This largely descriptive document examines the writing for saxophone in Bernstein’s dramatic works for the stage. In looking at the scores for *West Side Story*, *Wonderful Town, On the Town, Mass,* and *A White House Cantata*, elements of musicianship and style that confront the player who is seeking an informed performance of Bernstein’s work are discussed, as well as appropriate technical approaches for accomplishing a successful performance. Of primary consideration are performance practice concerns such as phrasing, articulation, and tone color appropriate for the various styles of music Bernstein writes in his eclectic music, as well as score knowledge and elements of playing in orchestra such as balance and blend with other instruments. The result is demonstrated with edited musical excerpts and accompanying annotations, and the conclusions drawn are supported by interviews with prominent New York-Broadway theater performers.

The study does not address concerns regarding the various arrangements of these works for orchestra, band, or chamber group. Additionally this research does not address other works of his that utilize the saxophone, such as the film score to *On The Waterfront* and *Prelude, Fugue, and Riffs* for solo clarinet and jazz ensemble. Also delimited will be issues such as ‘doubling’ other instruments, matters of playing specific saxophones, or saxophone equipment. In addition to the major thrust of the study, an up-to-date survey

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1 *A White House Cantata* is the concert version of the musical *1600 Pennsylvania Avenue*. As of the time of writing it is the only available version of the score.
of scholarship and related research on Leonard Bernstein is presented, as well as a
cOMPlete edition of the saxophone parts for each score are included for further study and
practice.
THE USE OF THE SAXOPHONE IN THE DRAMATIC MUSIC OF LEONARD BERNSTEIN:
A GUIDE FOR INFORMED PERFORMANCE

by

Wayne Eric Gargrave

A Dissertation Submitted to
the Faculty of The Graduate School at
The University of North Carolina at Greensboro
in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Musical Arts

Greensboro
2006

Approved by

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Kelly Burke, Committee Chair
To my wife, Ann-Renee, with inexpressible gratitude.
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Finally, three artists deserve special thanks and gratitude for their great and generous contributions of their time, wisdom, and experience to further this project and indeed make it possible: Dr. John Cipolla, Assistant Professor of Clarinet and Saxophone at Western Kentucky University and longtime member of the Radio City Music Hall Orchestra, Mr. Albert Regni, Professor of Saxophone at Virginia Commonwealth University and internationally renowned saxophonist who performed with Leonard Bernstein frequently over a period of nearly twenty-five years, and Mr. Sid Ramin, internationally renowned composer and arranger and a close friend of and longtime collaborator with Bernstein.
PREFACE

My interest in this subject comes primarily from two sources. First, the interest and respect instilled in me by my former teacher, Dr. Eugene Rousseau, for the history of the saxophone and for composers like Leonard Bernstein who have through their creative endeavors helped to establish the saxophone in the realm of concert music. Secondly, from my admiration of Bernstein’s music gained from frequent performances of Bernstein’s music myself in recital, on the concert stage, and in the pit.
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION AND DESCRIPTION OF STUDY

Leonard Bernstein (1918-1990), an icon of American classical music, was one of the most gifted musicians to have graced the world. Bernstein left a large and important imprint in almost every aspect of music: as a performer, composer, educator, and scholar-philosopher. While his legacy as a performer lives on through his large discography, it is for his catalog of compositions that Bernstein is a household phenomenon. Even those who do not know his name know his tunes, be it through the background music in a ‘Gap’ clothing commercial or any one of a number of other ways his music has entered the popular consciousness.

Despite this wide acceptance of Bernstein’s music, scholars and performers alike have done comparatively little to investigate his contributions. His music, however, is rich with topics for study. Works such as his masterpiece, West Side Story, are patchwork tapestries reflecting the diversity of America and its music. Bernstein assimilated a wide range of styles, techniques, and genres, in turn producing music that united these disparate elements in ways that are still fresh and new today.
Problem Statement

This document examines the writing for saxophone in Bernstein’s dramatic works for the stage. By looking at the scores for West Side Story, Wonderful Town, On the Town, Mass, and A White House Cantata, the writer examines elements of musicianship and style that confront the player who is seeking an informed performance of Bernstein’s work. Of primary consideration are performance practice concerns such as phrasing, articulation, and tone color appropriate for the various styles of music Bernstein writes in his eclectic music, as well as score knowledge and elements of playing in orchestra such as balance and blend with other instruments.

The study does not address concerns regarding the various arrangements of these works for orchestra, band, or chamber group. Additionally this research does not address other works of his that utilize the saxophone, such as the film score to On The Waterfront and Prelude, Fugue, and Riffs for solo clarinet and jazz ensemble. Also delimited are issues such as ‘doubling’ other instruments and matters of playing specific saxophones.

\[\text{\textsuperscript{2}}\]

\[\text{\textsuperscript{2}}\text{ A White House Canata is the concert version of the musical 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue. As of the time of writing it is the only available version of the score.}\]
Status of Related Research

Despite Bernstein’s immense presence in music, precious little has been written regarding his artistic output. Of course, no discussion of Bernstein would be complete without mentioning his own writings. Beyond this, musicological investigation over the past thirty years has largely been limited to biographies and brief descriptions of his stage works.

For a complete and up to date discussion of the materials available for research into the life and work of Leonard Bernstein, the reader should first consult Paul Laird’s volume entitled *Leonard Bernstein: A Guide to Research*. Published in 2002, the guide is a thorough and well-annotated listing of various media devoted to Bernstein, written by a musicologist with a long history of Bernstein scholarship.

Recent output has continued to focus heavily on biography, as other scholarly issues such as analytical and sociological matters are just now beginning to be explored. There are a number of articles reflecting various areas of thought on his music, much of which are either critiques of his recordings or concerts and, in the past decade since his death, retrospectives on his career and his musical influence. The majority of these writings, however, have no bearing on this project.

Regarding Bernstein’s own prose, it is essential to consider his Bachelor’s graduation thesis from Harvard University entitled “The Absorption of Race Elements in

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American Music contain the kernel of Bernstein’s compositional philosophy and view of American musical development. A broader and more philosophic view of music is considered in his The Unanswered Question, which is a transcription of his Harvard Norton lecture series.

In the category of biography, two recent works standout for mention. An insightful view of Bernstein’s life from a longtime friend and professional collaborator is presented in Humphrey Burton’s biography Leonard Bernstein. Joan Peyser has recently updated her contrasting and controversial look at the composer entitled Bernstein: A Biography.

There are many books that survey American music in general, some of which focus specifically on stage writing for Broadway. Gerald Bordman’s American Musical Theatre: A Chronicle and Denny Martin Flinn’s Musical! A Grand Tour: The Rise, Glory, and Fall of an American Institution, are recent books that examine the history of writing for stage. Joseph P. Swain takes a more in-depth look at the American musical in his book The Broadway Musical. Discussing archetypes of each sub-genre of the American musical, in his chapter on tragedy Swain takes an analytical approach to West Side Story. American Music: A Panorama by Daniel Kingman, and H. Wiley

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Hitchcock and Kyle Gann’s often-updated *Music in the United States: A Historical Introduction*\(^\text{12}\), are important general surveys of American music, as is John Warthen Struble’s *The History of American Classical Music: MacDowell through Minimalism*\(^\text{13}\). David Denby’s article for *The New Yorker*\(^\text{14}\), “The trouble with Lenny: Why we are still taking the measure of Leonard Bernstein’s protean gifts” is a look at how Bernstein has fared in the consciousness of the musical public, as does a similar article by David Schiff in *The Atlantic Monthly*\(^\text{15}\) entitled “Re-hearing Bernstein.” Two articles that discuss the diverse use of style in Bernstein’s music are Paul Laird’s articles “Leonard Bernstein: Eclecticism and Vernacular Elements in *Chichester Psalms*” for the *Sonneck Society Bulletin*\(^\text{16}\) and “The best of all possible legacies: A critical look at Bernstein, his eclecticism, and *Candide*” for *Ars Musica*\(^\text{17}\).

Some discussions of more specific aspects of Bernstein’s music can be located in the few dissertations that address his work. Philip L. Copeland examines extra-musical issues in his dissertation “The Role of Drama and Spirituality in the Music of Leonard Bernstein.”\(^\text{18}\) A discussion of sociological elements in music that focuses on Bernstein’s *Mass* is presented in William Andrew Cottle’s “Social Commentary in Vocal Music in

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the Twentieth Century as evidenced by Leonard Bernstein’s Mass”\textsuperscript{19}. Two dissertations which focus on analytical issues are Jack Gottlieb’s “The Music of Leonard Bernstein: A Study of Melodic Manipulations,”\textsuperscript{20} James Walter Moore’s “A Study of Tonality in Selected Works by Leonard Bernstein,”\textsuperscript{21} and Leonard Jordan Lehrman’s “Leonard Bernstein’s Serenade after Plato’s Symposium: An Analysis.”\textsuperscript{22}

There are no documents that address Bernstein and the saxophone specifically. However, one volume that contains an obvious correlation to the topic of my research is Edwin Friedrich’s dissertation “The Saxophone: A Study of Its Use in Symphonic and Operatic Literature.”\textsuperscript{23}

Justification

In examining the above literature, it has been noted that there is no scholarly output addressing the specific needs of saxophonists. As a result, there is ample room for exploration and discussion of topics of interpretation and performance such as phrasing, style, sound, and playing in an orchestra.

\textsuperscript{21} James Walter Moore, Ph.D., “A Study of Tonality in Selected Works by Leonard Bernstein” (Ph.D. diss., Florida State University, 1984).
Procedures

This document is largely descriptive in nature. Of primary concern is the examination of the scores of the music itself. Positivistic inquiry will include close examination for matters regarding notational concerns, printing accuracy, and errata. A brief background regarding Bernstein and the origination of his compositions is explored through various primary and secondary sources for providing the reader with a basic context of the research. Where appropriate, sources regarding broader considerations of musical style will be consulted. Of particular usefulness are interviews of Mr. Sid Ramin, the lead collaborator in the orchestration of *West Side Story* and longtime friend of Bernstein, Broadway artist Dr. John Cipolla, longtime member of the Radio City Music Hall orchestra and Assistant Professor of Clarinet and Saxophone at Western Kentucky University, and Mr. Albert Regni, a major New York studio musician, recording artist, and Professor of Saxophone at Virginia Commonwealth University.

The information gleaned from the above is presented in a combination of prose commentary and musical manuscript form. For the most significant passages of each score, matters of musical description, style, rhythm, phrasing, articulation, and technical matters are discussed in prose. These concerns are illustrated with excerpted passages from the scores as well as edited excerpts, when appropriate, to show in musical notation what is discussed in the text.
Organization of the Text

The presentation of the research is divided into five chapters, a bibliography and appendices. After this brief chapter of introduction stating the goals and methods of the research, the document continues with a brief chapter concerning information relevant to informed performance in a professional context, including general matters relating to appropriate musical style, professionalism and career management, and equipment. The following three chapters will look at the music and commentary itself, including one each on Wonderful Town and West Side Story, and one that includes On the Town, Mass, and A White House Cantata in compilation.

Finally, the document closes with a bibliography and appendices containing excerpted full scores of the major saxophone parts of each musical, transcripts of the interviews, as well as logistical information for the paper including copyright permissions, et cetera.

Summary

In accomplishing this research, the writer has created a document that informs the considerate performer with regards to the wide variety of stylistic concerns that must be brought to bear upon the music, as well as see these results manifested in careful editing of the music itself. This has been accomplished through interviews with significant figures regarding Bernstein’s work, an examination of other sources relevant to the inquiry, and the presentation of prose and musical excerpts to create a manual for
saxophonists seeking to make informed choices in interpreting Bernstein’s significant works for the stage.
CHAPTER II
GENERAL CONCERNS

Background

Leonard Bernstein is without doubt one of the most important art music composers to utilize the saxophone. The success of his works across different audiences and in various mediums of performance from theater and concert stage to film and recording have given his music an ever rising sense of importance; an importance of which the saxophone is a direct beneficiary. The saxophone has been fortunate to be along for the ride.

The vernacular has long been the genesis of so called art music, gradually folded into the museum of the canon over a long period of time through various avenues of presentation and preservation. Jazz, the blues, marches, and Latin styles have come to be appreciated for their vibrancy and creativity in their own right. These modes have also gained ever-increasing visibility in art music. It is works such as West Side Story, which so brilliantly incorporate vernacular styles into the rich existing traditions of musical theater, operetta, and opera that help these musics not only gain further acceptance, but also rework and revitalize ageing genres as well as create new avenues of expression.

Bernstein was aware of this use of the vernacular as a channel for creative expression from the earliest days of his career. In his Harvard essay “The Absorption of Race Elements in American Music” he traced this theme from the music of Dvorak to his
later mentor and friend Aaron Copland. It is easy to find this philosophy reflected in his compositions. As writer Larry Starr notes:

Like Copland, Bernstein investigated the American vernacular from the standpoint of a formally trained classical musician; but Bernstein resembled Gershwin more than Copland in the extent of his immersion in American musical theater and popular song. 

Longtime Bernstein collaborator and friend, Sid Ramin, notes that like all composers, Bernstein was a product of the sounds and musical world he grew up in. He states, “Bernstein’s music has a foot in both camps since his love for ‘pop’ music and his classically oriented background made his music naturally unique. I think he absorbed certain sounds from the big bands of the era.” Perhaps Bernstein historian David Schiff summed up Bernstein’s compositional success best, “Bernstein understood that the way to incorporate jazz into classical music was to evoke it rather than imitate it, for any imitation was doomed to be pale.” These thoughts, penned upon reflection nearly fifty years after the aforementioned essay, are exactly what Bernstein found so convincing in the music of Copland and others.

West Side Story (1957) is the centerpiece of Bernstein’s compositions, and with good reason. It is one of the central works in the musical theater canon, and is a tour de force of Bernstein’s compositional prowess and aesthetic philosophy. While West Side Story is first of Bernstein’s works to come to mind for saxophonists and listeners alike,

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26 Ramin, Sid, New York City, to Eric Gargrave, Greensboro, 26 May 2004, letter via E-mail.
numerous other stage works exploit the instrument to great effect. Prior works are the very popular *On the Town* (1944) and *Wonderful Town* (1953). Following it are *Mass* (1971), which continues to prompt interest and more hearings as the years pass, and the little heard *1600 Pennsylvania Avenue* (1976), which was later reworked by Sid Ramin and released in a concert version as *A White House Cantata* (1997).

Works involving the saxophone which are interspersed amongst the above musicals are the orchestral suites, the jazzy *Prelude, Fugue, and Riffs* (1949), and Bernstein’s lone film score which accompanied the critically acclaimed *On the Waterfront* (1954). The orchestral suites are possibly Bernstein’s most frequently performed scores. All prominently feature the saxophone, having been borrowed from the primary arrangements and recruited for the stage. First chronologically amongst these is *Three Dance Episodes from “On The Town”* (1945), followed by *Symphonic Suite from “On The Waterfront”* (1955), and finally the orchestral staple of *Symphonic Dances from “West Side Story”*(1960).

*On the Town* depicts New York City in wartime 1944, the idea of which found its first incarnation in the earlier ballet *Fancy Free* that had premiered earlier the same year. The plot traces three sailors in search of fun and love while tracking across town on shore leave. The first of Bernstein’s major Broadway successes, the musical has received three productions on the Great White Way beginning with its opening at the Adelphi Theater on December 28, 1944. Outside of the material’s success as a musical and suite, the song
'New York, New York’ has had a life of its own outside the musical as a popular herald of the qualities of the city ever since.\textsuperscript{28}

The score to \textit{On the Town} features five woodwinds, all of which double on other instruments. With regards to the saxophone, it is the second clarinetist that is called upon to perform a few brief passages on the alto saxophone beginning with the end of the first act and continuing in act two. The writing is brief, with some rhythmically challenging passages. The styles involved are swing and a brief line of two-step type music.

Next in line in Bernstein’s catalogue of musicals is \textit{Wonderful Town}. The collaboration of Bernstein, Comden, and Green depicts two girls coming to New York City from Ohio in search of love and success. The musical produced several hit songs including “Ohio” and “A Little Bit in Love”. \textit{Wonderful Town} received its Broadway opening at the Winter Garden Theatre on February 25, 1953.

\textit{Wonderful Town} contains the most writing for saxophone of Bernstein’s entire catalog. Featuring five reed books, the saxophone is featured prominently throughout the entire score right from the opening chords of the ‘Overture’. All five reed books double on saxophone as well as multiple other woodwinds. The greater involvement of the instrument is not just reflected in the material played, but also the presence of a full jazz band section of alto to baritone, including significant and prominent writing for the seldom-used bass saxophone. Much more varied in style than its predecessor \textit{On the Town}, \textit{Wonderful Town} features styles ranging from swing to vaudeville settings, tin-pan-alley songs, and marches.

The crown jewel of Bernstein’s output is *West Side Story*. The famous retelling of *Romeo and Juliet* has captured both public and professional admiration in a way that few works of art music have in the 20th century. Never before, and in the minds of many critics never since, had he so well fashioned a work that merged traditional elements with the vernacular. In a short fifty years the music has been recycled back into popular consciousness, signaling a resonance and staying power that has affected most all hearers. After a long and sometimes difficult gestation, *West Side Story* came to Broadway on September 26, 1957, again at the Winter Garden Theatre. It was a bold statement artistically and philosophically and a turning point for American musical theater and dance.

