

SW: You mentioned as you like working with performers, do you in the process, are you wanting to workshop with them one on one?
MO: Yeah I definitely like that, I especially like going to a bit of a rehearsal before a premier just to set the tempos and things like that. Sometimes If I’m writing for an accompanying instrument that might be a bit new to me, then I like to make sure that the tempos are right, that’s the main thing for me. As far as the saxophone, I sort of feel like that my playing of the saxophone- even as basic as it is- it gives me a little bit of a head start with regard to the fingering and breathing and possibilities. So the workshopping tends to be shaping the overall sound of the performance a little bit, and just helping out if I can correct any little details that make it easier for the performer, which doesn’t you know occur to me when I’m writing it. Sometimes it can be a small note difference that makes no difference to me but it can be quite big difference if the saxophone player can breathe for example or something like that, or just a note might speak a little more easily if I put it up an octave or something- things like that- so I like to workshop those details. And when I’m writing a piece, like during the actual creation
of all of the music and the harmonies and things I tend to know what I want and just go for it, you know every day, from sort of you know nine o’clock in the morning until however long it takes when I want to stop that day and then the next day the same and the next day the same. It’s just everyday until I finish the thing. It’s just sort of like you get into a frame of mind where everything starts to form, sort of like a jigsaw puzzle forming, it’s a picture, and so at that point I’m pretty happy to just work on it on my own. But definitely when that pictures formed and I show it to the performers its sort of helpful to get their input.

SW: You mentioned you can gain inspiration from your previous pieces, and you also mentioned that you were quite heavily involved in jazz growing up, so how do those elements sort of play out in your compositions and are there other influences?

MO: Yes, there’s definitely a jazz influence I see from years of listening to bebop music, and I like to do a bit of the genre bending of the classical and the jazz. Like I definitely know when I’m stepping over into the jazz territory - which is really easy for me to do - because my fingers, as a piano player my finger just naturally want to fall on the jazz chord, and so I enjoy that, because I know I can have that there as a resource. However I’m also very comfortable with the more classical angle, and so with the composing process for me, it’s all about walking the line along those two genres. So with a piece like Crazy Logic I can straight away see the bebop type melodic and rhythmic influence coming in and I was very aware of that when I was writing it. At the same time I was interested in bringing some other more classical influences in into that piece, so that’s the kind of one of the ways I’ve got like the craziness and a logic to the piece. But there are other influences in my musical life that come into the pieces. When I was at Sydney Uni I studied in a performance ensemble called The Gamelan, and Indonesian music kind of filtered into my musical compositional style. And so in pieces like Crazy Logic with the calm sections of that piece there’s a little bit of the sort of Indonesian style ostinato happening and also with pieces like Flight of Fancy, there’s that element coming into it - there’s pentatonic type scales. With choral music, it’s very different. With my instrumental and choral music it’s almost like a different composer has written each of them, I don’t really know why but I think it’s got something to do with the instruments being able to be have more dexterity in their ability for chromatic crazy logic type intervals and rapid melodic intervals. So I don’t really think the choral music influence is to be seen much in the saxophone music. However I do have a sown seed in my mind from Michael Duke who suggested some of my SATB choir music might be good for saxophone quartet. As soon as he mentioned it I thought I’ll have to keep that in mind and so whether or not I use the SATB music that I’ve written for sax quartet or just write some more sax quartet, I’m certain that I’ll be writing some soon, because I’m fired up for it, I’ve just got to find some time and space to get it done.

SW: So with your love of Jazz music, why do you think it is that your compositions have been in that sort of more classical setting, rather than explicitly jazz?

MO: I think that probably came from two reasons. I think one was my training at Sydney Uni, which was a more of a classical compositional approach, and the opportunities that we had. This was when I was studying with Peter Sculthorpe. He was providing with the department opportunities for performance that tended to be of a more classical orientation, and I think that I’m pretty confident that If I started writing very jazz jazzy pieces back then I would have felt a little like a fish out of water in that environment. So I guess in a way what I’ve ended up doing, walking the line if you like between genres is a little bit of a way dealing where I was at the time. The second
reason is that as, I like orchestration and composing, I find that the actual craft of writing down specific parts and orchestrating lines fully and melodic lines for soloists, writing out cadenzas and things like that I’ve come sort of to appreciate the way its all fixed. Even though I don’t tend to mind you know if a performer says I’ve got a great idea for another kind of performer for that cadenza, I think I’d like to hear it. But I guess one of the things I like about composing from a classical perspective is once you’ve finished the piece it’s sort of set and you can sort of relax a little, knowing that you’ve got something that you can preserve, where as with the jazz, I think the beauty is that its always changing and so its different thing, a different approach to creating music. And if I was probably to explore the jazz composing, I would probably like to work in the big band type situation where a lot of the music might be written out and as a performer-like as a piano player which is my main instrument -I wouldn’t be interested much in the music that I was writing. This sounds strange but I would really like to be an improvising jazz person because I think everyone knows sort of what their in built talents are and where they kind of lie, what things they might be sort of good at, and that’s something that definitely sits comfortably with me- the idea of improvising and live performance, but yeah just the composing is taken over 99.9 percent of all of that.

SW: Sure, great. Do you intend to compose for the saxophone in a classical setting in the future?
MO: Yes absolutely. I think I’d like to compose some quartet music because its something I haven’t done yet. That would probably be one of the things on my list, and I’m always interested in writing music for your good self as well, and I’ve got one in the pipeline. And I also like the idea of writing concertos because it kind of combines orchestration which I love and so I imagine I might not stop at two, I think I’ve got to do more than that. They take a while to do, but yeah they’re good fun.

SW: That’s very pleasing to hear, that you’ll keep going after two.
MO: Yeah absolutely.
SW: Ok, I think that we’ve pretty much covered everything that I was after, is there anything else that you’d like to add that you think is appropriate.
MO: Ah, well I think I’m just grateful to have performers interested in what I’m writing, because without the performers it would be impossible to get anywhere. I think that one of the best things for a composer is to have the having performers taking the music out into the concert hall and around the world, so yeah I appreciate that I think. If I can help write music for performers and the performers enjoy performing it, then I don’t see any end to it, I think its great fun to be involved in it. There’s lot of mental work when writing music but there’s also the joy of hearing it performed and then watching it travel- my pieces travel much more than I do- but I enjoy writing pieces and watching them pop up in all different parts of the world. It’s a good inspiration to keep working and keep writing.

SW: Well thank you very for your time; it’s been a great pleasure.
MO: It’s a pleasure being here, thank you.
Interview with Elena Kats-Chernin

SW: Ok, so that should be recording now. Now Elena, just so I have it on record as well, do you consent to audio recording for this interview?

