

### **Prelude, Cadence, et Finale – Alfred Desenclos (1956)**

Written as a jury piece for saxophonists at the Paris Conservatory, *Prelude, Cadence, et Finale* by Alfred Desenclos contains numerous virtuosic passages and sweeping melody lines. Incorporating many of the compositional techniques from past French Impressionists such as Debussy and Ravel, the piece is divided into three distinct sections.

The prelude begins the work, and establishes a perpetual drive through the use of continuous rhythmic motion. It also establishes the main thematic concepts heard throughout the work. An extended saxophone cadenza follows the opening section of the work. With the altered dominant seventh chord acting as a harmonic underpinning, the cadenza contains dynamic, sweeping melodic gestures and a flurry of notes, leading to a dramatic conclusion with the finale, which incorporates elements from the prelude and cadenza.

### **Le Merle Noir – Olivier Messiaen (1952)**

Composed by Olivier Messiaen for flautists wishing to enter the Paris Conservatory, *Le Merle Noir* incorporates the notated rhythm and sound of a black bird as the melodic material for the flute. Although Messiaen used bird song related material in previous works, such as his famous *Quatuor pour la fin du temps*, *Le Merle Noir* was one of the first to integrate actual bird song.

Bird song most easily fits the timbre of flute, however the transcription for soprano saxophone works remarkably well, though it does present numerous challenges, especially when dealing with the tessitura. In addition, flute flutter tonguing passages can be translated into saxophone rolling of the tongue, glottal trills, or growling. The piece contains three contrasting sections. The first is a fantasy, with a highly expressive unaccompanied bird song. The next is a duet with the piano in a more metered phrasing pattern. The final section type is the rhythmic ‘Vif,’ which contains highly punctuated notes and a relentless flow of energy. It is this section which most closely imitates the call of the black bird.

### **Sonata – Edison Denisov (1970)**

Edison Denisov was a Russian composer and mathematician who taught orchestration and composition at the Moscow Conservatory. He received international fame for *Le soleil de Incas* (1964), a cycle for soprano and chamber ensemble, but also wrote extensively for saxophone. The *Sonata* for alto saxophone and piano, composed for Jean-Marie Londeix, shares numerous compositional characteristics with Denisov’s *Sonata* for alto saxophone and cello, composed for Claude Delangle in 1994.

Divided into three movements, the *Sonata* incorporates numerous compositional styles, including serialized and pointillist approaches. The first movement is highly serialized, including pitch, rhythm, and dynamics. The second movement, almost entirely unaccompanied, is reminiscent of the Japanese

shakuhachi flute. The third movement of the work is highly influenced by jazz, most notably in the pulse, rhythms, timbres, and the interplay between voices. The "walking" bass line opens the movement and makes numerous appearances throughout. Denisov includes numerous extended techniques in the work, including altissimo, multiphonics, and quarter tones.

### **Jungle – Christian Lauba (1992-94)**

Christian Lauba is a French composer and pedagogue most noted for his saxophone compositions. A professor of analysis at the Bordeaux Conservatory, Lauba has won numerous awards for his compositions, including the SACEM prize in composition for these nine etudes for saxophones.

Written through the commissioning and assistance of the saxophonist Jean-Marie Londeix between 1992 and 1994, Lauba's *Jungle* is one in a series of nine etudes for saxophones that showcase various extended techniques to produce an exotic soundscape. In *Jungle*, which lasts just three to four minutes depending upon performance tempo, these techniques include circular breathing, slap tonguing, multiphonics, and altissimo.

### **Concerto – Ingolf Dahl (1949, rev. 53)**

The Ingolf Dahl *Concerto* for saxophone and wind ensemble is considered to be one of the major works in the repertoire, not only for saxophone but wind band as well. Dedicated to the German classical saxophonist Sigurd Rasher, the *Concerto* was originally much longer than its current iteration, and was revised numerous times in the 1950s. The influence of numerous composers, including Maurice Ravel, Igor Stravinsky, and Aaron Copland, are quite evident throughout the work, both in terms of melodic material and orchestration.

The piece opens with a dramatic flourish and aria-like recitative, which progresses into a more rhythmic declamation before winding to a close and segueing into the passacaglia. Composed in an arch form, this section moves between sadness and triumph, with each passing line adding to the tension of the movement. Characteristics similar to Copland emerge in the final movement, which is light and articulate, conveying a sense of jubilation which drives the piece to its dramatic finish.