Musically the score is amongst Bernstein’s richest creations, including all of the vernacular elements of his earlier works, but also incorporating Latin styles and a bluesy rock and roll, along with an increasing amount of operatic sensibility. Never before had dance figured so centrally in a work, and the score not only reflects the genius of Bernstein and his collaborators, but also the energetic input of choreographer and conceptual lead Jerome Robbins. The instrumentation includes five books for reeds, four of which prominently feature the saxophone from soprano to bass. The fifth reed book is for bassoon exclusively.

Bernstein’s increasing commitment to his performing schedule, as well as investments in many educational and academic pursuits, took time away from his compositional efforts. Subsequent projects were never as well received, even if they continued to be bold in their conception. *Mass: A Theatre Piece for Singers, Players,*
and Dancers (1971) is one of Bernstein’s most varied collages of musical style, as well as amongst the most controversial of his texts. Loosely organized around the Roman Catholic liturgy, Mass borders between a concert and stage work with the widest pastiche of musical style. Scored for a relatively large standard orchestra with the addition of rock instruments such as electric and bass guitar, the three clarinet players are required to double soprano, alto, and tenor saxophone respectively. The work was premiered at the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts on September 8, 1971 at a concert given in honor of President Kennedy, and received a premiere of the chamber version, scored by Sid Ramin, on December 26, 1972 in Los Angeles, California.

The final work to use the saxophone in Bernstein’s catalog of musicals is 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, which opened on Broadway at the Mark Hellinger Theater for a brief run of four days on May 4, 1976. Eventually withdrawn as a musical by Bernstein, other performances of excerpts followed. It was later revised for a concert setting by Charlie Harmon and Sid Ramin and presented as A White House Cantata in 1997. The work utilizes the soprano saxophone in its second act, which is written into the second clarinet part.

Playing Bernstein’s Music

Saxophonists seeking to play Bernstein’s works find a unique challenge in performing his works. Aside from the issues of doubling on other instruments, which are in large part beyond the scope of this research, the eclectic nature of Bernstein’s inspiration and output raises many issues of performance practice for those seeking to
make a credible, informed performance of his works. Musicians must be fluent in both classical and vernacular styles, comfortable in particular with swing. They must possess not only knowledge of these styles, but experience in making correct choices of equipment, have discerning knowledge of the scores, and various other issues in order to be successful.

According to prominent Broadway reed player Dr. John Cipolla, chief amongst musical skills is having a musical temperament oriented towards blending. In an interview with this writer discussing the elements of successful playing in the Broadway style arena, Dr. Cipolla returned to the concept of blending in sound, articulation, and style. In discussing his early years in Broadway and advice he received from legendary Broadway reed player George Marge, Cipolla gave this summary of the all-encompassing nature of blending:

George Marge had told me that when I was in college. That’s what he used to see. Guys would come on a recording date and they wouldn’t blend. It’s not just a matter of volume. It’s a matter of rhythmic conception, stylistic conception, intonation, or just tone quality. Just because everybody plays a Buffet clarinet you don’t all have to play a Buffet clarinet, but you want to be able to put your sound inside the other person’s sound so that you don’t stick out.

The worst thing that can happen on a Broadway show is the conductor can look over and know that the regular player is not there. Conversely, the best compliment a sub can get is the conductor saying, “Well, I didn’t know the regular player wasn’t there that day.” You just fill the shoes. The one overriding thing that makes a player successful musically speaking is being able to blend with other players. ²⁹

Further conversation with Dr. Cipolla and prominent New York reed player Al Regni pointed out score study, recordings, and preparatory practicing with this information in mind as key to developing the skills to blend properly, as well as knowing when to project in a solo or otherwise exposed line. Regni comments:

I always like to be familiar with the material that you’re going to play. Even if you’re playing a couple of notes it is nice to know when you’re playing and whom you’re playing with, how exposed it is. I like to be able to hear it beforehand. Just for preparation’s sake you should know what you’re doing.

Learn it as thoroughly as you can. And for a show, that’s a strong necessity today. For a show you make a recording. Go in the pit, bring a little tape recorder, and record the show. They give you parts to study at home, and you listen to the score. Just playing the show is not enough. You have to play it like the guy you are subbing for. If you’re doing a new show you don’t have that luxury. You have to read it and learn it with everybody else. But if you’re going in to sub for somebody you have to not only be able to play it, but play it in the manner of the person you’re replacing does it.30

Principal amongst the concerns a musician has when thinking of blend is tone color. For the saxophonist looking to play Bernstein, he must be aware of the jazz side of the instrument. Sid Ramin, who helped Bernstein arrange a number of his works including *West Side Story*, comments that Bernstein essentially thought of the saxophone as a jazz instrument, yet one that he was comfortable with using in an orchestral setting.31 This presents saxophonists with a need to master both classical parameters of control to perform in an orchestral setting under rigorous conditions of blend and dynamic

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30 Prof. Albert Regni, phone interview by author, 3 June 2004, digital minidisk recording.
31 Mr. Sid Ramin, New York City, to Eric Gargrave, Greensboro, 26 May 2004, letter via E-mail.
extremes, as well as present a flexible, jazz flavored sound that will sound legitimate in
the largely ‘swing band’ settings that the saxophone is called upon to play in.

Mr. Regni, who is accomplished as a performer in both popular and classical
realms of saxophone performance, credits players such as Al Gallodoro, Jimmy Abado,
and Toots Mondello as being major influences on his sound, in addition to great jazz lead
alto players such as Johnny Hodges and Marshal Royal. It is the sound of these players
he is thinking of when he refers to an ‘American’ conception of sound as being
appropriate for playing Bernstein’s music.32 It is a cross between the throaty reediness of
a full jazz sound and the focused warmth of a classical approach.

The primary influence in creating one’s sound of course is a strong aural
imagination that is focused through a fine technical approach to sound production. A
saxophonist’s mouthpiece and reed combination, often called one’s ‘setup’, can go a long
way in assisting the realization of one’s sound conception.

Thus, the reed-mouthpiece combination should be viewed as a means to an end.
The key to a good Broadway setup is flexibility and ease of playing that allows one to
play with fine control under a number of different stylistic and acoustical circumstances.
With this in mind, both Cipolla and Regni advocate moderate mouthpiece and reed
combinations.

Cipolla made special mention of the fact that saxophonists must remember the
requirements of doubling when choosing their equipment. An aggressive mouthpiece is
taxing, particularly when one is trying to restrain it to play at soft dynamics and places

where blending sound is crucial. This strain on the embouchure can make it difficult to accomplish the frequent and quick switches to other instruments required of each performer.33

With this in mind, Regni mentioned that he currently performs on a Vandoren V5 model saxophone mouthpiece with the A28 facing. Referring to it as a classical mouthpiece that is flexible and suitable for studio work, he finds that it is an example of an ideal type of setup for the similar demands of Broadway work.34 This is true for sound color, response, and ease and flexibility of articulation. It is better to play aggressively when needed on a slightly conservative mouthpiece than constantly fight to tame an aggressive set-up. This flexibility is an added plus when dealing with varied acoustical situations, amplification, and microphone concerns.35

Vibrato is also a major concern for the saxophonist when playing with fine blend. As vibrato is an intimate partner of sound production it must be considered in close accord with basic tone quality. Of course, the first consideration when using vibrato is the nature of the passage, whether it is a relatively free solo passage or an ensemble line where one must consider the surrounding instruments. For example, performers will generally not use vibrato when playing with a French horn, so as to not draw undue attention to the saxophone and disrupt the blend. Conversely, when playing with a flute or bassoon, vibrato may be utilized, but with the caveat to match the approach of the

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34 Prof. Albert Regni, phone interview by author, 3 June 2004, digital minidisk recording.
other ensemble instrument. Solo passages are free to use vibrato in a liberal manner, as long as it is stylistically appropriate.

In addition to the above parameters for saxophone in a mixed ensemble setting, the scoring of a passage for a section of saxophones has influence on whether or not players will use vibrato in their sound production. In playing unison passages, it is typical practice to play with a straight tone devoid of vibrato. Conversely it is standard to use a vibrato in performing harmonized or divisi passages.

Finally, the style of vibrato in jazz is somewhat different than a purely classical approach. The latter is usually comparatively quicker in undulation with a narrow amplitude. There is little, if any, perceived change in pitch, rather just a shimmer or variation in perceived intensity and color of the tone. In modern jazz conception, vibrato is used rather sparingly and often just towards the end of the tone, if at all.

The style of vibrato in the big band jazz influential to Bernstein’s conception of the instrument sits between these two poles. Similar to a classical concept, employing vibration in a big band style tends to be somewhat regular and vocal. What is dissimilar to the classical approach is the tendency to use a slower pace of undulation and wider amplitude to the variation of intensity. This suggests more of a motion of pitch as well during the use of a jazz inflected vibrato, but performers must still take care to play with good intonation and good pitch center. Listening to players such as Johnny Hodges, Benny Carter, and Marshal Royal will give players a good impression of this approach to vibrato.
Articulation is also a musical concern that has some differences in approach between classical and jazz performers. In classical music, it is a general rule that the beginning of the sound should be as pure as possible, with no sonic hint of the tongue’s involvement. While the tongue is involved technically, it should not be perceived musically. Unless marked, the tone is begun in a neutral, non-accented manner. Most releases are accomplished by merely stopping the air, without the aid of the tongue to dampen or cut-off the vibration of the reed. Furthermore, since the Romantic era classical composers have generally taken great pains to mark the desired articulation, leaving comparatively little room for improvisation or broad interpretation in the performance practice.

Jazz articulation has a very different set of parameters in these matters. Of course, the physical act of articulating in jazz is the same. The air is what makes the reed vibrate, and the tongue merely lets the reed vibrate or not. Jazz does have an additional technique that is sometimes required of or utilized by performers. Referred to as ‘ghosting’ a note, this means to mute the tone slightly by dampening the vibration of the reed partially with the tongue. This is usually done in a long string of running notes, where the player wishes to suddenly produce a soft or hidden quality to a tone, often on the bottom note of a sudden drop in the line’s tessitura.

Additionally, jazz articulation is often more aggressive in its production. In contrast to classical style’s generally neutral approach, appropriate enunciation in jazz is often slightly accented. In conjunction with the more open approach to sound in general, articulation in jazz is regularly more percussive, with a heightened perception of the
‘consonant’ in the articulation of the sustained ‘vowel’ of the tone. Short notes in are
more frequently clipped off with a sudden stroke of the tongue, producing a severe end to
the tone. A discussion of articulation in terms of the musicianship of swing style is
presented later in this chapter.

The third matter for performers to consider when blending is what can broadly be
termed stylistic conception. For most of Bernstein’s writing for saxophone, this concerns
playing in a swing style, which is difficult to describe in prose. As scholar Gunther
Schuller notes:

In all of jazz there is no element more elusive of definition than swing. Although it is something that almost all good jazz musicians can do and recognize, and something whose presence or absence almost all jazz audiences can instantly distinguish, it is also something that is extremely hard to define in words.36

Defining swing in prose amounts to a musical equivalent of trying to describe the
Mona Lisa’s smile. It is at once readily recognizable and mysteriously unable to be
quantified at the same time. Novice players often reduce it to a merely rhythmic
phenomenon, in terms of the triplety lilt or 12/8 nature to the division of the beat, whether
notated in that fashion or the more modern approach of writing even eighth-notes and
leaving the actual correct sense of dividing the beat up to performance practice. While
there are various styles of notating swing in Bernstein’s music itself, Ramin dismissed the
notion that the notation makes the swing happen out of hand.37 In actuality, swing is a

36 Gunther Schuller, The Swing Era: The Development of Jazz, 1930-1945 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 223. The reader is encouraged to read this account of the nature of swing style in its completion, pages 223-225, for greater depth on Schuller’s conception of the style.
37 Mr. Sid Ramin, New York City, to Eric Gargrave, Greensboro, 26 May 2004, letter via E-mail.
mix of rhythm, sound, articulation, melody, and ensemble factors that combine to create forward motion.

Barry Kernfeld aptly describes the various musical parameters that performers must be concerned with for a proper swing conception, even if their precise interaction to create the ‘propulsive’ effect that swing engenders in the performer and listener alike:

Swing in its broadest sense involves the simultaneous interaction of rhythmic components of articulation, duration, note placement, contour, dynamics, and vibrato. That is to say, layers of rhythmic pulsation are piled on top of one another. The musician articulates one note crisply, another gently, another imperceptibly, in an infinitely varied succession of pulsations. The relative length of adjacent notes or silences creates a second layer of pulsation. Placement of notes in relationship to the underlying beat—on the beat, between the beat, ahead of it (by a lot, by a little), behind it (by a lot, by a little)—creates a third layer of pulsation. Against these three layers, pitches move—high note, low note, in between, back up, higher still—and the resulting contours of melody, countermelody, or bass line create another infinitely varied pulsation, defined by the pace at which pitches (or general areas of pitch) recur. These same pitches (or areas of pitch) vary in loudness, perhaps in a clichéd manner—high and low, loud and soft—but often in a marvelously ingenious and unpredictable manner, thereby creating yet another infinitely varied pulsation. Finally, a steady or changing vibrato, if present, pulsates in relationship to the ground beat, perhaps moving in phase with that ground beat but more often defining, as it were, a different and variable beat. When these layers are presented in the right way—whatever that may be, the result swings. It is as if the patterns of human speech that yield sense had been translated by analogy into an equivalent, subtle, complex musical rhythm, yielding swing.

Swing is a subject of eternal disagreement. Insofar as the disagreement stems from perceptions of subtle, complex rhythm, it seems genuine: the fine details of swing can be hard to hear, and invariably these details defy precise analysis and rational notation.38

In addition to the rhythmic feel briefly described above, other significant aspects of swing include the manner of articulation. In examining a swing score, specific directions for articulation can seem cloudy for the player due to the fact that often little or no articulation markings may be indicated in the music. In contrast to the highly specified notation regarding articulation in most classical pieces, jazz notation can often have little or no marked articulation. This leaves the performer to supply a great amount of the articulation through their improvised application of principles of jazz performance practice.

It is assumed that the player is aware of the proper elements of performance practice for swing and will supply the appropriate phrasing. This may mean, as in the case of the opening of the ‘Overture’ to *West Side Story*, that only broad phrasing marks are provided. In many passages, in stylizing the swing, the performer may supply some additional articulation if the marks provided are not very specific.

Unless otherwise marked, a general approach to jazz articulation emphasizes the use of a smooth, legato style in the phrasing. Whether marked as such or not, long strings of running swing eighths are slurred together in groupings that accentuate the swing writing in the line. The performer takes into account the pitch contour, rhythmic action, syncopations, et cetera, when deciding how to cluster notes together. Groups are usually connected with a legato, if slightly accented, use of the tongue in the articulation.

Short notes, marked either by staccato or marcato symbols, are contrastingly dry and usual performed in a rather accented manner. As in marches, unmarked syncopated rhythms are usually played short. Long tones are usually begun with a sforzando piano-
like effect much resembling the striking of a bell. The above directions give a general approach, which will be greatly enhanced and refined by listening to great Big Band lead alto players like Johnny Hodges and Marshal Royal.

Ramin noted that Bernstein’s classical training often times led him to be quite specific regarding notating articulation. He balanced this comment with the understanding that Bernstein had regarding the flexibility of jazz performance practice and that Bernstein actually encouraged players to use their own judgment and approach.39 Regni, who frequently performed with Bernstein conducting, emphasized this same freedom from the viewpoint of the performer.40

This tension between the written notation and liberality of performance practice will always be a source of interpretive tension.41 The writer encourages the performer to notice where little guidance is provided for in the markings, either through their absence or broad application. These passages generally correspond with where, in a purely jazz context, there is room for improvisation. Contrastingly, there are passages where it is obvious that Bernstein and his staff took great pains to be precise. It seems to be in the best interest of the music to follow these wishes quite scrupulously in these instances.

Cipolla, in highlighting how he became involved in the Broadway performing scene, stated that playing in jazz ensembles, rehearsal bands, and chamber music groups

39 Mr. Sid Ramin, New York City, to Eric Gargrave, Greensboro, 26 May 2004, letter via E-mail.
40 Prof. Albert Regni, phone interview by author, 3 June 2004, digital minidisk recording.
41 The notion of playing with some improvisatory freedom versus delineated notation will be interesting to track as this music is performed more and in different contexts. As aforementioned, Regni noted Bernstein’s willingness to allow his players to be spontaneous and take risks, and he also approached the music the same way in a pit orchestra as he did on the concert stage. Every performer will have to make up their own mind on varying approaches and their risks in different contexts: auditions, pit orchestras, symphonic presentations, etc.
is a crucial element in gaining the experience necessary to play in the various styles required of performers on Broadway, as well as a good networking tool to make contacts which result in performing opportunities.\textsuperscript{42} Playing in style must be second nature so as not to stick out, drawing to oneself both negative musical and professional attention. Again, it is a matter of blending appropriately and effectively with the other performers as well as expected professionalism.\textsuperscript{43}

In summary, regarding playing Bernstein’s music, Regni makes this observation: “It’s jazz inflected, but it’s not out and out jazz. His music is very out front and in your face when you play it, but it’s not Count Basie. You’d play it more legit (sic) oriented with little jazz influences.” Again, performers must remember Bernstein’s aesthetic regarding art music, combining elements of classical and popular music in ways so as not to merely represent one or the other, but rather form a new creation.