EKC: Yes, I consent to all the recordings.

SW: Alright Elena, so the first question I had for you was why are you writing or the saxophone as a classical instrument?

ECK: Good question, but I have no answer...I like it very much, it’s a great instrument, and if there’s a choice to write for saxophone I will. So I’m not asking as a classical instrument, I just ask as my instrument - that I write for, an instrument that I choose, or an instrument that I’m asked to write for. For me the saxophone is part of the classical instruments of today. It’s no longer for me connected to jazz, I think its kind of earned its place in the classical, that’s why its been used. Probably the example that made a big impact on me was Lulu from Berg, Where she uses alto saxophone whenever lulu comes out, her big entry. It was kind of her main instrument, and I just love that sound. When I first used it extensively in my ballet Wild Swans because its always a bit of...if you choose it as an orchestral instrument, they have to get an extra player, so you kind of have to explain why you use it, because it costs more. And either you have to say why it’s absolutely necessary that you’ve got it. And in the ballet I remember, it was kind of character driven, it was connected to the step mother who was quite evil, but she was also very seductive, and it’s a very seductive instrument in that it has a very smooth honey-like texture and what I love I think about saxophone apart from that is the very practical things. It’s loud, and there’s no real problem in getting it through in the orchestra, you know you can always hear saxophone, and a lot of instruments have problems to penetrate the texture. Often you write a solo for an instrument and you can’t hear it unless you’re very clever and very transparent, and saxophone is just a very strong, powerful instrument, and yet rich, you know its emotional, that’s my view. I slowly, over the time, it became one of my favourite instruments to write for. I think its just lately I’ve written a cluster of pieces that all have the saxophone. I got a commission to write a concerto for saxophone quartet, which gave me a chance to explore the four different ones, which was very fun. Without knowing what to say and now I’m telling you lots of things. So that’s one, I’ve almost finished, well in the process of writing an alto saxophone concerto for Michael Duke. The interesting one was whenever it was, two years ago, I don’t know if you know that piece for the Australian Brandenburg Orchestra?

SW: Yes I do.

ECK: Oh you heard that piece?

SW: I haven’t heard it; in my research I found it.

EKC: ok, so what happened is, I was asked to write this piece to celebrate 25 years of the Australian Brandenburg orchestra. It’s about to come out on ABC classics. It’s almost ready to be released, I think in August. So in the very last minute when I was almost finished with the score, Paul Dyer, he head of the orchestra asked me if I wouldn’t mind adding a soprano saxophone to the score, because he really wanted Christina Leonard in it, because she was often part of the concerts with them. And it’s very interesting because in a way it’s a very unusual combination because the soprano saxophone is not a Baroque instrument and its very fitting though, it sounds amazing with Baroque instruments and I was just really happy to add it to my score, even though it meant moving things around quite a bit. I pretty much gave her all the solos.
Everything that everyone else had I just pushed it all towards saxophone. It was Christina Leonard again, I think I mentioned that. I wrote her a really high part, which I’m kind of sorry about everyone, and it was really fantastic to work with her I remember the only issue was to work out logistics of transposing because one thing of course transposing normally, but then you have the whole baroque tuning and everything had to be written lower. So that’s the story of the Brandenburg orchestra piece, it called Prelude and Cube and soprano saxophone is pretty much soloist. There are a few other soloists, there is soprano singer as well. I tried to feature a lot of people, a lot of instruments.

I’ve written recently a piece for dance, it’s for seven instruments and soprano saxophone is part of them. Another one where I just thought it was great to be part of an ensemble because it’s a piece based on Picasso’s painting called Three Dances and because of the time it plays in, I’ve paired it with accordion and other instruments, but I think it’s a nice combination, a nice sound addition for example. So yeah, I’m kind of hooked on saxophone, it’s just really fabulous, versatile, it can do really fast, it can be do really slow, it can be very long notes, it can be very beautifully vibrato. Just a lot of richness of colour, you know? And it’s just fun to write for. So there’s a long answer. Because there’s a lot of pieces recently that I’ve written for saxophone.

SW: No that’s right, and it’s absolutely fantastic to see a composer of your calibre writing for the instrument, it’s such a big help to all of us, so thank you.

EKC: Oh that’s so sweet, that’s very nice. So that’s what I said at the moment I have two concerto’s, one of them was flute, one of them was saxophone and the opera is for the opera in Germany. Mind you there’s also another opera being recorded for television right now. And yet saxophone is part of that too, that’s a mixture of tenor and alto. There’s 70 numbers in that opera and some of them have tenor, some of them have alto so there’s quite a lot. And my opera now in Germany, Snow White, it also has alto saxophone. So I’m placing saxophone everywhere, I’m giving a lot of jobs to saxophone players.

SW: Yeah, that’s right, it’s fantastic.

EKC: Well, it’s fun, it’s for my own selfish reasons because I like it. I tell you what; it gives glamour to an orchestra. That sound it lifts the whole texture somehow.

SW: Yeah you’ll be giving jobs to saxophonists for years to come I think, with all your works.

EKC: Well I hope so, because it’s fantastically versatile, because it can move fast and it can jump around. For me, it kind of sits between, I know it’s silly but it sits between clarinet and cor anglais, for what it can do with its sound. It’s mellow.

SW: Ok, that’s great. The next question I had was, in your opinion why do you think other composers are writing for the saxophone in similar settings that you are?

EKC: Well that I absolutely could not answer because I really don’t know, because I truly have no time to think about other composers. This is a really selfish answer, but I’m just really writing and writing and writing. If I start thinking about why others do it, I really don’t know. I’m sorry I’m not in their mind. Probably for the same reason I’m using it. It’s a great instrument and it’s really good to work with. It’s a plus for any ensemble.

SW: Yes, great. So probably I the same sort of question, but are you aware at all of an increase in the number and perhaps the quality of composition for the saxophone in recent years?
Yes I did hear to be honest John Adam’s piece called City Noir. City Noir, while not a concerto, its very much a piece which elevated saxophone. To the point that he got up, and played standing up. So it was very big for that piece, it was an especially long piece, like thirty or forty minutes. I heard it at a festival called Cabrillo, a music festival in USA in Santa Cruz Three years ago. Anyway, it was a pretty amazing piece. I think he loves using saxophone, and of course he wrote a saxophone concerto, which I think Sydney symphony premiered, but I didn’t hear that one. And yeah, it’s used amazingly and it always comes through and it’s got fantastic colours.

SW: Sure. So if you aware of a sort of a trend in recent years, do you think this is indicative of the instrument becoming more popular, marketable and maybe accepted as a classical instrument.

EKC: Possibly. I think it’s also to do with the players, I think the players are very innovative in the way they elevate the instrument, and they seem to work harder than say a cello player of a violin player to make the instrument known, because the others don’t have to work on that. So every saxophone player I know is incredibly proactive in approaching composers, and making new pieces to be written, making up concerts, making up the ensembles. You know, every saxophone player I’ve met, including Nicholas Russionello, he recently arranged some of my pieces for saxophone and string quartet for example, and he wrote to me and said I’m doing this. And its kind of so far I’ve probably the most emails from saxophone players than any other players, because they actually take initiative and are very enthusiastic about their instrument.

SW: Ok, so the players, you think they’re behind that sort of trend in the instrument.

EKC: No, as well, of course. No the instrument itself is gaining popularity and becoming almost an accepted part of the orchestra. It’s still not part of the symphony orchestra, you still have to explain why you want it. Like in my opera Snow White, I’ve placed it there presenting a particular character in that opera, and it connects to that, but I use it throughout anyway, because it just sounds great the whole time. It is very interesting and if I want to use it melodically as a solo then I have to be more careful to make it more of that character, but if its part of the texture, just chords, but if I want to bring a note out I know to give it to saxophone because I’m going to hear it and that’s great. I think it adds something to it, there’s the instrument itself which is great and then the players who make it known, you know who love their instrument.

SW: Sure. My next question was, do you have a target audience for your compositions for saxophone, and if so what is it?

EKC: Again, I don’t think about target audiences because I’m just writing a piece, I can’t think about the audiences, I just always write the best I can. I always write a piece I want to write, and also a piece that I think will fit a particular player and while I was writing I was imagining Michael playing it, so I just go into this kind of inner world. I go inside myself and I try to imagine. I imagine the audience that comes to hear my pieces. They like my work maybe, or maybe likes the works on the programme, or maybe likes the soloist, or maybe they like the orchestra, maybe they like the venue. I don’t know who they are. They’re usually people who like classical music and I think most of them accept saxophone. Some people say sometimes oh why do you write for saxophone. Why again saxophone? It’s a jazz instrument, and some people don’t like jazz. But see I don’t use it like that, it’s different, it sounds nice, I promise. But as I said I don’t know what...usually its just people who like music, and new music really, and new pieces because for me they’re actually the two kinds of audience, those who just like the old very famous pieces over and over, to listen over and over from all the
centuries gone past, and those who are open to new pieces, and new material. So I feel that those audiences are supporting new music being written, which is great, and I’m very grateful to this audience.

SW: Hmm, fantastic, thanks for that. Ok what is involved with the creative process when you’re writing for saxophone?

EKC: Well my creative processes are always similar to any piece I write. I do a little bit of research, I either Michael will send me a cd of his playing, or a concerto that he played, and I also listen to all sorts of pieces. Rascher quartet sent me you know the saxophone quartet concerto called Five Chapters. They sent me pieces to listen to, so I always do a bit of research on how it works in the orchestra, but ultimately I just write a piece. I don’t know how I write, I just write it on piano and I don’t think too much about. I just write it and think how will the saxophone be sounding in with this ensemble, or with this orchestra. So I’m hopefully listening inside myself, and playing the whole piece and thinking is the structure ok? So I’m constantly asking myself questions. But I don’t specifically constantly ask myself how will I write for saxophone. That’s kind of even if a part of the approach- its in my head already. And all the knowledge of course is just going into the piece, you don’t think about of it. I might think in a concerto will I give this line to saxophone or to orchestra for example. You just constantly give and take.

SW: Sure, ok. Just a question about sort of the duration, so you’re writing a piece for Michael, how long sort of from start to finish does that process take?

EKC: Well obviously its taking a long time because I started in November, and it’s now July, and I’m in the middle or orchestration, and still fixing a lot of parts, and doing a lot of juggling, moving things around, so I’m in the middle of it. Because there was a big gap while I was waiting for the files. Sometimes the best thing musically is just to immediately get the files back next week and continue working, but when you had a gap and written two operas in the mean time, I feel like I’m seeing an old friend again and I have to reconnect and find new ground, you know, I might change my mind about certain things and then sometimes I say what was I thinking? And I just change everything. But sometimes I’ll look at it and I just think oh no it’s actually ok, everything was fine, except for a few things. It can take possibly from start to finish I think 4 to 6 months. But you know, it doesn’t mean you work all the days through, and I have concerts in between, I perform, I travel, I need to have space and time over a period of time. It’s hard to tell, but Rascher quartet concerto I remember it took three months I wrote it. Quick- quite quick.

SW: All right, fantastic. So you’ve sort of already answered this next question, do you intend to compose for saxophone in the future, and so you’ve already told me that which is amazing. Beyond the pieces that are already sort of in your sights, do you have the intention to keep on going throughout your career?

EKC: Yeah, I think so, I’m kind of trying to place it in all my orchestra pieces, but not every orchestra says yes, so I’m having my fight over my next big piece. All this year I think every single piece I’ve written is for saxophone, but actually I didn’t even think about it, but it’s true, it’s amazing- except for flute concerto. But next year, I’ve got three orchestra pieces and

So I will try, but I don’t always succeed placing it everywhere. And obviously if I’m writing for a piano quintet which is just strings and piano, I can’t place it in there, but I can place it in an orchestral setting if they’ll let me.