\textsuperscript{43} Prof. Albert Regni, phone interview by author, 3 June 2004, digital minidisk recording.
CHAPTER III

WONDERFUL TOWN

Despite the great prominence with which the saxophone figures in Wonderful Town and the large number of popular and widely recognized songs in its catalogue, it is not the first musical of Bernstein’s that comes to mind when discussing the instrument. In further contrast to the more familiar West Side Story, much of the writing is more typical of the saxophone’s use in a standard jazz ensemble. The scoring is frequently for a full section of five saxophones in comparison to their more flexible and frequently soloistic use in West Side Story.\textsuperscript{44}

Act One: Overture

The “Overture” to Wonderful Town presents many of the tunes that will be explored later in the musical. The music is a pastiche of different styles, tempi, and keys. In the Overture the instrumental music is front and center, while later some of the passages will be played behind singers and therefore will serve as accompaniment. This calls for sensitivity on the part of the performer, who must account for matters of balance and projection according to whether the saxophone is taking a role as a lead or supporting instrument.

\textsuperscript{44} These characteristics do not make one musical superior to the other, of course. However, Wonderful Town is the earlier, less operatic, and less revolutionary of the two works. It may be expected that the saxophone would be used in a manner at once more standard and reminiscent of its usual employment in the jazz ensemble.
The majority of the material in *Wonderful Town* is written in the swing style.

First performed on February 25, 1953, the writing for the saxophone is in a usage typical of the Big Band era. This first excerpt (Fig. 1), from the tune “Swing” in the opening bars of *Wonderful Town*’s “Overture”, is a perfect example of the style as employed by Bernstein.

![Figure 1: Overture—“Swing” at A.](image)

Note how the first measure places the rhythmic emphasis on the downbeat, which is in accord with what we usually expect of the first and most important beat of a measure. The following bar attacks on the offbeat, in contrast to one’s expectation that another strong downbeat will be heard. It is this play off of expectation and actual delivery that creates the syncopation. A quick examination of the rest of the excerpt will find a number of different examples of this type of rhythmic shift. With the interplay of expectation and realization keenly based on rhythm, it is imperative to play with good time and rhythmic accuracy.

Careful counting, along with honing one’s feel of time by frequent practicing with a metronome is key in preparing this and other excerpts. A mistake such as rushing and
shortening the rest, or missing it entirely, in measure two will obviously not merely be wrong, but also upset the entire intended musical effect created by the syncopation.

Regarding the articulation, in jazz long slurs are frequently not played literally as slurs. Rather, slurs may be viewed as phrase marks. The performer is thus free to articulate in a manner which highlights the pitches that make the line swing, i.e. syncopated pitches, turns in the contour, angular sections, et cetera. In general it is appropriate to highlight the forward motion of the line by tonguing the off beats and slurring them into the following downbeat. If performed simply, this pattern of articulation helps give swing its distinctive bounce in conjunction with the syncopation.

An example of a suggested approach to this passage is demonstrated in the following edited example (Fig.2).

![Figure 2: Overture—“Swing” at A, edited.](image)

At C (Fig. 3), the saxophones switch to a more punctuated style of articulation. Syncopated quarters and phrase ending tones are generally played staccato with a slight accent. Everything else is played full value, with either a legato or slurred articulation. As in classical music, for instance march style, syncopated passages are played with a slight separation.
The beginning of this passage (Fig. 4) finds the saxophones presenting the melody in concert with the strings, first accompanied by the lower strings and later with the violins. In examining the full score, it is important for members of the section to note the manner of scoring for the ensemble, which at times is in unison and at others divisi scoring. At L, the saxophones take on an accompanying role.

The above excerpt from the overture introduces material used later in the number “It’s Love”. The need for comprehensive knowledge of the score is exemplified by the
change in the role of the saxophones that occurs beginning in measure seventy-three.\textsuperscript{45} At L the saxophones rejoin the strings to accompany the melody, which is now carried in the brass after their entrance two measures earlier. This knowledge will influence how the performer uses their sound and dynamics in phrasing.

At the opening of the excerpt, matching the warmth of the string timbre is of primary importance. Do not let the power and reedy edge possible in the saxophone tone dominate the texture. The saxophones carry the melody for eight bars. The unison scoring here ensures that the saxophone timbre will be project easily. Employ restraint when contributing to the overall dynamic.

The next eight-bar period finds the saxophones playing in harmony. In contrast to the first eight bars, here the performer must increase his or her volume and project the sound as an individual. The lead alto saxophonist carries the melody. Rise up and project as a soloist to carry out the line, even though the passage’s soloistic nature is not marked in the score.

The shift to leadership calls for a rather immediate elevation of dynamic level and an intensification of the tonal color. This would be a place where increased brightness and presence of tone would be called for, in contrast to the blending ensemble sound required up until just the measure before. In the actual number later in the musical, the lead alto saxophone is in a supporting role, requiring again the use of a more blended sound.

\textsuperscript{45} Knowledge of the above comes from a macroscopic knowledge of the score gained through study and careful listening that extends beyond just the immediate context of any given excerpt. The reader is referred to the opening chapter, as well as the interview with Dr. Cipolla in Appendix F, for a more complete discussion of the importance of knowledge of the score for successful performance.
Vibrato is native to the general conception of the saxophone sound. It should not be used in the opening eight bars, however. As mentioned earlier, in jazz arranging and performance, it is common practice to not use vibrato in unison sections. The unadorned sound is characteristic in playing all unison writing. As the saxophones break out in harmony, a contrasting full and robust vibrato is expected. This complete contrast in the use of vibrato is characteristic to the employment of the instrument in jazz.

As the next section of the “Overture” begins, “Wrong Note Rag” (Fig. 5), the lower saxophones accompany the clarinets in a bright passage of ragtime. While the bass saxophone works with the lower strings and left hand of the piano, the tenor saxophones work with the clarinets and piano right hand to present the ‘rinky-tink’ melody.

Do not overemphasize the forte dynamic. This will interfere with the style of the music, making it sound cumbersome. Playing loudly will also weight down the articulation. The unison writing will inherently multiply the presence of sound.

Figure 5: Overture—“Wrong Note Rag” at N.
Rag style, while notated in a manner similar to the earlier swing excerpt, is played with a strict sense of the notated dotted-eighth and sixteenth rhythm. The rhythm is thus performed in a slightly more stilted manner. Note the use of hemiola in bars six to eight and ten to twelve. These add interest to the writing, as well as drive each phrase forward to its end.

Very little articulation is marked in this excerpt. As in swing the performer may add slurs to aid in grouping the notes. In this instance judgment of the exact style is best settled by listening to the pianist. Particularly listen to the strength of attack and length of note employed. This will give the saxophonist a model to then emulate on the horn. Overplaying will also make clean articulation more difficult.

It is tempting to accent the Fs in the hemiola. They are the peak notes of each figure. However, doing so will work against the notated accents, giving the wrong musical impression and misconstrue the perception of the rhythm. Keep in mind that higher notes in a passage have a natural prominence to the listener. Be careful to balance the sound across the registers accordingly to avoid upsetting the intent of the rhythm. This will require de-emphasizing the Fs in order to help ‘make room’ for the accented tones.

\[46\] It would be wise to practice the excerpt with both leggerio and staccato approaches to the articulation, so as to be ready to accommodate any possible interpretation quickly and professionally.
From R through U (Fig. 6), spaced in between the main sections of rag are lyrical episodes for the saxophones. Again the saxophones are playing in unison with the strings. Brief statements for brass, called ‘punches’, fill the rests in between statements.

As in earlier lyrical passages, these episodes are in unison. This calls for slight restraint on the part of each performer in terms of dynamics. Be certain to contribute modestly to the overall sound. Again, avoid the use of vibrato here.

For direction in phrasing, note the contrast of diatonic and non-diatonic tones. The chromatic notes have a tense sound over the supporting harmony. Crescendo through these notes and relax slightly upon arriving at their resolution, as if one is stretching the melody like a rubber band over a post and then securing it into place. The
same instruction can be made for the half steps in bars one, nine, and seventeen of the excerpt, which are obviously similar in melodic shape.

Build the phrase at R (Fig. 7) in three parts as follows: Stress the F and relax slightly on the G-flat. Crescendo beginning with the F in the second bar through the high Cb, again relaxing the sound somewhat on the resolution to C. Finally, for contrast play the last phrase in bar four through seven in one big sweep, pressing through the high C climaxing at the B-flat in bar seven. Keep the music moving forward by making each succeeding phrase slightly louder and bigger than its predecessor. The subsequent phrases, while each being of a slightly different structure, may be played with the same general principles of shape.

As a brief practical matter, the key of Db can make for tricky reading, especially with the frequent accidentals in this excerpt. Give the excerpt extra attention in practice to be confident in playing in a difficult and infrequently visited key.47

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47 John Cipolla, D.M.A., phone interview by author, 30 May, 2004, digital minidisk recording. As Dr. Cipolla points out in the interview, job security is often a matter of not drawing the conductor’s attention to you. Accuracy in such matters of basic musicianship are of practical importance as well as respectful of the art itself.
In “Christopher Street” (Fig. 8), the saxophones make their first entrance, backing up the chorus. There also is a constant quick exchange of passages from one instrumental group to the other. Backing up the saxophones and voice, the piano and strings take up a stride two-beat pattern until T, where the strings join the saxophones in unison. The four bars leading into V are mirrored in the trumpets.

The tempo in this section is extremely fast and helps to convey the frantic motion described in the lyrics. While the time signature suggests a two beat feel, the tempo suggests taking each bar in one. Secondly, there is the frequent use of hemiola, which
leads to passages that frequently disrupt the normal flow of time and obscure the bar line and metric feel.

The opening sixteen bars of this excerpt is a period comprised of two eight-bar periods. The first four bar phrase is further broken down into two bar phrases, each of which should crescendo and decrescendo. The second phrase should be slightly louder than the first. The next four bar phrase should crescendo through the ‘blue’ Bb notes to their resolution on A at the end of the phrase.

In the second eight-bar period, simply follow the composer’s direction to crescendo. This leaves the rhythm, specifically the hemiola, to do the work of the music. Saxophonists should take special care on the high-Bs at this loud dynamic, however. This note is a deceptively loud and shrill note on the horn with a slight tendency to ‘throw itself’ out somewhat like a ventriloquist’s voice. It appears much more present both in volume and brightness to the listeners than its immediate volume may suggest to the performer. Do not drive this pitch.

At T, do not get carried away with the fortissimo marking. After the initial bar, play with a more transparent dynamic so as to allow the hemiolas in the brass to carry through clearly. Crescendo the final bar of whole notes to both help set up the forte-piano in the brass and prepare for the reestablishment of the melody in the saxophones. This pattern repeats itself at V to X.

A slight separation at each occurrence of syncopation will help keep the melody light and preventing it from bogging down. At U, articulate the marked accent of each run, and then back away quickly on the subsequent notes. If the weight of the accent is
not moderated through the remainder of each run, it will blur the clarity of the line and obscure each recurring accent. This will create both a needlessly heavy timbre and also obscure the shifting rhythm.

First, the key at change at T introduces one of the more difficult keys to read and also to execute on the saxophone in terms of dexterity. Keep the fingers lightly placed and close to the keys of the horn while playing the technical sections in bars twenty-three. Leaving the fingers in close proximity to the horn will sponsor confidence in the execution. The relaxation will allow the passage to be played at tempo with ease.

**Act One: Conquering New York**

![Musical notation image]

*Figure 9: “Conquering New York” at F.*

In the instrumental “Conquering New York” (Fig. 9), we find some of the most differentiated writing for the saxophones in the entire musical. Every member of the reed section is called upon in a special manner.
The first passage involves the tenor saxophones in a supporting role, joining the piano and strings in backing up the solo voice in the lead trombone. This vamp recurs frequently through the number as a rondo-like refrain between different musical episodes, the last occurrence of which at T involves the entire saxophone section in a grand climax to the piece.

The tenuto mark on beat two of the first measure suggests that this note is the peak of the phrase. Shape all dynamics subtly toward and away from this pitch accordingly. Crisply and lightly articulate this figure.

Figure 10: “Conquering New York” at H.
This section at H (Fig. 10) utilizes the saxophones for the first time in a solo context. The nature of the writing almost suggests one instrument accomplishing the musical idea. The texture here is very thin. Each solo voice presents its fragment. At this point the feel changes from a march into a shuffle, which is a rather inflexible, constant application of the swing lilt to every beat. The piano and strings continue the established two-beat pattern.

Rhythmic precision between members of the ensemble is a crucial aspect of a successful performance of this excerpt. To accomplish the cascading effect of the voices a metronomic sense of time is necessary on the part of each performer. The second alto and baritone entrances that occur syncopated off the beat in bars four and eight are especially tricky. Care must be taken to play on top of the beat and not allow the downbeat rest to be too long. The preceding voices, in the clarinet and tenors respectively, must play their rhythms exactly so that the alto and baritone have a stable beat against which to react. Execute the grace note just before the beat with a crisp, but unaccented, snap into the main downbeat pitch.

Each member of the section should strive to emulate the musicianship of the lead voice, which in this passage is the clarinet. What is not obvious to the individual reading his or her part, however, is Bernstein’s desire for a crescendo as the passage moves from the first bar to the last. The score shows the progress of dynamics from mezzo-forte to fortissimo, and the section should be careful to accomplish this. Be careful to not let the higher, unaccented notes, which are heard more easily, predominate over their accented neighbors and distort the intended shape of the phrase.
This requires some rather nimble control of the air stream at times, so as to not accent the grace notes and other tones around an accented pitch and also correctly shaping the articulation, all while doing so at a brisk tempo. The writer recommends practicing this passage very slowly, perhaps even playing the pitches outside of the contexts of rhythm and articulation. Take time to emphasize the individual dynamic requirements and corresponding breath control of each pitch. Once the dynamic pattern has been established as second nature, reintroducing the rhythm and articulation duration that is required.

There is a slight discrepancy in the marking of the articulation between the first three bars and similar figures in bars five through seven of the excerpt. The writer suggests that the accent in the later bars should be applied in the opening three in order to bring out the syncopation that occurs on the pick-up to beat two. This would reflect a typical style of articulation for this rhythm in jazz.

Figure 11: “Conquering New York” at L.
At L (Fig. 11), a section of new material begins with the clarinets and tenor saxophones. This passage is again in swing style. Remember that there is no differentiation in the execution of the opening dotted-eight and sixteenth passage ascent and the arrival rhythm of eighth-notes. Do not be late starting on beat two by a sluggish attack following the downbeat rest.

Each phrase is marked to start at mezzo-forte and crescendo. Forward momentum in the passage is aided by making the crescendo of each succeeding phrase more than the previous statement. Be aware again of the last two phraselets that end on the high B, taking care not to drive the note past the point of good taste.

The pick-ups to beat three in both the second and eighth bar would benefit from an accent marking like the rhythmically similar phrases in the intervening measures. In bars four and five, make sure the accented notes are of primary importance. Do not distract from them by overplaying the unaccented notes on the downbeats.

Bars thirteen through fifteen are not marked with staccato notation like the preceding two bars. This absence does not necessarily mean that notes should be played legato. The continuing angular nature of the line and syncopated rhythm is well served by space between the notes at the end of the slur markings. Continuing in this vein, the quarters should not be played longer than their eighth-note counterparts. Rather they should be played spaced with a slight separation, as the rests included elsewhere in these measures imply.
One of the most difficult passages for the saxophonist in *Wonderful Town* is in the above solo for the tenor saxophone (Fig. 12). Described quite aptly in the score as ‘snaky’, the contour of the passage and unstable rhythm has a bit of a ‘drunken sailor’ effect to it, albeit at a rather quick tempo. The directions of ‘snaky’ and ‘growl’ suggest a sinister edge to the character.

Notice that there is a complete lack of regularity to the rhythm. Upon close examination the accents further serve to mark groups of beats in an unmetered way. The first phrase moves in groups of four quarters, then three, two, and six. The second phrase is grouped differently.

Performers tend to tailor the length of accents in music proportionally to the tempo of the music being performed. Considering the musical direction to play in a suggestive and perhaps unstable manner, it may be interesting for the performer to vary the length, weight, and sharpness of attack for each accent. When coupled with the
variety of tone colors that the use of growling and straight tone performers will utilize in executing this excerpt, altering the color of articulation in this manner can make for a dramatic and unpredictable effect.

The writer would not choose to growl for the entire excerpt, as this would be staid and predictable, contrary to the irregularity that has been previously mentioned. Furthermore, varying the overall tone color and amount of growl on any given note or phrase would be desirable as well, just as one changes the sound with dynamics while playing normally.

Artists typically interpret grace notes as a brief but clear flip of notes at the front of the beat. Grace notes as used here are an approximation of the pitch contour. The actual effect should be more in the character of a smear, executed through a combination of embouchure and finger work.

Fortunately, the majority of the pitches can be implemented with the assistance of the side Bb and C keys. Beginning the tone on the notated pitch with the key closed and embouchure slightly loose as if to play ‘flat’ performs the smear. After starting the note, as the key is opened, the jaw can be dropped slightly further in opposing motion, smoothing out the beginning of the rise in pitch. When the key is finally open, the embouchure is returned to its normal position completing the slide into the arrival note, centered and in tune.