SW: Why do you think the orchestra’s are not always up for having the saxophones.
EKC: It costs more, they don’t want to spend money, because they’re budgets are low, not always allowing for that, and they will ask me why do you want it and you have to have a good reason. I mean I can’t indulge it constantly in having saxophones in every single piece. It feels like its a luxury a little bit, because its not always part of an ensemble. But for me it’s not a luxury, for me it’s a necessity, and I like it, I want it, but you have to explain. I think if you explain and you say it’s absolutely essential then they will go with it, but if they commission you a piece, and they don’t commission it for saxophone, then it’s also rude for a composer to just say oh but I insist. You can’t, there’s a lot of discussion needed for these sorts of things, because you can’t just demand. If you’re commissioned by someone, they are in a way telling you what they want, even though you can be creatively open you still have to kind of comply with people or whoever commissions you, what they want. Yeah, so that’s my answer. I’ll try, and I will definitely always choose it, if I have a choice.
SW: No, that’s great to hear.
EKC: By the way I just wrote recently a privately commissioned piece, and it was for five or six instruments and I said I really want saxophone in it, so I had saxophone as well, so I had soprano saxophone and clarinet in it and I had Christina play. Do you know Christina Leonard?
SW: Yes I do.
EKC: Yeah, she played in it, and it was just a month ago, the piece is a suite, and it’s really fun, very fun. I wrote it actually a year ago, but it was performed this year, in May, because it was a special occasion for a husband of the lady who commissioned me, so yeah.
SW: Fantastic. So when you’ve been writing these pieces, obviously Christina’s played a fair few of them.
EKC: Yeah, I’ve often sent her the parts to check if it’s ok, while I’m writing.
SW: So you kind of collaborate with her?
EKC: Yeah, we have done that on a few occasions by now. And, I’m doing the same with Michael, its just really great, its very important because I mean my situation with the Rascher quartet was I wrote the piece, I sent it to them and then the person who was taking care of all that administration, he’s a baritone player, his name is Bruce Weinberger. He wrote back and said, ah but we can play much higher, we can play a whole octave above what you’ve written, I mean you didn’t push the instrument far enough. So the question is do I write to showcase an instrument or do I write to make a piece of music. Those are the questions I always ask myself. Is something I want to push the boundaries and then have a lot of squeaky sounds and the piece will not be attractive necessarily? I mean it depends, so I remember when I was writing that piece I asked Christina a few times, oh what do you think of this comment? The Rascher player said: You can challenge us much more, at the moment the piece is not difficult enough." In my mind the piece was actually quite hard already and at times very virtuosic. However, I took on board those comments and then at the premiere of the concerto I did not enjoy some of those really high sounds. So, I revised the piece after the premiere and made use of altissimo register only very sparingly. It is a much better piece now and I am happy with it how it is currently. A lot of the higher sounds are not nice, but sometimes it’s nice. So the altissimo range is not something that I can use too much of. So I kind of went that way, a little too much I think as a reaction, as a sort of quick reaction. But occasionally there are very beautiful sounds on the top, which I like. Do you play that range?
SW: I do, yes.
EKC: Do you like playing in that range?
SW: It’s difficult up there.
EKC: To tune.
SW: To tune, and just to get it, you know, similar to the normal register. It’s a challenge, but you have to be able to do it because most composers are writing in that range fairly often.
EKC: Yeah, because the problem is, the composers, if you don’t write in that range, people will just say ah, you don’t know about saxophone, or you didn’t push far enough, and if it’s a concerto it has to go that way.
SW: Right, so you almost feel that’s a requirement.
EKC: Yeah, and I’m the last person to push someone into territory they don’t want to be in. I like to write safer because I don’t want to… but if it’s a solo they have time in the rehearsal usually, in the orchestra, time is so precious, and you don’t want to waste time discussing a lot of difficult things. You want to just have a rehearsal, and it’s usually just an hour, you don’t have much time. It’s probably different with a student orchestra, there are more sessions, but with the symphony orchestras that are paid, it’s very difficult to push the sound.
SW: Sure. And just the last question I had: In your opinion, what do you think the future of the classical saxophone is in Australia.
EKC: I think it’s very popular. It’s definitely going to get used more and more. Because firstly there are so many fantastic players, they’re all here, and it’ll be silly for composers not to use saxophone, it’s just there, people play it so well, and sensationally well. You know they hear it everywhere; it’s a very inspiring sound. So I think the more composers hear it the more they’ll want to hear it. I think its multiplying at an amazing rate. As I say I don’t know repertoire that much that’s been written in Australia right now, maybe because …
But it seems like saxophone is gaining momentum everywhere. A saxophone player is usually commissioning a piece so that obviously also adds to the repertoire.
SW: Sure, yeah that’s fantastic. Thank you so much for your time. The answers have been really insightful, so it’s been fantastic.
EKC: Well I’m glad, there were a lot of good questions. Thank you.
Interview with Katy Abbott

SW: All right, so we’re recording now, and just so I have it on the record, Katy, do you consent to audio recording of this interview?
KA: Yes that’s fine.
SW: And do you consent to being identified in the study as well?
KA: Yes.
SW: Ok, excellent. All right so this is interview with Katy Abbott on the 6th of September 2015. So Katy the first question I had for you was, why are you writing for the saxophone in a classical setting?
KA: I’m a contemporary classical composer, so it’s naturally my style to be writing in this genre, and I really enjoy writing for the saxophone, so it sort of just comes naturally into the work that I’m writing. I tend to be writing for saxophone these days because I’m asked to in a solo setting, but I have more recently been adding saxophone to the odd piece just because I would prefer to have there in chamber settings or orchestral settings.
SW: Ok, sure. So what is it about the saxophone that’s drawing you to want to write for it?
KA: I just like the saxophone, it reminds me of the voice and I’m a singer. Pop/Jazz is probably what suits my voice the best, although I don’t perform anymore, and the saxophone is also well suited to those settings, so I can relate to the instrument because it reminds me of the voice I suppose.
SW: Sure. So the tone of the instrument is quite similar you think to the voice, and so it’s quite a natural way of composing for you?
KA: Yes I suppose so. I started writing for the saxophone because I was asked to, and I thought that would be a great way to get to know the saxophone a little more. And I had learnt the saxophone for one year in my university studies, so I was familiar with what it took to blow it and the basic fingerings and what it sounds like in different settings. So it’s not an unfamiliar instrument for me, so I guess it’s a natural instrument. And I know that when I was looking at including a voice in a piece a couple of years ago I ended up including soprano saxophone instead and I suppose it’s the soprano saxophone particularly that makes me think of the voice. I think I can say the same type of things-the same kind of lyrical lines that I would potentially ask the singer to do- I feel I can also ask the saxophone to do.
SW: Ok, that’s very interesting. When you’ve been working with saxophonists, you mentioned initially that was because they approached you to write. Who are these saxophonists that you’ve worked with?
KA: It’s mostly Barry Cockcroft, in Melbourne, I assume you know him or are aware of him. So it was probably about 15 years ago or so, I was just starting out as a composer, and I think Barry asked me to write a couple of different pieces for different settings, one for a solo setting which he then has performed extensively and recorded. And other ones for his publishing business Reed Music which had subsequently become part of the AMEB syllabus in different things, so that was probably my first proper venture into saxophone, and then of course its fantastic to work with instrumentalists and Barry was extremely generous with his time and helping me explore different sounds that I was after, or different genres, as well as being curious about certain saxophone techniques, and for example Egyptian Wish is based on glissandi because Barry said please write me a piece that’s based on glissandi, and I said oh, sure! And that’s how it came about,
so it’s the interaction with instrumentalists. Michael Duke of course, is a little more recent, but I didn’t get to work with him on a one to one level with the piece, because he’s in Sydney and I’m in Melbourne, but *Undercurrent* (2011) came about because HD Duo commissioned the work so it was sort of sending little excerpts up and down over email.

SW: Yes, sure. So the work you have done with Barry, have these come as sort of a commission process, or how has that worked out?

KA: Yes, that’s a good question. I’ve sort of changed my tune a little bit on how I’m viewing as commission- I would have said that they were commissioned but those early pieces there was a bit of quid pro quo, so there was no actual money changing hands but Barry said can you write this piece, and I wrote it for him, and he performed it, published it, toured it, so in a way its sort of how that relationship started off. And following that there were actual paid commissions. And the HD Duo piece was a paid commission.

SW: Great. So when you have worked with Barry, has that been a process where you’re workshopping with him? You mentioned you weren’t able to do that with Michael, but with Barry was that a process that you used?

KA: Yes definitely, particularly early on when I wasn’t as familiar with the saxophone, especially the extended techniques and things. I probably spent quite a lot of time pre-composing, just listening to Barry play, just going through systematically some of the things the saxophone does and doesn’t do. This tends to do be a little bit of a cycle that I set up for whenever I work for any instrumentalist, not just saxophone, and then I will sketch out a few things, take it back to the instrumentalist, play it through, see if it sits well, and then I’ll go and write the piece. Following writing the piece, in the rehearsal phase there’s a little bit of workshopping and adjustment, but by the time its complete it’s mostly there with just a few tweaks needed I’d say.

SW: Ok, thanks Katy. So the next question I had was, in your opinion, why do you think other composers might be writing for the saxophone in a similar setting that you are?

KA: Well, its only for me to guess but id say because saxophonists tend to be really proactive in approaching composers and proactive in developing repertoire for their instrument and proactive in recording and performing, so I think its really attractive for composers to be writing for these people because the piece isn’t just performed once and popped in a draw, its usually recorded and performed multiple times, and performed to an excellent level, so I think that would be my guess.

SW: Sure. Do you think that’s sort of a contrast with other instrumentalists?

KA: Not necessarily, I think percussionists are the same. My experience writing for percussionists is they’ve either sort me out, or when I’ve sought them out, they’ve been so open and giving of their time and then giving the pieces multiple performances and airings. I would say perhaps a little more with saxophone and percussion than other instruments but I think it just depends on the person behind the instrument rather than an instrument specific stereotype.

SW: Ok, Sure.

KA: Does that line up with what other people have said?

SW: Yes, I have actually. Which has been interesting to see. Most other composers have said the same thing; that saxophonists are really keen and motivated and so that’s an attractive thing as a composer to know your work will get performances really. So its good to see that trend coming back, and making sure that’s something that I’m doing as
well. Ok, great. Katy are you aware of an increase in the number and quality of composition for the saxophone in a classical setting?

KA: Since when?
SW: Since 1990. That’s when my study is from, so from the last 25 years or so.
KA: I would have to say yes. I wasn’t really composing until about 1999-2000 and I didn’t come from that ground at all, so at the time I wasn’t aware of what the scenario is, so its more about my perception of what that time is. But I would say, I think there is repertoire-more good repertoire- for the instrument. I think it seems to be a definite part of the classical music scene. It’s not an addition anymore.
SW: Fantastic. So that ties into the next question, which was in your opinion, is this a trend of the instrument becoming more popular, marketable and accepted as a classical instrument?
KA: Yes, I think so. And perhaps the expertise and virtuosity of the saxophone players, is that increasing? I’m not sure, but I’m wondering if that idea of the virtuosic classical solo instrument is appealing as well.
SW: So you would hazard a guess that that’s on an increase, the virtuosity of the players?
KA: Perhaps, but perhaps not over the last ten years but maybe since 1990. Maybe as repertoire has developed for saxophonists, saxophonists can develop their technique in different ways and push and extend and therefore then different types of music is being written for the instrument and the saxophonists develop different virtuosic techniques. I’m not sure, I’m just guessing at this point.
SW: Ok, thank you. What is the target audience of your compositions for saxophone?
KA: It’s probably quite wide. Different audiences for different pieces. I wouldn’t say I had one audience. Certainly one audience is the student saxophonists. Grade 4 to 7 AMEB level, and that’s come about through Reed Music. But also professional, with Michael and Barry in particular, who have got these pieces off the ground. I’ve also included saxophone recently for a piece that I did for the MSO. It’s quite a small orchestra, so single winds, but it included saxophone. Barry ended up playing in the end, they hired him, and he was playing soprano and baritone- that was included in the symphony. It had quite a prominent part actually. I wouldn’t say it was a solo, because a lot of the instruments were solo’d, but it was certainly a featured part. So I guess that’s professional settings.
SW: Would it be ok for you to name the work?
KA: Oh yes of course, its called Introduced Species and its Symphony number two. You can hear little excerpts on my sound cloud I think but I’m not sure if I’ve got them up yet. Part of the saxophones role is to create a Doppler effect. It’s the ambulance going past you, and as the siren passes you and goes away, the pitch appears to the be lowered, but actually it’s not lower; so it’s the perceived lowering of the pitch. The saxophone sort of acts as this siren throughout the piece amongst other things, but its one of the featured instruments to include that.
SW: Fantastic. So that’s sort of your audience as far as the saxophonist goes. Do you have an audience that you’re writing for saxophone as far as the listeners go?
KA: Oh, ok. Yes I suppose I do. I don’t think I have a separate audience for saxophone versus other settings. I like to create music that is challenging and fun for the performer to play, and yet accessible to the general audience, and when I say general audience I suppose I don’t mean the new music audience-although it can include them. More I’m thinking of my mum, or my cousin who aren’t in that scene, to try and demystify
classical music to that audience in a way that’s not necessarily challenging in its harmony, but opens ears in other ways; that might be through using extended techniques in context, so its sort of still virtuosic or challenging for the player, but not necessarily alienating for the audience. So lets just say the general community as opposed to the new music community. It’s hard to define isn’t it?

SW: Yes, it is, but I understand what you mean, that’s great, thanks. When writing for the saxophone, what is involved in the creative process?

KA: Again, I would say it’s a similar process to other instruments. Usually I would be writing for somebody, so the first thing would be to be very clear about what the brief is and the context of where the piece will be performed and what it’ll be used for. Secondly, would be to negotiate any things that I would feel strongly that I would like to include and just check that’s what the performer would like, or is ok with, and then perhaps to go to concerts with that performer playing so I can hear him or her, listen to recordings, maybe spend a couple of hours with that person- with their sound, with their tone, and to see their playing, and see the sort of things they’re interested in writing for, and also the things that sort of appeal to me about their playing that I can feature. Once I’ve made that decision I’ll probably sketch something and then develop the piece from there, bearing in mind what the saxophone can and can’t do, and then perhaps have a workshop stage at some point when its in its first draft- I mean this is an ideal situation, and then hand it over at the end with a bit of tweaking in the rehearsal period if it needs it. I’m becoming more and more aware as I’m writing that there’s a difference between writing for a live performance and writing for a recording. So if it was for a recording I would compose it slightly different if it was a live performance, being a sort of prime reason for the commission.