This technique is the trickiest to carry off on the D-Eb exchange where the stability of the pitch, due to the long tube of the saxophone at this point, makes bending the note more difficult. Some performers may wish to experiment playing these pitches
with some combination of the palm keys while omitting the octave key. It is comparatively simple with this method to get the pitch to bend on the D-Eb. However, at a mezzo-forte dynamic the tone color of these notes will be thin and crass. For that reason this writer would not chose this solution to the problem.

Growling on the saxophone can be accomplished in two ways. The first path is to produce a multiphonic-type sound by singing into the instrument simultaneously while playing. This can produce a striking effect with a rather grating sound. A distinct benefit of this approach is that the performer can change the pitch of the singing quite easily, creating a noticeable flexibility and change in the overall timbre for added effect.

It can be difficult initially to accomplish this. It requires attention be paid to the delivery of air to both the vocal cords and saxophone tone. Additionally, the vocal cords sap energy from the air stream’s normal force of delivery to the saxophone, requiring extra effort overall to produce enough volume to project the intended sound. This can be fatiguing over a such a long excerpt.

If one chooses this option to produce the growl, they should be cautioned against singing in parallel motion a recognizable interval to the melody, such as a third, for obvious reasons. Singing with a more dissonant interval, such as a second, or varying the interval, will avoid this problem.

A second method to produce a growl effect is to flutter the tongue in the back of the throat. Unlike the more forward motion of ‘rolled’ R’s familiar to many languages and used for traditional methods of flutter tonguing on many wind instruments, this technique vibrates the tongue against the soft-palate towards the rear of the oral cavity.
Blowing a very warm stream of air by saying “haaah” while lightly touching the tongue to the soft palate (the same region one would use when pronouncing the syllable ‘guh’) will bring about the desired effect. Similarly to the above singing technique, the constant interjection of the tongue into the air stream will inhibit the air delivery to the mouthpiece and somewhat deaden production of sound on the saxophone.

With either technique, more overall effort is required to produce the requisite amount of sound. As fatigue sets in, be careful not to drop one’s air delivery. This will only serve to further starve the sound production and stress the embouchure, compounding the problem from both musical and physical endurance standpoints.

*Act One: Conga*

![Figure 13: “Conga” at M.](image)

Having thoroughly permeated popular culture, “Conga” (Fig. 13) is one of the most recognizable numbers from the musical. The entrance to M finds the saxophones
supporting the voice. At N, the saxophones take over at full volume for the famous refrain.

A change from the earlier predominance of swing style for the saxophones, this Latin tinged piece is driven not by the lilting unevenness of the division of the beat but rather by equal divisions. Furthermore, the 3+3+2 beat organization is a common metrical pattern in Latin music.

Beginning each four bar cycle at a softer dynamic and building to the end of the phrase through a crescendo will help build excitement and drive the music forward (Fig.14). The broad slur serves as a phrase mark rather than a signification of articulation. Of course, repeated notes must be articulated to make the rhythm distinct. In a very resonant performing area more definition may be needed to be clear, even to the point of slightly spacing the notes. The articulation of the voice part will naturally be lightly spaced by the diction of the consonants, and saxophonists should strive to follow the declamation of the voice parts. In the fourth bar, it would be appropriate within the character of the number to articulate the rhythm not as slurred, but as “voo-dit-dah”. This would amount to a long eighth followed by a short quarter and slightly accented articulation on the finish.
At N the articulation on this passage should be detached. Earlier statements of this famous refrain are marked staccato, leading the author to believe that the omission in this instance is a manuscript oversight. Provided the accompanying brass and piano are in agreement in every second bar, the accented upbeat half-note may be played slightly delayed for added stylistic flair.

The alto and baritone saxophone parts have a misprint at the end of this passage. The requested low A♭ is out of range for the saxophone. Obviously an inadvertent misprint, these notes should be played up the octave.
The above two passages are from later in “Conga” (Fig. 15). A light, detached articulation is again the rule. In the second bar of S the upper eighth notes should be played their full value, in differentiation to a staccato style on the quarter note values. Singing the rhythm with the syllables “Dop-Bee-Dop-Bee-Dop” will give an impression of the correct articulation. The syllable “Bee” naturally has a slightly longer duration to it than ‘Dop’. This creates a contrast that makes the rhythm lively. Similar figures at Y should receive the same treatment (Fig. 16).
Figure 16: “Conga” at S and Y, edited.

Act One: Entr’Acte

Figure 17: “Entr’Acte” at G.

Act Two of *Wonderful Town* is considerably shorter than Act One. It is comprised of some music presented earlier in the show, including some that has been already discussed in looking at the “Overture”. The “Entr’acte” (Fig. 17) is music for the intermission and functions in a manner similar to the “Overture”. It utilizes music from the feature numbers of the musical.

While the saxophones are utilized heavily during this piece, the brief passage for alto saxophone deserves a special comment. While this phrase is marked solo, it is actually a melody shared with the lead trombone. After the opening four bars the saxophone drops out leaving the trombone to finish the passage four bars later. Fit the
saxophone sound within the sound of the trombone, playing with a covered tone. Use vibrato if the trombonist does, being careful to match width and pacing. This is a rare place where the music most closely resembles a classical rather than popular styling. The saxophonist must be flexible enough to redirect their technique and phrasing to suit the demands of the character of the passage.

Act Two: Ballet at the Village Vortex

Figure 18: “Ballet at the Village Vortex”.

The opening of the “Ballet at the Village Vortex” (Fig. 18) is a large homophonic passage for combined brass, woodwinds, and piano. The upper reeds carry the tune and its harmony, while the baritone saxophonist augments the scoring in the left hand of the piano by following along in unison. With the direction of a ‘slow, heavy blues’, players again find themselves playing with a swing feel.
As this passage is harmonized, it is desirable to use vibrato here. With the loud
dynamic and forceful heavy character, a slow and rather wide vibrato is appropriate. The
effect of the tone and vibrato should be rather grainy, reedy, and unrefined as opposed to
the silken, smooth, and more classical approach needed one excerpt prior.

Slow tempi have more of a triplet lilt to the division of the beat in swing rhythm.
The upper reed and baritone parts seem to display a disparity in the rhythmic notation.
While the notation may suggest that the baritone plays with a tripartite division and the
upper parts in a bipartite division, playing in the appropriate swing style will result in a
united rhythmic conception that in actuality sounds the same. In fitting their rhythms
with the ostinato in the pianist’s left hand, the winds largely have their amount of swing
determined for them.

Beat two of the first measure shows two eighth notes in the alto over the triplet
figure in the baritone. Visually the alto part suggests even eighths, but as discussed
earlier swing performance practice dictates their uneven division. So actually the
application of the tripartite division of swing practice will make the alto player play in
rhythmic unison with the baritone. The similar points in later bars can be parsed the
same way.
CHAPTER IV

WEST SIDE STORY

Act One: Prologue

This entrance by the alto saxophone (Fig. 19) in the “Prologue” is amongst the most recognizable melodies in West Side Story and indeed the entire saxophone repertoire. Marked solo, the saxophone actually presents the melody in unison with the similarly notated vibraphone. The final statement, bars twenty to thirty-three, drives into a larger chamber setting with a new instrument added at each successive attack.

It is important to note the punctuation of the accompaniment both before and during the performer’s entrance to each excerpt. In this first section, the recurrent ‘bah-DUM’ pick-up to the first entrance establishes the tempo prior to the saxophone’s
opening statement. The entrance is immediately preceded by three measures of finger
snaps on beat two. These disappear each time during the opening call of the melody and
then reappear to pace out the held notes. Be very attentive to their rhythm so as to place
your release and next attack carefully in time.

Note the change in the rhythm of the accompaniment that begins in measure
twenty-two. Instead of the earlier ‘bah-DUM’ figure, Bernstein begins three-beat figure
in the bass voices that overlaps the bar line. This creates a new triple meter in the
accompaniment that ignores to the duple 6/8 time signature. He then merges the new
accompaniment with the new swing melody overtop in the upper winds and strings.

The use of poly- and crossmeters is not at all foreign to jazz. However, this
setting of swing over an offbeat waltz is an important example of Bernstein’s fusion of
musical cultures, particularly in the musical where the light operatic style was
commonplace. Here one can see Bernstein’s artistic approach emerging. In merging
jazz style with classical trends we find that his intent is not to merely parrot jazz but
rather to create a new musical voice.

Play this excerpt ‘to the fore’ and with great strength. Project out over the
ensemble with a full sound, and striking a great contrast to the sparse background that
accompanies it. Keep the characteristics of swing style in mind when approaching this
excerpt. The 6/8 time signature coupled with the command to play the part with a jazz
feel instructs the performer to play in the swing style. Later excerpts will also utilize the

48 This light style is present in many numbers in West Side Story as well. An example is “I Feel
Pretty”, which does not involve the saxophone. Bernstein’s eclecticism often showcases both the novel and
the traditional.
swing style, yet occasionally be notated differently. The general principles contained in the discussion of this excerpt should be noted and applied to the other swing excerpts as well.

In looking at the opening line of the solo, accent the high C-sharp of the and also the following B-sharp. The high C-sharp is highlighted for its prominence as the highest note in the passage, in which it also serves to emphasize the downbeat. It is this strengthening of the rhythmic expectation against which the following B-sharp is syncopated. The latter plays off the expectations created by the former. This rhythmic syncopation, in conjunction with the angularity of the line, helps to create the swing feel.

With the beginning of the second phrase, this pattern should be repeated. In this instance, however, the second accent will fall on the A-natural. The third phrase is played similarly. Always utilize the accompaniment to carefully measure out long tones for an accurate release.

The score specifies a tempo range of dotted-quarter = 116-128. At measure twenty-two there is the direction of ‘Slightly Faster’ in the score. In practice be ready for a variety of tempi, especially for a sudden quickening while maintaining careful rhythmic precision with the expanding orchestration.

Marked mezzo-forte, the saxophone is positioned as the dominant voice in the union of itself and the vibraphone. Where not otherwise directed, crescendo slightly on
each long tone. Be sure to maintain the energy of each and every line in this manner.\(^{49}\)

This will push the musical energy forward into the next phrase.

Vibrato should also be employed to generate extra intensity in such a soloistic passage. The vibraphone will have some effect on one’s use of vibrato. This will depend on whether or not the percussionist has chosen to use vibrato on their instrument, and if so, how fast they have set it. If they have chosen to not use vibrato, as the lead instrument the saxophonist should feel free to use it as they wish. If the vibraphone is using vibrato, some effort should be made to match their rhythm to create a more uniform presentation.

The vibraphone’s attack is instantaneous. Any delay on the part of the saxophonist will cause the entrances to be noticeably ragged. The repetitive D’s should each have a small sforzando-piano articulation and crescendo, as is usual for a jazz style attack on a long, held note.

It would be stylistically appropriate in the swing vein to articulate the up beat notes under the phrase marks if desired (Fig. 20). This can help the melody have more of a swing feel. The added musical energy of the articulation seems to bounce the upbeat forward into the next downbeat.

\(^{49}\)Prof. Albert Regni, interview by author, 20 April 2005, Mankin Sabot, Digital minidisk recording. In playing for Prof. Regni, one cannot help but be struck by the great energy in his playing during his demonstrations. If out of neglect or carelessness I was to drop the intensity of a note, his ears and directions were quick to point this out and ask for an interpretation that maintained strength to the phrase’s completion.
While the saxophonist must always take care to precisely match intonation, with the vibraphone’s inflexibility in this regard the challenge becomes that much greater. The first high C# is particularly demanding with its tendency towards sharpness. This is further augmented aurally when following the pick-up note of middle-C#, a note that is usually slightly flat on many saxophones. Alternately, the long A and D-naturals are also normally quite sharp. The marked decrescendos compound the issue. Doing so pits the saxophone’s tendency of to rise in pitch while softening against the vibraphone’s stability. Extra care must be taken to keep the pitch down.

Adding the right hand ring finger on the A-natural can help lower the pitch slightly. Similarly, adding the low-B key to the D-natural can make for a similar effect. With either fingerling adjustment, doing so in the middle of playing the note will cause a noticeable disturbance to the pitch. It is best to plan ahead and execute the added key work to the fingering from the beginning of the note.
The above passage (Fig. 21) for two saxophones beginning in measure 112 of the score is played in ensemble with the strings and clarinets. It is also performed in a swing style, despite the presence of notated duples. Proper performance practice will result in the duple and triple divisions notated on the page sound identical in performance.

Careful attention to dynamics will heighten the melody’s lyrical character. Rise and fall slightly with the contour of the line. Blend the sound with the surrounding instruments, supporting and adding weight to the ensemble without becoming dominant or playing in a soloistic manner. The saxophone’s natural brightness in the upper register makes it easy to project the sound without resorting to great volume.

The syncopated off beats should be emphasized slightly with a breath accent to help generate the swing feel. Remain judicious and light with these, and be wary of overplaying this section. The phrase’s character is rather laid back and charming rather
than driving. At best, an overcooked approach belies a performer’s inexperience with swing style. At worst, it becomes a devaluing parody, the expression sounding unwieldy and forced. Overall employ a legato style, as this is the default approach for a swing jazz articulation.

Remember, accentuating the line does not require additional effort on the part of the tongue in crafting the articulation.\textsuperscript{50} As in all articulation, the tongue merely stops the reed or allows the reed to start, leaving the shape of the sound to be created by the use of the air.

\textbf{Figure 22: “Prologue” at m. 144.}

\textsuperscript{50} As in baroque music, jazz articulation is frequently left up to the stylistic sense of the performer. Often remaining unmarked in the music, articulation is therefore somewhat improvisational. In ensemble playing, the approach to articulation is set by the lead player. However, in general, unmarked phrasing in jazz is articulated in a very legato manner, with the markings usually reserved for staccato and marcato hits. Bernstein’s approach to articulation is often notated more carefully than the average jazz chart, however, and players should be careful to interpret closely what is written. Bearing in mind that many performers who are inexperienced in jazz style often articulate in a choppy ‘tut-Tah tut-Tah tut’ or similar vein, players should think of emulating syllables that sponsor a more legato sense of articulation and leave the sound emphasis on the vowel of the formation, including ‘doo, vah, lah’, and so forth.
In the above passage (Fig. 22) the alto saxophone is paired with the flute, and is immediately preceded by an earlier entry of the same material by the flute and electric guitar. Later the saxophone is joined by muted trumpet, piccolo, and Eb clarinet, creating a dramatic crescendo into an explosion of activity in bar one fifty-three.

The opening ten bars are virtually devoid of any accompaniment, save for brief interjections in high register voices. This leaves large periods of time that are absent of rhythmic activity that can be counted on to establish the beat. Combined with the lack of regular rhythmic activity in the solo lines this makes picking up the tempo difficult for the saxophonist’s entrance.

The saxophone’s first phrase is performed in a similar environment. Playing with good time and tight ensemble here is difficult. Be sure to watch the conductor in this situation. With little to no aural cues to aid in accurate counting, it makes relying on the visual prompts essential.

From measure one fifty-three on the accompaniment is radically different. The walking bass figure in the low voices moves in a pattern of eighth notes in 7/8 time against the rest of the ensemble in 2/4. A unique musical gesture, this provides a constant stream of eighth notes with which to use as an aural metronome, yet the odd metric pattern clouds the rhythmic feel.

This up-tempo line is pressing, angular, and clipped in nature. When repeated later in the musical, this music depicts a rumble, or fight, between the two rival gangs involving fists, knives, and an eventual gunshot. A musical approach that is intense and has a cutting feel to the phrasing will help drive home the drama in the music.
There is no dynamic marking at the entrance of the saxophone part. Similar passages in other instruments are marked mezzo-piano. It may be assumed that this is the appropriate dynamic for the saxophonist to apply. Remember that this is an ensemble passage with the flute. Create a sound that blends well with the flute and does not dominate the texture.

Begin at a moderate dynamic and crescendo through the half note into the eighth-note release in the following bar. If the crescendo is shaped so as to reserve the bulk of its swell in the last beat of the note, the last second increase will make for a gesture striking for its mimicry of the lunging and jousting on stage. Repeat this shaping for each of the notes which are a quarter note’s value or longer.

With the addition of the piccolo and Eb clarinet at the end of the first phrase there is ample room in the crescendo to allow the sound to brighten noticeably. On the last note the aforementioned approach to crescendos will be effective in making a dramatic launch of the burst of percussion in bar ten. The high C#, which naturally has an easy to brighten timbre, will aid one in accomplishing this without too much effort. Think of the saxophone as supporting the higher instruments rather than being a leading voice.

At the tenth bar the feel of the time changes quite significantly from the opening of the excerpt. The spacious rhythmic writing through the first phrase leads one to feel the beat at the level of the half note. The feel of the beat shifts to the quarter note as the pattern of eighth notes in the accompaniment is launched in the tenth bar. This creates an effect that suggests a doubling of the perceived tempo, known as double time in jazz parlance.
This establishment of a double-time feel is a frequent rhythmic device in Bebop jazz, a swing style prominent at the time of the writing of *West Side Story*. The division of the beat in swing rhythm becomes more even than lilting the quicker the tempo becomes. Play the eighth note division in an even manner at the quick tempo of this excerpt.

Regni suggests playing the last beat of the excerpt (bar twenty-two) with a slightly delayed rhythmic feel. This can best be described as stretching and accenting each note slightly to play these notes slightly behind the beat. Singing the syllables “Voo Dit – DAH!” with gusto will help to demonstrate this jazz-inflected effect.