SW: How would that vary the process for you?

KA: I don’t know if the process would vary but perhaps the piece might be slightly different; I’d be aware of the space it’d be performed in, but also I’ve noticed that some of the pieces that I’ve recorded have been tricky to record because I rely on resonance or piano peddling, holding over, and things that don’t have defined clear breaks- or pieces that don’t have clear defined silences I should say-are more difficult to record, it’s more being an understanding I’m getting about the recording process. If it was for a recording I’d just compose it slightly different, but the process would remain the same.

SW: Ok, awesome. Ok so if you are writing a piece, say as you mentioned, for Reed Music, for saxophone and piano, how long would that process take for you?

KA: I’m really slow. I think every composer varies wildly when it comes to this. I don’t think you can pinpoint anything. I’m slow because I have a family and a job, but even before a family and a job, I’ve never been fast. I’m quick to get my initial material. That’s not ever a problem, but I really like to sit with the material for a long time, because it sort of develops in my head over time and either I’m able to sort of create more sophisticated or meaningful pieces with more time, so I often ask for as long a time as I can just because the composing time is always scant. So it really depends on the length of the piece. A five-minute saxophone and piano piece isn’t going to take as long as a twenty minute one, and then if it’s for orchestra and saxophone for example that’s a big deal, depending on the duration. So I’m always talking in months, I’m never talking in weeks.

SW: No that’s understandable.
KA: Well some people, its amazing, they tend to pop out a great piece really rather fast, and I’m quite envious of that, its not something I’ve had the headspace for at this juncture.

SW: No, that’s fine, everyone works differently.

KA: It’s interesting though; I find it curious to see how other people work.

SW: No, that’s right. All right, so the next question I had was: do you intend to compose for the saxophone in the future?

KA: Yes, absolutely, I love it. I think it’s a really versatile, colourful instrument. I don’t have plans to write of the saxophone right now, I’ve got other pieces on the boil, but yes I would be sad to think I wasn’t going to write another saxophone piece, that would be very sad. What I’ve never written for is a saxophone quartet, or a saxophone ensemble, so I’d be keen to explore that at some point. I’m not busting to do that, but I feel that would be good at some point, but I do like the idea of saxophone as a solo instrument.

SW: Well, I look forward to hearing your quartet then.

KA: One day. Do you compose music as well?

SW: Oh, not too much. I have a little bit but not for a long time. Maybe after I finish my studies I might try.

KA: Yes, I think like percussionists, saxophonists write well for saxophone obviously. But there does seem to be quite a lot of composers who are saxophonists.

SW: No, that’s right. I guess we will just know the capabilities of the instrument and things like that.

KA: Yes, its all the fingering and all that kind of stuff that I would love to- I mean it would come more intuitively to you than it would to me. I’d love to know the instrument that well-that I could write as a player. That would be something to aim for.

SW: Yes, it’s interesting to find out you play a bit of saxophone as well.

KA: Oh, for a year in a group class, when I was doing my bachelor of education we had to learn a new instrument each year and get about up to fourth grade on it. And that partly because we were doing teaching degrees, so it was really helpful to be able to go into schools, and directing ensembles and be able to say, no you need to put your first finger down, or know that the trombones can’t blow for ever, and that kind of thing. But it has helped me; it has been informative for me, because I did the guitar and trombone as well, even though I couldn’t get a note out of any of them now.

SW: Don’t worry; you’re not alone in that. I wish I could play. All right, so this next question it is broad, but in your opinion, what is the future of the classical saxophone in Australia?

KA: I think the future of classical saxophone in Australia is probably pretty bright. There seem to be some highly motivated teachers, performers, new music specialists and saxophonists who are connected to composers, who are bugging composers to write, and commissioning, and being very mindful of the composers needs I would say; in giving multiple performances, or recordings that’s could have broadcasts. I think there are really good performer-composer relationships that are out there that work well to promote the saxophone. I think it’s an instrument that most people can relate to in some way, and I’m thinking audiences here. I think you can imagine in the next 50-100 years Australia could have a really huge base of great saxophone music.

SW: Fantastic. Well that brings us to the end, but is there anything else you would like to add that you think is relevant?

KA: No, I don’t think so. I think where saxophone will get to and where new repertoire will get to will depend largely upon both saxophonists and composers and the sort of
working relationships that they form. That’s my experience and that’s what I notice in other people around me as well. I think that’s about all.
SW: All right, well thank you very much for your time Katy.
Interview with Brenton Broadstock

SW: All right, we’re now recording, so this is interview number three with Brenton Broadstock on the 26th of June 2015. Brenton do you consent to audio recording of this interview?
BB: Yes I do Simon.
SW: All right, fantastic, thanks very much. All right Brenton so the first question I had for you is why are you writing for the saxophone as a classical instrument, as opposed to a more jazz or popular music setting.
BB: I thought that was an interesting question, the fact that you put classical there, the premise of that is that its not a classical instrument, my immediate response is well it is a classical instrument, it always has been a classical instrument since Sax invented it. So, maybe it’s been used in jazz settings in more recent times, but right from the very beginning, right from the 1850’s when it kind of was a fully formed instrument, its always been a classical instrument. So, to use it in a classical setting, you know, there’s some fantastic precedence, of course going back to Debussy, from 1901, with his Rhapsodie, so we now kind of have a 160 years of classical repertoire, from some amazing composers, people have used it since Prokofiev, right up to John Adam’s concerto of recent times. So, it kind of begs the question, why wouldn’t you write for the saxophone as a classical instrument, it is a classical instrument, and you know, its ideally suited to a classical setting, depending on the kind of context you use it in.
SW: Hmm, sure. Yeah, I guess the reason I put there the classical is, just from speaking to many other people, people still find it hard to sort of see the saxophone through a classical lens, even though as you rightly said it was created as a classical instrument, but yeah I’m glad you can see it in that light, that’s really good.
BB: Well, you know Benny Goodman used the clarinet in a jazz setting, so, does that mean the clarinet is not a classical instrument? I mean its just the way someone’s used it that’s all. It’s very much a classical instrument to me, and yeah, so that’s fine.
SW: Ok, well in that case, let me rephrase it, why are you writing for the saxophone full stop?
BB: Well I think, you know I can answer for myself, and maybe other composers as well, you know, in a way its very opportunistic, composers are willing to write for anything, you know, the opportunity arises and take the opportunity, and if you get a good player that comes to you, whether it be on kazoo or saxophone, it doesn’t really matter. Someone says, you know- and they are kind of an expert in their field- and they say you know I’d like you to write something, you kind of jump at the opportunity, because being a composer is about expressing your creativity in whatever form, you know, is kind of possible. So, when I’ve been asked to write for saxophone, I kind of jump at the chance, because often you know its been fantastic players, like Barry Cockroft, or Michael Duke, and you say well, you’re not going to get a better performance, so why wouldn’t you write for the saxophone? Partly, that’s the kind of really basic answer to your question, but also the saxophone is an amazing instrument in its own right, in that it has such incredible technical capabilities. You know in terms of the way it plays, its ability to go across huge dynamic ranges, its ability to be so technically versatile, it has beautiful, the tone, the timbral qualities across different registers. All those kind of things make writing for the saxophone a really joy. So there are two things there, the opportunistic part and the fact that’s it’s also a beautiful instrument as well.
SW: Hmm, sure. So you mentioned when players have contacted you, like Barry or Michael, so in this regard, are the works being commissioned as such, or has it been written for, more like an admiration of the performer, how is that working?