Do not accent the grace note in the opening phrase. This will sound clumsy as well as distract from the overall phrasing. Leave it light and ornamental in sound. The phrase ending eighth-notes are marked staccato. Staccato’s traditional meaning is detached, not short. Considering the preceding slur and following rests in this particular marking’s context, one can only surmise that Bernstein’s intention is to highlight the brief length of the note. Do not make the note so short as to be choked and inaudible to the audience, yet also not lazily left as something just short of a full beat or with the singing ring of a resonant pizzicato.

The tongue may clip the release of the note. The writer suggests ending the note with a sudden stoppage of the air, but this must be done rather suddenly after the note
speaks to avoid any undue length or resonance. The whole effect of this note should be like a dry rim shot on the snare drum.\footnote{Players familiar with Ryo Noda’s music for solo saxophone, which calls for many such clipped releases, in imitation of a Japanese flute, will quickly recognize the sound of which the writer is speaking.}

It is not necessary to accent these tones no matter how one chooses to articulate it. The sudden change of tessitura and release of built up energy from the preceding crescendo will serve to vault them without any additional force being applied. Additional accent would only serve to weigh down what must in the end seem as a quick stab rather than ponderous thud.

Looking back over the bars six to ten, the shifting accentuation becomes evident. Not overplaying unaccented tones, either through excess volume or heavy articulation, will enable the accents to stand out without crushing them to make them evident. This lightness serves the music, which seeks to keep the listener on the edge of their seat through syncopation and rhythmic shifts.

The tritone in the fifth bar is marked with a smear. While playing with the same dynamic shape of the previous four bars, it is fairly simple technically speaking to incorporate the smear. Combine an ascending chromatic scale between the marked pitches and blur it slightly by flattening the pitch with the embouchure. As the pitch arrives on the C# as the scale is completed, return the embouchure to its normal position, completing the slide up into the correct tuning.
This passage (Fig. 23) in the bass saxophone is part of a brief ensemble statement by the low woodwinds and pizzicato strings.

One can observe the bar by bar alternation of downbeat and syncopated entrances. Do not be late coming off of the rests. If played correctly this passage will have a feel of being on the top or front of the beat. This is no small challenge on the bass saxophone, which has a natural delay to the articulation due to its size. Conversely, dragging will kill the energy of the music.

A rarely used member of the saxophone family, the use of the bass saxophone particularly adds a tremendous amount of power to the low tessitura that is the dominant texture in the passage. While it is alluring to utilize the full power available to the performer of the bass saxophone, keep in mind that a crass tone and easily split attack

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52 In the early 1990s the writer had a conversation regarding the saxophone with the late conductor Frederick Fennell. Fennell, who for a time had studied with Richard Strauss in Europe, related that Strauss, a master orchestrator, felt that the baritone saxophone would be the next instrument to enter the orchestral woodwind choir as a regular member, for the purpose of adding power to the low woodwinds specifically. (One will recall Strauss’s use of double baritone saxophones in quartet of saxophones in his Symphonia Domestica.) Bernstein and the arrangers put this purpose to great affect here.
will disrupt the ensemble sound. This will bring attention to poor taste rather than good style fine control on the performer’s part.

The basic dynamic pattern of this passage is a short four bar decrescendo followed by a long twelve bar climb to fortississimo. Pace the crescendo out carefully. It is advisable to arrive on the F# half note in bar fifteen at a dynamic significantly less than maximum. Doing so will leave room for an effective amount of sonic force to be applied to the final push into the downbeat of the sixteenth bar.

The dynamics can also affect the articulation negatively if not followed judiciously in a technical sense. Overdoing the louder dynamics will cause the articulation to become heavy and delayed. Not playing with enough air on the lesser dynamics risks not motivating the instrument to speak.

Copy the sound of the articulation modeled by the low strings. In the strings the staccato marking strengthens the score’s direction of pizzicato. Thus Bernstein is taking a naturally detached sound and marking it to emphasize the separated character even more. This seems to suggest that Bernstein is not merely looking for a detached note, but rather a very dry, secco quality to the articulation.

The articulation in bars one and three of the excerpt are different, despite being the same pitch and rhythmic pattern. The rest of the excerpt is consistent in its articulation marking, leading this author to surmise that the discrepancy is a copyist error. Throughout the excerpt there is a pattern of emphasizing syncopated pitches by marking them as accented and full value. This pattern lends weight to interpreting the third bar’s
articulation in the manner of the first, where the upbeats are accented over their full length in contrast to the downbeats of every other bar.

Alternate the short downbeats in the odd numbered bars with the slightly longer upbeat first notes of the even numbered bars. Being faithful to the markings enhances the rhythmic activity and excitement written into the music. This rhythmic alteration of the first ten bars is additionally highlighted by Bernstein’s use of accent markings. This calls additional attention to the rhythm and instructs the performer to emphasize this subtle shifting pattern.

After the initial bar, the accents are only placed on the first notes of each measure, with additional support from the ensemble voices. Do not cloud the texture and distract from the effect by accenting notes that are not marked as such. Staccato markings are done away with all together in the tenth bar. In addition to the crescendo of the music, increasing texture, and rising tessitura, playing these notes slightly longer will add additional weight and power to the sound as the musical excitement ramps back up to fever pitch.

**Act One: Jet Song**

“Jet Song” opens with a brief restatement of the alto saxophone solo that opens the “Prologue”, which was discussed earlier this chapter. The following passage (Fig. 24) is the only other substantive writing for the saxophone in the number and is from the closing bars.
 Allegro Moderato (deliberately) \( \frac{\text{c}}{\text{c}} = 116-128 \)

Figure 24: “Jet Song” at m. 190.
The figure in 2/4 time accompanies the rhythm in the chorus, consisting of its dotted-eighth—dotted-eighth—eight rhythm in each bar. Do not let this figure that requires a strict subdivision of the beat become lazy and like a triplet or it will conflict with the chorus. (Of course, this assumes the chorus is singing *their* rhythm appropriately.) If done correctly the rhythm should be tighter and stiffer than the swing figure that it gives way to for the final phrase of the number.

The interjection of the variation of the primary melody at the return of the 6/8 is written without its usual articulation. To articulate every note would not be characteristic of the swing style and would stand out as sounding incorrect for the idiom. As this is a restatement of the opening figure from the “Prologue”, apply the concept of articulation for this melody as discussed earlier. However, practically speaking, as this final shout passage is dominated by the brass their concept, correct or not, will be the lead.
“Mambo” (Fig. 25) is another of the instantly recognizable signature tunes from *West Side Story*. A Cuban-American dance form that was exceedingly popular in the time Bernstein was writing, especially in New York, this Latin style is typically fast paced with a dense texture featuring many layers of instruments, rhythmic figures, and a driving beat.

The piece begins with a sudden entrance of the Latin percussion, which breaks into the preceding “Promenade” with the effect of interrupting both the dramatic and musical action. The layers of furious and repetitive rhythmic patterns continue
throughout the opening one hundred measures and recur wherever the saxophones are involved in the work. Precise rhythmic placement is called for to line up with the established feel, meshing both with the other winds and strings as well as the percussion. A brief shout in the tutti ensemble follows the entrance of the percussion and immediately precedes this well-known excerpt for the saxophones.

The tempo of this number is a brisk one, at quarter note = 126 beats per minute. In the excitement, this can easily be performed much quicker and rush considerably in less disciplined ensembles. Be prepared to go faster than the published tempo.

What is immediately noticeable is the predominance of the rhythmic motion occurring at the level of the subdivision or sixteenth-note. This fact is part of what makes the tempo seem fast, even if it is established at a restrained pace. This flurry of activity, combined with some difficult to perform key centers and angular lines, make for a level technical difficulty which is unique to this number in *West Side Story*.

Play on the front side of the beat. Do not tarry on the rests in particular. Brief, their silence is frequently covered by the resonance of the ensemble. Their effect is often more one of articulation than rhythmic space. Any slight lengthening beyond their appropriate length will cause an immediate phasing of the rhythm between oneself and the ensemble. This will disrupt the tight precision needed to make the performance truly exciting and give the rhythms their biting feel.

In his comments upon the author’s playing, Regni did make one suggestion that is an exception to the above general direction. This would be the high D-sharp/D-natural combinations of measures ten, fourteen, and similar passages later in the excerpt, which,
as Regni states, may be slightly broadened and delayed, in order to ‘jazz’ them up a bit
for variety (Fig. 26). The suggestion obviously heightens the climax of the phrases
involved, are in places where there are both rhythmic space to do so, and markings that
can be interpreted to favor a broader concept of time and articulation. As the entire
ensemble must perform these points in this manner for the approach to be effective,
agreement must be made across the various sections for this suggestion to be successful.

Figure 26: “Mambo” at m. 78, edited.

The dynamics of this number are marked to suggest the aggressive sound and
approach that is appropriate for the energy of the dancing on stage and passion written
into the music. With the exception of the final few bars, there is not a marking under
forte, with the restatement of the above material at the end being marked at fortississimo.
Nonetheless, an effective performance will be as cautious with volume levels and sound
quality as some of the more subtle lines in the musical.

With the dynamic markings confined to their upper limits, a few considerations
come to the fore. First, while not directly a dynamic concern, the florid rhythmic writing
creates a sense of a large amount of dynamic sound. This is further compounded by the

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53 This suggestion was not the author’s usual way of approaching this rhythm, but was a
suggestion of Al Regni’s to add color and a freer style to the performance.
fact that the ensemble is primarily moving in unison, both rhythmically and melodically, both of which serve to multiply the perception of volume. Thus, the large dynamic markings are to be interpreted in terms of an overall ensemble contribution, not one player trying to shoulder an undue amount of responsibility for a big sound.

Secondly, a long number with a definite sense of musical progress written into it, the dynamics must be well paced. Starting too loud in the excitement of the opening fanfares will kill room for making the musical drama grow. Thirdly, two purely instrumental concerns are involved. The first of these is not playing too loudly so as to cause the extreme upper register to become spread, grotesque sounding, and out of tune.

The second is to save some room dynamically so as to be able to pronounce the accents in the articulation as marked. Despite the dynamic markings, approach the unaccented notes with a lively but mezzo-forte colored sound. This allows one to use a more aggressive tone to highlight the accentuated notes, enabling the saxophone to contribute to the overall texture while emphasizing ensemble blend and staying clear of heavy playing.

This approach will allow the important nuances to speak through the ensemble. The power is created through the marshaling of voices. What is actually needed on the part of each individual performer is then an emphasis on clarity in execution and lightness in style.\(^{54}\) If left to the devices supplied by the composer, the music will play

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\(^{54}\) Of course, clarity in technical performance and musical intent is always a hallmark of fine performance. What is being talked about here is a near Baroque-like manner of play, where one line or sound is not played in such a way so as to distract or obliterate the other musical elements. It is easy to get carried away in the excitement of the wash of sound being created and rush of rhythmic motion. If these elements are overplayed, what will result is an impression of heavy loudness, rather than exhilaration.
itself and be exciting through it’s own propulsive drive. Although tempting and easy to lapse into, an overly muscular approach will weigh the music down and actually work against the intended result.

Articulation is marked so as to highlight the rhythmic activity of the music. As previously cautioned, overplaying the dynamics will make a wash of the phrasing and articulation together, eventually causing a loss to the vitality of the rhythm. Lighter playing in general on the unaccented notes will help make the accented tones standout resulting in an appropriate highlighting of the frequent instances of syncopation written in the music. When an appropriate accent is then articulated, the extra intensity applied will sparkle and stand out.

Take care to make releases of each note short. This is for two reasons. An untidy release will obscure the rhythm, make the beat difficult to feel, and therefore likely cause a misjudgment of the next entrance. A long release will make the music sound sloppy rather than the decisive and clean-cut sound that is introduced by the terse brass hits and percussion. An exception to this would be where Regni suggests the aforementioned broadening of the rhythm, which will of course slightly delay the release point of some notes.

This number is by far the most difficult in terms of technique. Players called to play this on short notice should emphasize this excerpt in their practicing. The above patterns are shifted through a number of different and difficult keys and over a wide range of tessituras. A close perusal of the entire movement will reveal subtle changes to Mambo is a dance style with quickness and ferocity, which in general is not well served by an approach to the music that makes the dancer and listener feel earth bound and heavy laden.
several occurrences of otherwise familiar-looking material, which may be an additional challenge in performance if not made familiar through careful study and practice.

Regarding the cropping short of staccato articulation, the performer may elect to use the tongue to clip the appropriate notes. However, it is the writer’s suggestion to release the note with the air alone.

*Act One: Cool*

Figure 27: “Cool” at m. 1.

‘Cool’ is one of the most involved numbers for the saxophone in the musical. It utilizes unique scoring of four members of the family including soprano, alto, baritone, and bass. Each member receives prominent passages performed in a solo or highlighted context. This laid back riff\(^{55}\) starts off the number in an ensemble comprised of flute, alto and baritone saxophone, vibes, piano, guitar, and contrabass as a brief set up for the entrance of the voice part.

\(^{55}\) This passage is one that highlights Bernstein’s unique gifts as a composer. To lift a few jazz stylings and place them in what had been a largely light classical genre would be musical pandering, not serving the art of either jazz or classical music. What he does do is rather easy to see here in this case, melding jazz style with what was then cutting edge metrical treatment in a classical context to make a new vein in the musical arts. This is central to Bernstein’s personal compositional philosophy, and is a hallmark of most groundbreaking composers whom we admire. Again, the reader is referred to Bernstein’s essay, ‘The Absorption of Race Elements in American Music’, as reprinted in his book *Findings.*
It is interesting to note that this passage (Fig. 27) is notated in a manner that is most familiar to those experienced with modern swing jazz styles, in contrast to the earlier 6/8 notation for approximating swing. The direction of ‘Solid and bopy’ coupled with even eighth notes signifies the composer’s intention to rely on the experience of the performer to apply the appropriate performance practice in this case.

The marked tempo is half-note = 90 beats per minute. Bernstein plays with the usual four-beat, straight-ahead rhythm\textsuperscript{56} of the majority of this opening by interjecting three bars of 3/2 meter into the usual flow. Performers naturally group and emphasize beats by meter. This seems to be a rather deliberate way on Bernstein’s part to call attention to a hemiola in the line.

Keep in mind that the title and lyrics suggest a cool intensity, not a searing flame. This passage serves as an introduction to the voice, to which the opening direction is marked ‘almost whispered’. Emphasizing smoothness in the performance of the melodic line and allow the hip angularity of the music to speak for itself. Do not over accent or ‘over swing’ the line. Doing so will turn the hip and angular into lumpy, and distract from the subtlety of both the rhythm and the unique melodic use of intervals like the tritone.

The written out hemiolas naturally direct the phrasing, placing the peak note of each phrase at the end of each bar (Fig. 28). Phrase each line into the high C with a slight building of intensity and volume through the bar. This crescendo of each measure should

\textsuperscript{56} Despite its notation in cut time, the sense of this section is decidedly a standard, walking quarter note feel. The cut time may be seen as an attempt to notate a sense of the larger feel of time smoothly streaming forward. This keeps the performer from approaching the music in a ‘beaty’ manner, emphasizing each quarter note giving a vertical, rough, or bouncy feel.
be obvious and enough to generate excitement, but not stray too far from the opening piano.

As in *Mambo* the accents should be emphasized as they appear not only by aggressive playing but also as much by de-emphasizing the unmarked notes. Be careful to articulate clearly as indicated, with a crisp staccato where called for to contrast the legato slurred sections. In bars four and five of the excerpt, the F# on the and of beat 4, between the preceding slur and following accent, can be particularly troublesome to articulate crisply, in time, with a lightness so as not to distract from the following accent.

Practicing the measure up and through this F#, delaying the completion of the measure with a couple of beats of rest interjected will allow one to practice a clean articulation with proper relaxation, allowing for a correct following articulation on the D#. As one becomes comfortable with the proper coordination, one can systematically remove the rests to rejoin the split portions of measure into the proper whole.
The above fugal passage (Fig. 29) is first presented earlier in the flute and vibraphone. The bass saxophone enters in the fourth presentation in unison with the bassoon and low strings. After two beats the flute, clarinet, and guitar enter with a fifth statement in stretto. As the number progresses, the opening Cool riff alternates with the Fugue passage progressing through different combinations of instruments, frequently involving the alto and baritone saxophone as well.

The opening two and one-half measures again feature a version of notating swing, which in truth is performed with a more tripartite feel than the stiffer dotted-eighth and sixteenth pairing which this notation suggests. The sixteenth-note triplets in bars six, seven, and nine are written to approximate turns frequent in music of the Bebop era. Snap them more as an anticipation of the beat that they lead to rather than hanging back in the beat in which they are written.
It is again important to stress that blending sound with the other instruments is of the utmost importance. Bernstein is creating power out of an ensemble sound, rather than relying on sheer aggressiveness. As this passage is always presented in unison, a measure of restraint with coupled with good intonation will ensure a successful performance.

Figure 30: “Cool—Fugue” at m. 94, edited.

The first two and one-half measures of the excerpt feature no script delineating articulation.\(^\text{57}\) Regardless, a correct approach to the style would imply a slurring of alternate notes in the line, from upbeat to downbeat or some other stylistically appropriate grouping.\(^\text{58}\) Beyond this, one should be careful to articulate as indicated. The above edited example (Fig. 30) deviates slightly from Bernstein’s own direction only to give a more detailed possible interpretation of the actual shape of the articulation, as a jazz...