BB: Look, it often varies, you know sometimes you get a commission, and sometimes it’s a commission where someone will say I’d really like you to write something, or maybe something’s coming up, some kind of opportunity, and say I’d like you to write something for this. And in the case of Barry, I think both the kind of pieces I’ve done for him have been more of the latter, you know the opportunities here and would you play these works, if I write you something will you play it kind of think. The saxophone concerto I did for Michael Duke, that was a commissioned work, something we talked about doing over a long period of time. So yeah, it can vary. Again its kind of an opportunity situation as well, where you kind of fit according to what the need to, and as we know moneys kind of tight, not every performer can afford to pay you to write something, we cant always get commissions from the Australia council or other things so sometimes you just have to write because you know you’re going to get a good performance.

SW: Hmm, yes, sure. You did touch on this, but why do you think other composers are writing for the saxophone in the same setting that you are?

BB: Yeah, look, I think that’s a question you should ask other composers, but I suspect for the same reason. You know its both opportunistic and because it’s a fantastic instrument to write for. I was just looking online at the comments that Jennifer Fowler, an English composer wrote a piece for Amy Dickson and she did a concerto for her just recently, and her comments were “I heard Amy play, and I thought you know, I really want to write her a piece”, so its also that as well, when you hear someone that is an expert in their instrument, you kind of have the urge to contribute to the repertoire, and get this person to play something for you. I think that’s got something to do with it as well.

SW: Sure. Before Barry and Michael, you’ve been composing for quite sometime now, were there other performers around who inspired you to think about the saxophone?

BB: Oh Absolutely, Peter Clinch in Melbourne, I had the privilege of knowing Peter Clinch in my early days at the University of Melbourne, Peter Clinch was also there. He is kind of an icon in saxophone playing in Melbourne, and set up a classical saxophone quartet- this is kind of the 60’s and 70’s- unfortunately he died in the early 80’s. I did write a saxophone concerto for him, which unfortunately he didn’t get to play as he died, and Barry Cockcroft played it instead. But Peter Clinch, I think is probably a pioneer of saxophone playing in this country, and consequently there’s a couple of major works, James Penberthy concerto 1970’s is a fantastic piece. There were several other major Australian composers from that era, from the 1970’s who all wrote for Peter Clinch. And the kind of players that have come out of his school of saxophone are teaching, are still incredibly active in the saxophone community now in Melbourne. But there seems to be a bit of a lag between him, I mean Barry I think studied with Peter Clinch as well, so Barry has kind of come out of that, where as the Sydney school, I don’t know enough about that, where the Sydney school kind of started from, who were kind of the leaders there, but certainly I know more about the Melbourne school.

SW: Hmm, great. So obviously my studies are looking at contemporary composition from the last 25 years, so the sort of hypothesis I have is that there has been a bit of a boom in composition for the saxophone. Are you aware of an increase in the number and perhaps the quality of composition for the saxophone?
BB: Well, there’s been a boom in composers in the last twenty years as well; there’s also been a boom in the number of saxophone players in the last twenty years to. So you’ve got high quality saxophone players being trained, you’ve got a large number of high quality composers who are being trained and they’re kind of all connecting together, so I guess you’re going to get more works, and you’re going to get more works of higher quality, there’s always going to be a few duds, but that’s all part of research and development in any composition. So yes I’ve heard some fantastic works for saxophone, I can’t think of any offhand, but there’s a number on both Michael’s cd and Barry Cockroft CD’s, and I mention those two as I’ve had most to do with both of them, and there’s been some terrific works on their cd’s. But all you need to look at is you know the Reedmusic catalogue just to see how many composers have written for saxophone in the last few years, since he set that business up, you know its got a 100 composers now, and we’re not talking about kind of fly-time night amateur composers, we’re talking about lots of big names from Ross Edwards to Paul Stanhope and Raf Marcellino, yeah there’s lots of them. So did that answer your question?

SW: Yes, no that’s good. So you did mention for you the saxophones always been a classical instrument, do you think as the musical society as such, do you think there’s been a shift in thinking perhaps that the saxophone is a classical instrument now, or?

BB: Sorry I missed the middle bit of that question Simon.

SW: Ok, sure. So I was just asking about if you think there’s been a shift for other people in the musical society thinking about the saxophone as a classical instrument, because, I mean anecdotally many people still regard the saxophone as a jazz instrument.

BB: Yeah, I don’t know if that applies to composers. Maybe if you’re to talk to the general public maybe they’re kind of used to…and maybe even I don’t know if you spoke to a flute player or a clarinet player maybe they’d say its more of a jazz instrument as well, but maybe that’s got to do with their sort of prejudice as classical players. But, I think for composers, I don’t think, and again you know I’m speaking anecdotally as well, I haven’t done any research in this, but it would seem to me that most composers also have always treated it as a classical instrument, yes its used it jazz, and its used in concert bands, and wind bands and things like that, but its still very much a classical instrument. So, yeah that’s all really I can say I suppose.

SW: Yes, sure, ok. So yeah that sort of answers this question anyway so, question four was yeah, so in your opinion is this trend indicative of the instrument becoming more popular, marketable and accepted, but in your mind that’s sort of already there.

BB: Yeah, I think its always been there, I think its, you know been not hijacked, but its been used in popular areas as an instrument. You know its been ruined a bit by people like Kenny G as well, but you know I think yeah, its for me its always been a classical instrument and always will be.

SW: Sure, all right, fantastic. So what is the target audience of your compositions for saxophone?