\(^{57}\) Likely this is a misprint, as all other presentations of this melody are marked slurred.

\(^{58}\) It is a printing error to have not grouped the opening three bars under a long slur, as in the earlier and later entrances.
performer might perform it. The eighth-quarter-eighth and similar patterns presented repeatedly should be performed lightly articulated and spaced with a long eighth on the downbeat, followed by a quarter note played staccato and a long following eighth-note. The following eighth note is frequently tied in to a figure that approximates another syncopated quarter. This should also be played short, as in bars four and seven. In bar eight, however, this eighth stands alone, and should be played long into beat three. This is also true of the hemiola figure that ends the excerpt where all the syncopated notes should be played short in the same fashion. The long notes marked with flutter-tongued designations should be driven to their end with crescendi.

This excerpt is amongst the most difficult technical writing for the instrument in *West Side Story* and indeed all of Bernstein’s works. First is that it is complicated to ‘read’ due both to the chromaticism and varying rhythm. Secondly, frequent be-bop like turns that occur over challenging fingering patterns make for added complexity, especially at such a quick tempo. Finally, the writing covers a wide range on the instrument for each saxophonist as the music passes from player to player, with a challenging combination of attacks and frequently occurring angular, leaping passages.

While flutter tonguing is usually played on instruments by “rolling one’s r’s” at the front of the tongue while maintaining the tone, on saxophone this is impractical due to the intrusion of the mouthpiece in the front of the oral cavity. Rather, one gets the desired effect by getting the tongue to flutter similarly near back of the throat, where the tongue and the soft palate meet. Make this by blowing warm air, as in a soft ‘Huh’. While doing so, lightly allow the tongue to raise and touch the soft palate. If done with
relaxation, the tongue will lightly bounce. It is this motion, which needs not be terribly regular, that will cause the disruption in the sound that is characteristic of flutter tonguing.

All members of the ensemble should agree in advance on how to handle matters of style in these passages. In performance, the opening style will be demonstrated by the flutist and vibraphonist, after which the other members of the ensemble will follow. Ensuring such uniformity is especially important for fine execution in the tutti passages. Blending as such may require a slight alteration from the above direction due to the wishes of the conductor, or for the sake of consistency with earlier presentations of the melody.

After Cool the saxophone is used much less frequently and always in a supporting role. The material present is frequently recycled or similar to that which is discussed above. As such, it does not demand further discussion at this point.
CHAPTER V
ON THE TOWN, MASS, & A WHITE HOUSE CANTATA

Many saxophonists know *On the Town* primarily through the concert suite for orchestra. In the musical itself the second clarinetist handles the alto saxophone duties. This amounts to three brief but prominent solo appearances, once in the first act and twice in the second. This is quite a contrast to the copious amounts of material in *West Side Story* and *Wonderful Town*.

*On The Town*

*Act One: Times Square Ballet*

The lone appearance of the saxophone in the first act is in the instrumental finale entitled *Times Square Ballet* (Fig. 31). The solo casually saunters over a simple beat in
the piano, muted brass, and pizzicato low strings. The feel of this excerpt is carefree, not heavy and operatic.

An interesting challenge is presented by this excerpt’s musical direction. The saxophone part is marked solo, which requires enough volume of sound to be easily heard. The dynamic marking, a direction that is more about character and color, is by nature not aggressive. A sound quality must be created which is not too aggressive or overactive for the character that the mezzo-piano dictates, yet the solo direction calls for it to be projected out with an amount of sound strong enough to be heard easily.

Fortunately the arranging of the background does not present a heavy curtain of sound to project through. Produce enough quantity of sound to satisfy the solo marking, but do not push the instrument into an aggressive tone quality that violates the expressive character.

Be sure to play with a ‘warm air’ or ‘ah’ concept in the oral cavity in order to cultivate a rich sound. This manner of tone production will help to keep the reedy edge out of the tone while allowing one to produce the requisite quantity of sound before it naturally gets brighter. Conversely an ‘ee’ shape to the oral cavity, corresponding to a ‘cooler’ conception of air, will cause the sound to be small, driven and bright from the beginning, to the detriment of the expressive quality desired.

Vibrato concept also contributes greatly to the tone quality. Of course, as a solo passage, vibrato should be used. At mezzo-piano, be sure not to overdo the intensity of the vibrato. A wide and fast spin to the action will not be in character with the expressive sense of the melody. Reserve the use of vibrato for the dotted half notes. As the note
decrescendos, gradually bring the use of vibrato to an end. The sequencing of the last phrase up one step demands a little extra volume and energy on the part of the performer.

The rhythm is fairly straightforward both in the saxophone part and the accompaniment. A meter change occurs from 4/4 to 6/8 at F, and the soloist has five bars to get established in the new flow before the entrance. The entrance of each new phrase is linked rhythmically with the off-beat attacks in the muted brass and left hand of the piano. Therefore, rhythmic precision in the attacks is crucial. Listening to the trapset will help subdivide the long rests and held notes for the requisite precision.

This variation from later in the score (Fig. 32) of the earlier melody saunters less and swings more. The alto starts the passage as a true solo instrument. The clarinet restates the melody in the pick-up to bar seven, where the saxophone is joined at the octave by the flute.

Upon casual examination, there is practically little difference regarding the rhythm of this passage versus its earlier presentation, save the notational change
including the common time signature and triplet notation. In the trapset, however, the accompaniment has changed from the earlier rather common 6/8 pattern to the standard swing “Tah tah-ta Tah tah-ta Tah…” rhythm. This is accentuated by the swing triplet figure in the trombones and piano on beats two and four.

Notice the slight discrepancy in rhythmic notation in beat two of bar five and the last beat of bar ten. As mentioned earlier in the study, in swing style the performance practice of the notated rhythm at the division level for quarter-eighth triplets and ‘even’ eighths is the same.

Additionally to the differences presented above, other musical aspects stand out. The melody enters an octave higher than previously and is initially marked forte. The glissando and extra chromaticism gives the melody a new bluesy dimension. Play with a brighter sound with more activity and flexibility of tone for the first phrase. Become more transparent upon beginning the second phrase marked mezzo-forte. This will both allow the clarinet to project their melody as well as blend the saxophone tone with the doubling flute.

Of course, as a soloist the use of vibrato is expected. At the forte dynamic and high tessitura of the opening, the vibrato will naturally be both on the slightly wider and slower end of the expressive spectrum. As the dynamic backs down, temper the vibrato to closely blend with the flute. At this point a prominent vibrato will also draw attention to the saxophone when actually a more transparent concept should be employed while in an accompanying role so as to allow the clarinet line to take center stage.
In the opening phrase, follow the accentuation as prescribed. These markings closely match the typical up-beat accent pattern of standard swing articulation, so in essence Bernstein is giving the performer a clue to typical practice. Do not over interpret this and push the swing over into a caricature. The articulation of the line should retain a smooth character.

The beginning of the restatement in bar four, beginning on the high F, contains a marking indicating a smear up into the pitch. Smears characteristically do not have nor need a razor sharp start. Articulate this tone slightly before the beat using the air alone. Using the tongue will give no advantage in such an attempt at an undertone start.

The tenuto marks in the second phrase are reminders to play the notes with their full intensity over the entirety of the desired length. While long slurs tend to be more phrase suggestions in swing articulation rather than literal instructions, in this excerpt it is recommended that one play the last bar literally as written. Musically, this phrase is dying away and coming to an end, so a very active concept of articulation will not favor this direction.

Act Two: Subway Ride and Imaginary Coney Island

Figure 33: “Subway Ride and Imaginary Coney Island” at B.
This solo (Fig. 33) follows the introduction by an irregular and somewhat wobbly triplet figure in the clarinet comprised of two alternating pitches, suggestive of the subway car rocking back and forth. As the saxophone enters it is accompanied by a pad of slowly moving chords in the strings. A bluesy, flexible sensibility is also called for here. The narrator describes the figure the saxophone represents in the dialogue with the phrase, “Ivy appears, looking exotic and glamorous.”

The passage is challenging to play the rhythm accurately due to its frequent shifts between duple and triple divisions of the beat. Keeping a stable beat is essential to making sure that the rhythm of the triplets do not blur into duples and visa versa. In essence, Bernstein has written in the rhythmic flexibility, so there is no need to add rubato to make it expressive. Do not to play the grace notes too quickly, but rather play them more languidly in line with the slow tempo and direction to be subtle.

While the rhythm needs to be stable to make the passage musically intelligible, there is considerable room to be flexible with the dynamics. The slurring is notated in short phrase marks, rather than broad swaths. Phrasing along with these marks will make for a subtle push and pull to the dynamic shading. In fact, shaping the dynamics up and down with the subtle changes in melodic direction is what fulfills the direction to play the line ‘sexily’. Do not make large dynamic gestures, however, as this will be out of character with the marked mezzo piano and direction to be ‘subdued’.
Act Two: The Real Coney Island

The above passage (Fig. 34) is the final brief statement for saxophone in *On the Town*. The accompaniment is written to suggest an 8/8 pattern of 3+2+2. The saxophone solos over this in a march-like feeling of two. The quarter notes should be played slightly separated, as if in a march. The syncopated figures on the upbeat of two in the third, fifth, and seventh measures suggest a bit of accent, and it would be stylistically acceptable to play them slightly articulated, if desired (Fig. 35). The melodic pattern suggests two bar phrases that can be highlighted by a slight use of hairpin dynamic phrasing.

Figure 34: “The Real Coney Island” at B.

Figure 35: “The Real Coney Island” at B, edited.
**Mass**

*Mass* is the most eclectic of Bernstein’s works. It has also been perhaps the most controversial of his compositions, due to both the stylistic diversity and its handling of the Roman Catholic Mass. After its initial performance and critical controversy, it received little attention. It has undergone a revival recently as musicians revisit Bernstein’s works in the wake of his death.

Like in *On the Town*, the saxophone does not figure prominently in the score, making just two brief appearances in the later pages. Both of these appearances are in a supporting ensemble role. The use of soprano, alto, and tenor saxophones written into the clarinet parts serve to provide a repetitive texture behind the voice. In both the marked and lyrical sections, the writing is sparse.
Through the opening bars of this section of “X: 3: Trope: ‘Hurry’” (Fig. 36), the saxophones interlock with the trap set, piano, and voice. The saxophones are one of three large instrumental groups playing at various junctures, and at times overlapping and at others in a successive manner. These include a ‘blues band’ of drums, bass guitar, and piano, a ‘rock band’ of a similar grouping that includes an added electric guitar. The saxophones form a separate third group.

The excerpt is defined by two differentiated textures. In the first episode, the saxophones exchange brief staccato figures that progress from tenor to soprano in a continuously forward moving wavelike motion. This later gives way to a second episode
that consists of homophonic passagework in which the saxophones double and harmonically support the voice in the legato section.

The tempo of this excerpt is quite lively at quarter note = 120 beats per minute. It is easiest to feel the beat at the half note throughout the signatures of 3/2 and common time. The bars in three-four are correspondingly easiest to feel in one. The rhythm of the pickups to bars twelve and sixteen are easy to fall behind. Take care to maintain the underlying division of the beat closely in your head, and do not be late by giving too much time to the rest. As this lyrical section from bar ten on doubles the voice in unison, one must be sure to match their approach exactly.

Little volume is needed to be heard and support the vocal soloist. In the first episode the dynamics cycle twice from forte diminishing to mezzo piano, and then finally in a three bar hairpin fashion. Interpret the fortés in the context of an accompanying role. Be sure to blend and not cover the voice.

In the second episode, the soprano doubles the voice part in unison. The alto and tenor saxophones fill out the harmony. The voice part is directed to sing in a manner that is ‘almost whispered’. The tone in the saxophones should be similarly veiled. Not breathy, in the sense of a bad tone, but with the warm softness that is natural to a true pianissimo.\textsuperscript{59} Listen to the mezzo-soprano soloist and follow their phrasing, being sure to rise and fall dynamically with the line.

\textsuperscript{59} If the player performing this piece is a clarinet player doubling on saxophone, it is likely that their equipment will be rather conservative and classical in its parameters, featuring a moderate to close tip opening and longer facing length. The ensemble may choose to engage saxophonists for these specific passages that may possibly be more familiar with jazz setups for the majority of their playing. It is recommended that they make the investment in a more classical setup so as to be able to execute these passages with the necessary ease and control.
X: 5. Trope: “I Believe in God”

The saxophones double the right hand of the blues band keyboardist and the rock band’s electric guitarist in “X: 5. Trope: ‘I Believe in God’” (Fig. 37). As the movement progresses, the saxophones are joined by the remainder of the woodwind choir and eventually, the brass.

The tempo of this excerpt is half note = 90 beats per minute. The unusual aspect of this excerpt is the compound meter of a bar of cut time combined with a bar of three-
four time. Other than this, it is essentially a repetitive background passage presenting no great challenge other than keeping place.
**A White House Cantata** (also **1600 Pennsylvania Avenue**)

**1600 Pennsylvania Avenue** is a history of the White House presented in a musical fashion. It is the last stage work in Bernstein’s catalogue, and it survives in a revised concert format as **A White House Cantata**. Like in *Mass* and *On the Town*, the saxophone is used sparingly. Written in as a doubling in the second clarinet part, the soprano saxophone makes its appearances late in the second act of the musical. Its most significant employment is in two march-like numbers: “15: Minstrel Parade” and “15b: The Grand Old Party”.

**Act Two: Minstrel Parade**

![Figure 38: “Minstrel Parade”](image)

Figure 38: “Minstrel Parade”.

In the opening fanfare of “Minstrel Parade” (Fig. 38) the soprano saxophone combines with a unique ensemble of Eb clarinet, trumpet, tuba, banjo, and piano. The minstrel singers then enter utilizing the melody of introduced by the fanfare. The saxophone is used mainly to double and fortify the choir of minstrel singers.

The score offers no specific metronome figure as a suggested tempo for “Minstrel Parade”. The suggestion of ‘bright’, plus its march feel, suggests an average tempo of approximately quarter note = 120-132 beats per minute.60 Be quick off of the rests when attacking the numerous off beats in this excerpt.

Keep in mind the supportive role the saxophone plays in this excerpt when monitoring the use of dynamics. The initial two measures should be an explosion of bright sound. It is not marked in the saxophone, but the other instruments in the score are marked mezzo forte on the downbeat of measure three. This coincides with the entrance of the choir. Rectify this manuscript omission by following the ensemble’s lead in this matter. Pay close attention as well to the frequent changes of dynamic as the score progresses. The soundscape is quite volatile, and nimble changes are required.

The markings for articulation are very specific in this excerpt. March style performance practice includes a light separation between articulated notes. In addition Bernstein often utilizes staccato notation to specify an extra short length to the marked tones. Be sure to contrast these markings appropriately in performance. In such an exciting piece, it can be tempting to get carried away and lose discipline in the articulation as well as overplay the articulation. Be sure to reserve accents for where they

60 The author bases this suggestion on the average march tempo of the ‘Stars and Stripes Forever’. The common practice tempo for this march is approximately 120 beats per minute.
are specifically marked. Avoid unnecessary heft in the articulation. Emphasizing a light, fleet style of articulation will clarify the rhythm and project the energy of the passage and provide the musical excitement.

**Act Two: The Grande Old Party**

![Quick two-step illustration](image)

The quick two step of “15b: The Grand Old Party” is the final number where the saxophone is involved (Fig. 39). Like “Minstrel Parade” it can essentially be thought of as a march. It has a very fast tempo of half note = 144 beats per minute. At this speed, it
is easiest to actually feel the beat in one. In typical Bernstein fashion, he throws in frequent metrical changes, often interjecting a bar of three-four meter.

There are no great technical or musical challenges in this excerpt. Keep in mind the key of Db major and the frequent use of accidentals in this excerpt. The full movement is rather long, and consists of a number of wide ranging key changes. Throughout there is frequent chromaticism. This is a passage that demands attention in practice so as to not be caught unaware come performance time. Be careful to articulate the tenuto markings appropriately, as they create contrast to the shorter articulation of march style and syncopated figures.
CHAPTER VI
CONCLUSION

This research investigates the use of the saxophone in the dramatic music of Leonard Bernstein. Drawing upon positivistic inquiry and descriptive methods, the research has sought to provide a broad context of knowledge for the performer to draw upon and make informed decisions in playing this essential and vital repertoire for the instrument.

The above has taken place primarily through a direct observation of the scores in question, including *Wonderful Town, West Side Story, On the Town, Mass*, and *A White House Cantata*. In addition, the researcher has sought out expert opinion and analysis from three musicians who are thoroughly familiar with both the music itself, the applicable matters of performance practice, and the context in which the music was created and continues to be performed. Furthermore, where appropriate other secondary sources of note have been drawn upon for additional commentary and perspective. These have included both outside commentators and Bernstein’s own reflections on his musical philosophy.

The introductory chapter discusses technical matters of the research. These parameters include: a description of the study, a problem statement, the status of related research, the justification of the research, a summary of research procedures, and the organization of the text.
The second chapter discusses matters that put the performance of Bernstein’s music into a larger context. This begins with a brief description of Bernstein’s own compositional philosophy, as examined through his essay analyzing the rise of American art music, the core principles of which become evident in examining his scores directly. Turning from this, the research briefly introduces the creation of each work, serving to help the performer properly place the music in an appropriate historical context.

The chapter continues with general concerns that are hallmarks of successful performance in a Broadway-style pit orchestra context. The material is framed with commentary gleaned from interviews with artists Mr. Albert Regni and Dr. John Cipolla, noted Broadway reedmen, with additional information on Bernstein and his music specifically provided by Mr. Sid Ramin, a friend of and frequent collaborator with Bernstein. Topics discussed in detail include in importance of blending, tone color, and stylistic approach. Tone color is further analyzed in terms equipment selection, vibrato, and articulation technique. Style is examined for elements of rhythm and articulation in a swing context.

Chapters three through five take a look at Bernstein’s music specifically. From each piece significant excerpts for the saxophone are discussed. Excerpts are chosen based on their prominence or importance, technical difficulty, ensemble considerations, and style. Each excerpt is first presented as it appears in the score. Following this are annotations discussing matters of performance practice including form and accompaniment, style, phrasing, articulation, rhythm, and where needed approaches for practicing and the successful development of requisite technical skills. Principles from
chapter two are often discussed in sharper focus in relation to the requirements of a specific excerpt. Additionally, specific interpretive suggestions are included from the contributions of Mr. Regni, Dr. Cipolla, and Mr. Ramin, as well as comments generated by the researcher’s own experience performing Bernstein’s music. Where appropriate, additional edited portions of the excerpt being discussed are presented in the narrative to illustrate with musical notation the concepts discussed in the prose.

*Wonderful Town* and *West Side Story*, major works that feature significant writing for the saxophone, each receive a full chapter. Chapter three includes fourteen excerpts from *Wonderful Town*. Chapter four features eight excerpts from *West Side Story*. The following chapter contains works that feature the saxophone in a rather limited role. This includes four excerpts from *On The Town*, two from *Mass*, and two from *A White House Cantata*.

Following this concluding chapter, the document contains a bibliography and appendices. The first five appendices present virtually complete excerpts of the writing for saxophone from each of the works discussed. The following two contain transcripts of the researcher’s interviews with Mr. Regni and Mr. Cipolla. Finally, the last appendix contains documents regarding copyright permissions.

In closing, this research also generates further significant questions that are beyond the immediate scope of its inquiry but ripe for future investigation. Bernstein stands amongst a number of major composers of classical music who have utilized the saxophone to great effect, giving it both noteworthy music to perform and added credibility as a concert instrument. We may look back to composers whose use of the
instrument preceded Bernstein’s, such as Ravel and Strauss, and later composers who draw upon these earlier influences and continue to use the instrument to great effect. Their use of the saxophone in the creation and performance of their music will continue to be of scholarship interest to saxophonists, composers, and arrangers for a long time.

A study of the technical, pedagogical, and musical considerations of ‘doubling’ on different woodwind instruments would be fruitful, either as general discussion of the topic or as related to a series of works such as Bernstein’s and others. A survey of how musicians view and handle similar musical material in different performing contexts, such as the music for *West Side Story* in its musical and concert suite adaptations, would be very enlightening. Similarly, many performing musicians would benefit from the experience gleaned from an effort in the biography of performers who have significant experience in the Broadway and studio arena, such as saxophonist and reedman Albert Regni, who was interviewed for this project.

As in any exploration of artistic principles, many of these suggested projects would not provide hard and fast answers. Rather, as this document accomplishes, they would seek to record of the practice, merit, and reasoning of artists and their choices. In addition to this material’s historical worth more research along this vein would provide stimulus for the creative thought of future performers, scholars, and composers alike.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


Ramin, Sid, New York City, to Eric Gargrave, Greensboro, 26 May 2004, letter via E-mail.

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APPENDIX A

WONDERFUL TOWN

Instrumentation:

Reed I— Alto Saxophone, Flute, Clarinet in Eb, Clarinet in Bb
Reed II— Baritone Saxophone, Alto Saxophone, Clarinet, Bass Clarinet
Reed III— Tenor Saxophone, Oboe, English Horn, Clarinet in Bb
Reed IV— Tenor Saxophone, Piccolo, Flute, Clarinet in Bb
Reed V— Alto Saxophone, Bass Saxophone, Clarinet in Bb, Bassoon

Significant Recordings: 61

Original Cast— Decca 9010, MCA 2050, Brunswick LAT 8058(E)
MCA Classics, MCAD0881-10050-2 (Reissue)

London Cast— First Night Records 88561-8260-2

Wonderful Town: Overture

Modestly bright

Reed I

Reed V

Reed III

Reed IV

Reed II
Bright ("Wrong Note Rag")

I

V

III

IV

"rinky-tink"

"rinky-tink"
Wonderful Town: Act 1: No. 2: Christopher Street

Tempo II Fast

Reed I

Reed V

Reed III

Reed IV

Reed II
Wonderful Town: Act 1: No. 2b: Change to Scene 2
Wonderful Town: Act 1: No. 4: Conquering New York

Allegro alla marcia

Reed I

Reed II

Reed III

Reed IV

Reed V

sfz
Wonderful Town: Act 1: No. 5a: One Hundred Easy Ways Change of Scene
Wonderful Town: Act 1: No. 6: What A Waste

(Beginning measure 123)

Fast \( \text{Tempo} \approx 176 \)

Reed I

Reed III

Reed IV

Reed II

I

III

IV

II
Wonderful Town: Act 1: No. 6a: Waste Utility

Bright and bouncy

Reed I

Reed V

Reed III

Reed IV

Reed V
Wonderful Town: Act 1: No. 9: Pass the Football
Wonderful Town: Act 1: No. 12: Conga

Tempo di "Conga"

Reed I

Reed V

Reed III

Reed IV

Reed II
Wonderful Town: Act I: No. 12b: Conga Reprise (Finale, Act 1)
Wonderful Town: Act 2: No. 13: Entr’acte

Andante ($=60$)
solo, w/ trbn.

Reed I

$pp$, dolce e semplice
Wonderful Town: Act 2: No. 13a: Opening, Act Two
Wonderful Town: Act 2: No. 15: Swing

Moderately light swing \((d = 72)\)
Wonderful Town: Act 2: No. 15a: Swing, Change of Scene

Moderate swing tempo
Wonderful Town: Act 2: No. 18: Ballet at the Village Vortex

Slow, heavy blues

Reed I

Reed III

Reed IV

Reed II

I

III

IV

II
Wonderful Town: Act 2: No. 19a: It's Love Reprise (Finale, Act 2)
Wonderful Town: Act 2: No. 20: Bow Music
Wonderful Town: Act 2: No. 20a: Exit Music
APPENDIX B

WEST SIDE STORY

Instrumentation:

Reed I— Alto Saxophone, Piccolo, Flute, Clarinet in Bb, Bass Clarinet
Reed II— Clarinet in Eb, Clarinet in Bb, Bas Clarinet
Reed III— Tenor Saxophone, Baritone Saxophone, Piccolo, Flute, Oboe,
            English Horn, Clarinet in Bb, Bass Clarinet
Reed IV— Bass Saxophone, Soprano Saxophone, Piccolo, Flute, Clarinet in
          Bb, Bass Clarinet
Reed V— Bassoon

Significant Recordings: 62

Original Cast— CBS OL 5320, OS 2001, S 32603, Phillips BBL 7277/
                 SBBL 504(E), CBS 62060/SB RG 70026/Embassy
                 31027(E), Phillips B 07362 L(G), CBS 62060/70025(G),
                 CBS 7464-32603-2/Columbia CK 32603
Film Cast— CBS OL 5670/OS 2070, Philips BBS 7530/SBBL 659/CBS
          BPG 62058(E),BRG/SB RG 70006(E), Phillips R 47126
          L/847 126 RY/CBS 7006(G)/CBS Supraphon (Slavic)
          Soy SK 48211
London Cast (1)— Saga XIL 6001, ERO 8106(E)
London Cast (2)— IMG Records IMGCD 180
London Cast (3)— Ter 2 1197

West Side Story: Act 1: Prologue

Allegro moderato (deliberately) \( \text{\textit{cresc.}} \) = 116–128

Solo with a jazz feel

Reed I

Reed III

Reed IV

I

III

IV

Solo

Slightly Faster

\( \text{\textit{cresc.}} \)
West Side Story: Act 1: No. 2: Jet Song

Allegro moderato (deliberately) \( \frac{4}{4} \) \( \text{m.} \quad 116-128 \)

[Music notation image]
West Side Story: Act 1: No. 4: The Dance at the Gym

Molto Moderato (\( \frac{3}{4} = 58 \))

Reed I

Reed III

Reed IV

I

III

IV

(sempre string.)
molto

Rocky (\( \frac{1}{4} = 108 \))

I

III

IV
West Side Story: Act 1: No. 4b: Mambo

Fast \( \text{(} \dot{q} = 126 \text{)} \)

Reed I

Reed III

Reed IV

I

III

IV

$sf$s

I

III

IV
West Side Story: Act 1: No. 8: Cool
West Side Story: Act 1: No. 10: Tonight

Fast and rhythmic \( \{ \text{d} = 132 \} \)

Reed I

Reed III

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{I} \\
\text{III}
\end{array}
\]

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{I} \\
\text{III}
\end{array}
\]

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{I} \\
\text{III}
\end{array}
\]
West Side Story: Act 1: No. 11: The Rumble

Tempo di prologue

Reed I

Reed III

Reed IV

I

III

IV

I

III

IV
West Side Story: Act 2: No. 13e: Procession and Nightmare

Allegro molto \( \bowtie \) 152

Reed IV

IV

IV

IV
West Side Story: Act 2: No. 14a: Change of Scene
APPENDIX C

ON THE TOWN

Instrumentation:

2nd Clarinet in Bb, Alto Saxophone

Significant Recordings.\(^{63}\)

<table>
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On The Town: Act 1: No. 11: Times Square Ballet, Finale
On The Town: Act 2: No. 21: Subway Ride and Imaginary Coney Island

Slowly subdued

Alto Saxo.

AS
On The Town: Act 2: No. 23: The Real Coney Island

Fast and loud

Alto Saxo.

AS
APPENDIX D

MASS

Instrumentation:

1st Clarinet in Bb, Clarinet in Eb, Soprano Saxophone,

2nd Clarinet in Bb, Alto Saxophone

3rd Clarinet in Bb, Bass Clarinet, Tenor Saxophone

Significant Recordings: 64

Original Cast— SM2K 63089

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Mass: X: 3: Trope: "Hurry"
Mass: X: 5: Trope: "I Believe in God"

(Beginning in measure 30)
APPENDIX E

A WHITE HOUSE CANTATA

Instrumentation:

2nd Clarinet in Bb, Soprano Saxophone

Significant Recordings.65

Original Cast— DG 463 448-2

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A White House Cantata: Act 2: No. 13: Bright and Black

Faster $\cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \po
A White House Cantata: Act 2: No. 15: Minstrel Parade

Soprano Saxo.

Bright

Sub. mf sub.

pp sub. ff sub.

Sub. mf sub.
A White House Cantata: Act 2: No. 15b: The Grand Old Party

Quick two-step \( (d = 144) \)

Soprano Saxo.

vamp till ready

Solo
A White House Cantata: Act 2: No. 15c: Red, White, and Blues

Slow, heavy blues tempo

Soprano Saxo.
EG: Who were some of the musicians and players, on saxophone and clarinet or otherwise, who influenced you as you started playing? How did you get interested and become involved in the Broadway scene?

JC: I lived in New Jersey. I started studying in high school with a man named John Sbano. Now he had dabbled a little bit in Broadway shows, but he was from an era of the 1950s and 60s where many people were involved with Broadway shows. You didn’t have to be the best player in the world to play them, so many musicians were smattered through north New Jersey who had played a Broadway show at some point in their career or even just substituted on a Broadway show. So, I would run across people. It was in the air that this was the thing that I wanted to do.

From there, when I got to Eastman, one of the first big influences would be George Marge. (I went to school at Eastman with his son, George Jr.) He brought me to a few recording sessions, and that’s how I met Al Regni. Al is another influence who has been extremely helpful to me in breaking into things.

George, unfortunately, died before I moved to New York. I never got a chance to work with him or really pick his brains much more than the couple of years that I saw him on holidays when I’d come down from school.

Right before I moved to New York another person was Bob Mintzer. Another was Dick Oatts. Al Regni recommended that I take some lessons with Bob Mintzer. So,
I think I may have taken one or two lessons with Bob. He’s a very, very encouraging, gentle man, really, really nice.

I got to work with Dick Oatts at Radio City a lot, and he’s one of my good friends. I’d say he’s had a big, big influence on me, not as a woodwind doubler, but just as a musician.

EG: I remember when he was here a couple of years ago. Wow, he was just fantastic. As a teacher, and like you said, an encourager, and the monster playing.

JC: He’s got everything.

EG: How’d you break into working that scene?

JC: When I was at Eastman, one of the things George Marge had said was to--he was a people person, he knew everybody--to get to know people because that’s how you get on jobs. You go play duets with people, you call them up and go play rehearsals for them, fill in for them.

When I finished Eastman I was living in the Catskill Mountains in upstate New York playing in a hotel band, a little trio. I was collecting unemployment at the time and taking flute lessons from Al Regni once a week.

I just had this little notebook and I would just telephone people. I’d hear a name, find their phone number, call them up and ask if I could come and play duets with them or take a lesson with them if they were a player somewhere. You get a lot of rejections, but you get some people that would say okay, sure. You’d go down and have an afternoon of duets. Two months later they might say, “Hey, I’m stuck. I got this
rehearsal band I committed to and now I got this gig that pays some money. Can you cover this rehearsal band for me?”

I did that. That lasted through the summer after I graduated and into the fall. Towards the fall I decided to go back to school again to get a master’s degree. I had already developed an interest in the clarinet at that point because I wanted to be a doubler. I applied for an assistantship, which I got, to go to Rutgers University, to study clarinet and get a performance degree there. Once I went there to school, I was living at home again with my parents in New Jersey. I continued networking while I was in school. Being around, just physically being there, gradually things started to happen.

Someone would call me for a rehearsal band and I’d go over and play in it. I’d meet guys, I’d take all their names down and become friendly with them. Then I joined the Union in NYC. I just asked people, I got names, I called contractors.

One day, out of the blue, the contractor from Radio City called me at 5 o’clock. He said they had a guy that got sick. He didn’t know me, but he knew that I’d graduated from Eastman. Turns out the contractor, Bob Swann, he was an Eastman graduate from the 1940s. Could I come in and fill in for this guy for this one show, and do I think I could handle it, this is what it’s going to entail…. “You’re going to play the Nutcracker. Do you have an A clarinet? (Yes.) Do you have a bass clarinet? (No.) Do you have a mouthpiece? (Yes.) Well, you can use one that’s here.”

I drove in that day. I had a tuxedo. Jerry Nywood was there, and Dick Oatts. (Jerry Nywood is another one who’s really a great colleague, really wonderful colleague.) So I went in and I guess I did a good enough job. They hired me for a few more shows
that season. The following season, during the course of that year, there were other things
that they hired me for. Gradually they started to hire me more and more.

Turns out I happened to be in the right place at the right time because I was
available. That’s the other big thing, if you’re available. Sometimes good players are not
as available. But I happened to be available because I was young and I wasn’t working at
all. Everytime they called me, of course, I’d come. Radio City used to be the lowest
paying gig in town, and no one wanted to work at Radio City. If you couldn’t get a gig
anywhere, you’d end up at Radio City.

Then through the years, as Broadway became more competitive to get into, so did
Radio City. That was sort of an offshoot of it. They had this unique thing of having a
house band. These guys had a gig, and they’d play any sort of entertainment that would
come in there.

I didn’t know this, but this is what I was getting in on the ground floor of. This
guy I was filling in for was going to retire, and he needed to be vested in the Union.
There were like five years or something because his pension, the pension rules had
changed. (He never told me this.) They kept hiring me year after year, show by show.
“Can you do next week. Okay, great. Can you do next week?” And this is what
happened for about four or five years in a row.

And then, ultimately, they hired me, and then all those years of doing that I
continually met new people. People who were playing on Broadway shows. Actually,
that’s how I met people on Broadway. Pretty much from that gig, that’s what did it.
(Al Hunt was another guy who was a really nice guy. He’s playing “The Producers” right now. He’s been playing Broadway shows for probably twenty-five years. He was very, very nice to me and encouraging to me. He helped me get on to sub on a couple of shows.)

Then the guys on Broadway would get stuck once in a while. They’d see me around, and they’d call me. I’d got shafted a lot of times, the guys would be jerks sometimes to me. Gradually I got to work starting to sub on various shows, and people would get to know you. That’s how I got to know Al more, Al Regni.

I think what happens is that it’s different than an audition situation. It’s almost more reliable than an audition situation because even though its sort of a good old boys club, when you’re gonna recommend someone you’re gonna recommend someone that you know can do a decent job. When a contractor needs to hire someone or when a player needs to get out of a gig, he or she wants to be able to hire a person they know will cover the gig for them and not totally screw up and get the conductor angry at them.

This is how I got to know Al. As I started to work around more and get different types of jobs, Al heard my name more. He was a very, very busy guy. He did a lot of recording work and he played Lincoln Center a lot. He was playing a Broadway show all the time, so he had to take off from the shows a lot. In order to keep the conductors happy, he would have to get people who were reliable, that would not make any problems, would be totally reliable, show up all the time, never miss, do a decent job on the music, and were available. This is where he got young guys in because they’re
always available. So for about a year he gave me a lot of work, an immense amount of work, and basically helped me get by the first year or two there.