BB: (Laughs). For saxophone, well I think you should take the bit for saxophone off, because I don’t think it makes any difference whether it’s for saxophone or anything else. And the target audience, I honestly don’t know, because if I write a piece for Michael Duke, and he plays it in the conservatorium, then the target audience is a bunch of music students and maybe a few others, but then if he goes to the World Saxophone congress and he plays it for saxophone aficionados, but then he might go to some little church in Germany or somewhere and play and so you get a whole different audience
altogether, but you know as a composer I don’t have any control over the audience, I can’t control who’s going to listen to my music either in live performance or in broadcast performance, so all I can do is write a piece that expresses whatever it is I want to express and time, give it to the performer and in a way it kind of becomes the performer’s responsibility too, to present that to an audience. So I don’t have a target audience, I never have, and I don’t have a target audience for any of my pieces, because I don’t think it’s about target audience anyway, it’s always about the creative expression I think, that’s what comes first.

SW: Ok, sure. So what is involved in the creative process when you’re writing for the saxophone?

BB: Well again, it’s pretty much the same as writing for any other instrument. You know you still have to go through the whole issues of working out what the piece is, and creating structures and the harmonic elements and all those kinds of things, but then you get to ok so what instruments am I using, I’m using a saxophone and of course you have issues of register and maybe some technical difficulties where you cross different fingering. Kind of sounds the saxophone makes, you know the colours, so all those kind of things…consider how it might blend with what other instruments you’ve got, so if you’re using a small ensemble with saxophone, it’s a very loud instrument, if you have, you know, a flute or a harp or something, the saxophones going to stand out like a sore thumb. So it’s that kind of subtlety you have to kind of bring to bear in the way you use saxophone in kind of ensemble, it’s about finding the right balance in how you use it. If its in a larger ensemble, I guess that’s why it works so well in kind of jazz bands, and wind ensembles, because it kind of fits in with the greater loudness of those ensembles. And as a saxophone quartet, or saxophone ensemble, it works really well, because you have this kind of wonderful homogenous blend of sound from all the instruments, its absolutely gorgeous, as good as a string quartet. And with an orchestra of course it works really well, because you have the kind of big body of sound behind it, and with a piano also it will lend well. But when you get the kind of more intimate ensembles it’s a bit more difficult, so that’s going to affect your creative process in the way you use the instrument. So I guess you have to be aware of you know of the nature of the instrument itself, in order to make the creative process kind of work.

SW: Hmm, sure. So when you’ve been writing for Barry and Michael, have you done some workshopping with them, or how does that sort of play out?

BB: I haven’t, and to be honest that rarely happens for me, kind of more happens with collaborating art forms, and you know when you do opera or something like it’s a bit more significant. But my experience is, when I’ve written for a soloist you kind of ask them the kind of things, you know are happy to do or not happy to do, you also have an idea of what they’re capable of in the first place because you’ve probably heard them, you know them, you’ve spoken to them. So it’s a kind of talking and an understanding the kind of musician, what kind of player they are, and often they come back and say you know right sort of whatever you like, which is nice. And then you kind of throw it out there, and then it becomes maybe a bit of a negotiation at that point, and I’m pretty sure with Michael we did that a few times, you know he’ll just come back with something and say can you change this or can you change that, and that’s fine, I think that’s part of the process of working with someone, and you’ve got to make those kind of adjustments for a particular player, and maybe they just picked up things that, you know in my ignorance of precise capabilities of saxophone, I missed some might say,
you know the fingering across here is difficult, or that kind of thing, so you change it, that’s fine.

SW: Ok, sure. So that’s sort of the process that you’d use for things like extended techniques, I suppose you already have that knowledge before working with them I guess?

NN: Yeah, extended techniques for me are always part of, you know the music. I don’t, I’ve never really written extended techniques for its own sake. It’s always something that hopefully adds to the nature of the music. So, and I’m quite familiarly with all the extended techniques in jazz and classical music on the saxophone. And then you kind of throw them out there again, in terms of you know what can be done on the score, you send it off to the player and they might ask, you know what do you mean by this, and then you explain it, and then they’ll come up with some way of dealing with it. Or not, as the case might be.

SW: Yes, sure. I know this a very broad question, but when you’re composing for the saxophone, on average how long would that take you? I know it would depend, you know on which setting, which medium you’re writing in. But yeah, could you just give me some details on sort of the duration?

BB: Yeah, look that is a difficult question, because it depends on what you’re writing for, so you know, if it’s a piece just for solo instrument and piano, its kind of a little bit more easy to deal with, in terms of looking at things on the screen, you know in the software, but if you’re using an orchestra its kind of a lot slower, because you just have to take time to go through the whole thing, so you kind of, practical elements involved. You’ve got more instruments to write for, so it can be anything from months to a year, it just depends. I wrote a piece for Barry Cockroft called, Not so near, not so far, which I wrote in Italy, I was in Italy for a month, and virtually wrote the thing while I was there, that’s because I was there to do nothing else, so I had kind of every day to work on it, so I got most of it done. So it really depends I guess on how much time you have, how focused you are, how easily the piece comes, sometimes you know the composition process, and I can say that about the saxophone concerto I wrote for Michael Duke, It came, it was very difficult for some reason, and sometimes the music, its got nothing to do with the instrument, its just got to do with sometimes that cold creative flow, its just not easy. And, so it’s a bit of a struggle sometimes to get it out, so that piece I worked up to maybe more than a year, and I’m still not entirely happy with it, so there you go.

SW: Yeah, sure. All right, great. Do you intend to compose for the saxophone in the future?

BB: Yeah, absolutely, I can certainly foresee writing another piece for both Michael and Barry at some stage, and I guess for anyone else. You know it all depends on that sort of opportunity that comes up, and there are a lot of composers out there, we talked about that earlier, there’s certainly a great number of composers now writing, so both of those two players in particular, you know have large opportunities to have pieces written for them. But if it comes up to write for them or for someone else, you know I’m always very happy to do it.

SW: Fantastic. In your opinion, what do you think is the future of the saxophone in Australia?

BB: Oh, it’ll be dead in the next five years (laughs). Oh look, I think the classical saxophone will be around as long as there are classical saxophonists, and I don’t think that’s going to change in the next 30, 40, 50 years. Because there is such a, I think as you say, there is a much greater interest in classical saxophone in recent years, and I
think that’s got a lot to do with the fact there are more and more saxophonists being trained, so they’re just going to keep on growing, they’re going to obviously produce students, and they’re all going to want to play saxophone music. And the great thing about writing for saxophone is that because it is a relatively new instrument, you know, 150 years, a lot of the music is kind of new, which is fantastic, so its one of those instruments that’s kind of rally nice to write for because it is still kind of finding its way in the world as an instrument, so I think has huge potential.

SW: Yup, fantastic. Alright Brenton, well I think I’ve covered everything I was after, is there anything else that you think is relevant that you’d like to add?

BB: No I think I’ve probably covered everything that you wanted to know about, so it’s fine.

SW: Yup, sure. Alright, well in that case we might finish up the recording, so I might just turn that off.