He gave me a huge help, and then he backed off a lot and started to use other people. You say, “Well, what’s going on? Why am I not being hired anymore?” That’s the sort of plight of a freelance musician, but luckily I was doing enough stuff, I was getting calls from other people. I had a pretty decent nucleus of people that would call me at that point. So even though I wasn’t necessarily getting called at that point to play a Broadway show of my own, I was subbing on enough shows, for enough guys, on enough different books that I was pretty often working each week. Then I got called to do a show of my own which closed after a couple of months, maybe less than that.

EG: Let me ask you a question. When you mean a ‘show of your own’ that means that you start the book off.

JC: That’s right. A contractor calls you up and says, “I’m hiring an orchestra. Can you do this?” You’re the person, and if you get hired then you play the show until it closes or you quit. Sometimes people quit to move on to another show.

That went on for a while, maybe about six or seven years of that, I was starting to get disenchanted with the whole thing. Actually it was because a number of the players. One or two bad apples in the bunch can really make your life miserable, and they did for me. I found myself becoming increasingly unhappy, having to go to work for some of these guys I really didn’t like, who would just toy around with you and put you on hold for something.
For instance, they’d say, “Hey, listen, I’ve got a recording date. Can you show up at the theater and I’ll pay you forty bucks if I make it there to play the show, if my session ends in time. If not, then you just play the show and you’ll get paid for the show. They’ll make deals with you. After a while, I just couldn’t take being on hold so much. They’d toy with you.

There was a point at which Bob Mintzer called me up—he was not one of those guys. He was great. He was just wonderful—and said, “You wanna do this? I’m going away for the summer with The Yellowjackets, and I have these dates. You want to see if you’re available?” I hesitated. He said, “Hello, Is anyone there?” I said, yeah, yeah. “Do you want to do these dates or not?” Of course I do, I’ll do them. But it was at that moment I realized that I really didn’t want to continue doing that kind of work.

Then, very soon after that—I had traveled a little bit with Cats on the road, a couple times a year. Again, through some word of mouth, some guy who was doing Cats on the road got my name, and he wanted to take a vacation. So I would go twice a year and play for either a week or up to a month while he was on vacation a couple of times a year.

Through that, I got to know a conductor who was out on the road who became a conductor in New York because a lot of times they move from the road to New York. He was the conductor at Cats. (Mintzer eventually left Cats.) He knew me, and I had been subbing there at least a couple to five times a week, every week just about. It was like I was a regular. He called me and asked if I wanted to be hired, and I said, “Yeah, it’d be great.”
The bottom line is, through word of mouth, I worked there a lot. When a vacancy became available--Bob (Mintzer) left the show--I started playing the show.

EG: But you had already known the conductor?

JC: I had already known the conductor. That’s the way Broadway shows many, many times happen, by the conductors requesting a specific player. That equals a certain amount of brown nosing, yet, the bottom line is if someone can’t hold their weight musically, they don’t get hired. This climate now a days, and when I was there too, certainly it was like that. You could brown nose all you want, but if you went on the gig, actually ended up getting yourself hired to play a gig full time, and the downbeat happened at the first rehearsal and you just flop on it, they’re not going to keep you. They can fire you at the beginning within the first week.

EG: That leads me to my next question, or series of them. They may overlap a little bit. What makes for a successful pit musician? What are the most important skills that one needs? What might be skills that are lacking in a novice that experience teaches or things that weren’t addressed in music school that you learned out on the job, and what makes the inexperienced person stand out versus his experienced peers? What makes you successful skillwise?

JC: I can answer that in one word. It’s blending. Most people have enough technical ability to get through the stuff. They’ve been through music school or have played enough on their instrument that they can get the technical ability to get through an engagement.
Now, that’s not to make light of the things that are asked of players. Many times there are some really demanding flute parts. So it was presumed, as a doubler, that you took the flute really seriously, like a flute player, and that you studied with someone and learned it. Studied etudes, studied scales, and just got around on the thing, and learned to get a good tone on it. That was presumed.

What the thing was that I’d even see with experienced players through the years was they wouldn’t blend. Wouldn’t blend their tone, the intonation, the sense of rhythmic feel. All that stuff wouldn’t blend and gel with another player. You’d hear a guy warming up and sound just incredible, then as soon as you’d start to play, within the first four or eight bars, you’d think, “What’s wrong? It doesn’t feel right.” It wasn’t blending.

George Marge had told me that when I was in college. That’s what he used to see. Guys would come on a recording date and they wouldn’t blend. It’s not just a matter of volume. It’s a matter of rhythmic conception, stylistic conception, intonation, or just tone quality. Just because everybody plays a Buffet clarinet you don’t all have to play a Buffet clarinet, but you want to be able to put your sound inside the other person’s sound so that you don’t stick out.

The worst thing that can happen on a Broadway show is the conductor can look over and know that the regular player is not there. Conversely, the best compliment a sub can get is the conductor saying, “Well, I didn’t know the regular player wasn’t there that day.” You just fill the shoes.
The one overriding thing that makes a player successful musically speaking is being able to blend with other players.

EG: When you get in there, you need to get in there with ‘big ears’ and not be thinking about, “I’m going to show myself off,” but, “I’m going to listen to what’s going on with the rest of the particular band and make sure that I fit in as quickly as possible.”

JC: That’s exactly right. And that has to be. I remember playing on a swing band with this guy, Vince Giordanno and the Nighthawks. There are some really great jazz musicians on this band, and because I had played some Broadway shows I was aware of the blending idea. When I sat in the section, this is what I tried to do, and the guy turned to me and said, “Boy, it’s easy to play with you. Many guys get in here and just blow their brains out. You just adjust to what’s going on around you.” What you strive for musically is pretty much that.

The other thing that makes you really get hired back—Success means getting hired back, not getting hired the first time, but getting hired again, after the first time—is to learn the show that you’re playing. When you’re talking specifically about Broadway shows, to learn it like the back of your hand. When you learn a Broadway show, you want to learn cues of when you’re going to be heard, and that’s what you focus on. There could be all these gnarly clarinet parts that go all over the break and you could learn every single note of that and play every note, but if no one hears that it doesn’t matter. So there can be this one whole note you don’t place in the right note when the conductor points at you, you’ll be fired.
When you learn a book, first of all tape record it. You go to the pit and watch it while the other player plays it, and then you photocopy the book. I know it’s illegal, but many times the players won’t have a copy available for you. I’ve gone so far as showing up at midnight or 11.30 when the show is over, taking the book, and returning it within thirty minutes. Or returning it the next morning at 9 a.m. so that I’d have a copy of the book.

Then I’d go through it painstakingly with a tape recorder and a pencil, and I’d almost memorize the sections that I’m going to be exposed on. Those sections I’m going to know the tempo of it, know blending wise how I should fit in with the section. If it’s a total solo, I want to pretty much have it memorized, so that when I’m looking at the music I’m not looking at the notes. I can look up at the conductor a lot, which leads to the conductors.

Many times they are not really clear with their beat patterns. It’s your job to make it sound good anyway; no matter how bad they are, which many times they can be very bad. I remember subbing *A Chorus Line* and the conductor conducted with a pencil. I could barely discern where an entrance was, no less a beat pattern. I went to go look at that show five times for one cue in particular to try to figure out where, what he was doing with his pencil so that I knew to come in. I got it, eventually. It was just through sheer repetition. You compensate for the conductors.

So that’s number two. The first is blending, the second is knowing your part. The third thing is—all that’s musical stuff, and beyond the musical stuff—is your availability. People will call you, and they want to be able to reach you right away.
have a pager or a cell phone. At that time, when I was doing it, that wasn’t so available so I’d call your (sic) machine fifty times a day. You return calls right away to people, even if you can’t do it.

You learn little tricks. Not tricks, ‘professionalisms’. For instance, if you don’t want to do a job, you just say you’re working already. You don’t just say, “You don’t want to do it. You don’t want to work with that person.” You say you’re working already.

Generally speaking, you try not to juggle gigs. If someone calls you for something, I found myself committing to it, even if it was less money. Many times if it was a lesser gig because people know then that they can rely on you. There was actually I guy I worked with for many years who continually juggled gigs. He would really stick it to me sometimes. He’d call me up on a Friday night and say, “Hey listen, I can’t make a 2 o’clock matinee tomorrow because I’ve got a gig. A club date that’s going to pay $500 that day and I gotta take it.” But after enough times of this, I stopped calling the guy.

One’s availability and one’s ability to commit to something and stick to it. People appreciate that.

EG: Is there anything that classically trained musicians lack when coming into a pit for the first time? Or what about people coming from the other side, the jazz of pop realm?

JC: Yes, that’s interesting actually. You get some great players who come in from that stuff. One of the sort of crossover people is a Bob Mintzer, who can do all of that. I
remember working with a number of people. Another guy is Ted Nash. He’s really good at that, too; he can do both things.

But there were a number of people that you’d work with, woodwind players, they’d come off the road playing with some big name act, some great big singer or something like that or some band. They played all the instruments, but they didn’t take the time, number one, to take the rigors of the training on that particular instrument. For instance, learning the piccolo or learning the flute, studying it, getting a good tone on it. A good fundamental tone, number one.

And number two, they wouldn’t understand the basic concept of blending. Many times they’re going to have work with people who would want them to play soloistically, and here, you can’t do that all the time, only when they tell you to. They wouldn’t understand this concept of blending.

This one guy I worked with, he was playing with Mike Stern, who’s a jazz guitarist. He was great. He’s a tenor player. He’d played with George Benson. He’d played with Chaka Kahn, Paul Simon; he toured with all these people. He’s a very nice guy. We kind of knew each other a little bit. So, I said to him, “I’d be glad to help you through this if you haven’t done one of these things before. I’ll tell you what you have to do. Zerox a copy of the book, and then learn it with a tape recording. Basically memorize it.” He kind of brushed it off, said, “Don’t worry, I’m a really good sight reader.”

He clammed. He just clammed up. Came in the next night. The conductor pointed at him for an entrance, and he totally missed it. It just got worse from there, and
he got all disheveled and nervous after that happened. He started missing everything. I knew this would happen because I’d been through it before and watched it happen. It’s very different than being up on a stage with Gloria Estefan. It’s just a whole different set of skills.

This is the thing. You’re a jack-of-all-trades. What you do is you come in and have to learn the book, have it kind of memorized. If something goes wrong, they rely on you to keep it going. That’s your job, and many of these guys don’t quite get that.

It’s not a put down. I find many good musicians that I worked with never criticized other players when they couldn’t play a Broadway show because they just knew it was a different set of skills.

EG: So no matter if they are classically trained or more jazz and pop trained the idea is to get back to that blend, don’t stick out.

JC: Oh, yeah. The classically trained, though, very often blended easier. But, you know what, they didn’t blend in with the stylistic stuff. Most Broadway shows there is some variety of styles, and they didn’t always fit in. With the woodwind players it was annoying to play with guys who refused to learn how to play the saxophone. That was an annoyance really; that was a drag.

EG: Is there a Broadway style, or is style more dependent upon the composer, or perhaps genre of the musical number?

JC: No Broadway style. Pretty much broad musical training. Someone who has a little bit of a swing background, they can understand jazz styles and eighth notes,
articulations. Things that are implied if not written, and yet be able to read the music literally like a classical musician would.

Again, it gets to blending. If you find the lead player in a section is doing certain things, and you’re not doing them, you try to be aware of that and adjust. If you’re not sure, you ask them. You ask them before you come in to play it.

EG: You mention knowing the style by ear, and coming it being able to read what’s literally on the page. That’s one thing Sid Ramin mentioned in talking about—I asked him about articulation and rhythm in Bernstein and how the articulation is really pretty specific, especially in conjunction with the rhythm. He responded, “Yeah, it’s not so much that you’re gonna take a classical person and try and train them how to swing,” but that there was a balance there between Bernstein being trained as a classical musician or artist and knowing that being particular is good in writing the music and also trusting the player.

JC: Yes. I agree with that completely.

EG: We might have touched upon this. Are there any common misconceptions about playing musicals or theater works? It seem like you were relating that one gentleman’s experience: It’s not just all sight-reading.

JC: Many people have made their livings at it. They commit a fair amount of their livelihood to it, their time and their energies, and some people come into it, I find, just wanting to get in on it really quick, go get some gigs, and make some money really quick. Coming in from the ground floor up is important because you learn a lot.
Right now, the way it stands, it is the best gig in town for the average freelance musician. I don’t know what the pay scale is now, I used to make about $1,400 a week, if I played all the shows that week. You get health benefits, pension contributions, which were really great. You made a decent living.

Many people come in thinking that it’s a given, an expectation they should have this. The players who’ve been playing a lot more years know this all didn’t happen by itself. The pension didn’t always exist, health benefits did not always exist. The pay scale did not always exist. It was the musicians who fought for those through the Union to make those conditions better for the musicians.

These things happen through the years, and younger musicians take that for granted. They think, “I want to get a Broadway show.” I used to get calls from clarinet players all the time, and I’d ask, “Do you play saxophone?” “Yeah, I play some saxophone.” Once in a while I’d take a chance on someone. Then Jerry Neiwood or Dick Oatts would turn around to me the next day and say, “Just don’t send that guy in again.”

Here I am sitting in front of a guy who played with Chuck Mangione for fifteen years and another guy who played with everyone under the sun as saxophone players. You put in some guy who doesn’t fit in as a saxophonist with them and, boy, it basically just says learn your stuff.

EG: Did you ever have a chance to play any of Bernstein’s music?
JC: I did *Wonderful Town* once for City Opera and we made a record, with the St. Luke’s orchestra. Played two weeks of an engagement of that, a staged version at City Opera in NYC.

EG: What was your impression of Bernstein’s music? Anything you recall in particular?

JC: Well, the rhythm. The rhythm was crucial and the style. You had to play out and really just play with a lot of feeling and just nail the rhythms. Certainly in a recording session or in the City Opera, too, they’re all great, great players, you have to really nail it. You can’t go in tentatively. Play with a lot of confidence, and you just have to grab it and go for it. I really studied the part, listened to the recording before I did it a lot. Really learned my part. I tried to be as expressive as I could. I had a tenor saxophone solo, at one point, and I tried to growl and just really, really focus a lot, really hard. I rested during the day, tried not to do much during those couple of weeks when I was doing the City Opera concerts. I tried to show up to the recording sessions early every day so I could look at the music. I always made sure I had good reeds available, got my horns always in tip-top shape. That was a given. I’d spend a lot of money keeping my horns in shape because you could never risk having a pad fall out.

EG: You were mentioning how in particular the rhythm was important and also a certain, a great amount of intensity to his music. Are those the two primary things that you see separating his music from some of the other things that you’ve played, or have you noticed in some of the other things that you’ve played his music having affected those other composers?
JC: Firstly, the rhythm is, with him, the most prominent challenge for me personally. And I’d say for most of the people there. When you’re dealing with string players who often times have problems with syncopations, and that sort of stuff. That’s not to say necessarily anything negative about very, very good, finely trained musicians, but they just don’t have that experience under their belt. There’s no reason for them to, often times.

EG: Right. There’s not that much emphasis on that in their repertoire.

JC: Exactly. Does it influence other Broadway shows? In the sense that the style does, I wouldn’t say Leonard Bernstein in particular did. It was more like if you think of any musical style pervades by osmosis or gets in the air. He came up in the 1940s in New York when, there was a time when jazz music was what it was. It was very fresh and vital at that time. He comes from that. Although he’s not a jazzer he has some of that background and that influence. He used to go down to the Village Vanguard and hear people play. He knew that style. In the end he becomes a prominent composer and therefore he makes his mark in whatever stylistic stuff he has in his compositional approach. Do you say he influenced everyone or is it in the air? I vote for maybe a little of both.

Now, in regards to your question specifically in the music I play directly or that I have played. It happens to be that I was in New York at the time when Andrew Lloyd Weber’s shows were all over Broadway. And he did not have that sort of influence at all. There’s not a lot of depth to Andrew Lloyd Weber’s music. They’re tuneful, but it does not have a lot of the history that the American musicals do.
In a yes or no answer, did it influence other composers? Sometimes yes, and sometimes no.

EG: Probably obviously in Sondheim, who worked with him on *West Side Story*. But maybe in some of the more popular and pop oriented stuff like Andrew Lloyd Weber the music is so light that you don’t see the depth of Bernstein’s influence in there?

JC: That’s right. You have to also remember that not everybody was as diligent as someone like Bernstein in his or her study of music.

EG: Talk about a variety of style. What kind of challenges does this place on a performer, and how do you prepare yourself to meet those challenges. Is it just those people like yourself, who have had a natural interest in playing a wide variety of things? You’ve had some jazz experience, some classical experience. You get over and start playing some Broadway and you bring those experiences in, or is there even as you were playing something you were doing to educate yourself about style? Maybe it’s the tape recording and sitting down with the score?

JC: I think the thing that helps a person learn style the most is to play with other players who play that style or styles. Its not like there are so many styles out there. Broadway shows for a woodwind player--I’ve always thought of it in terms of “swing eighth notes or even eighth notes?” And then, many things can be an offshoot of many of those things.

Under the category of even eighth notes can be really ricky-tick, 1920s jazz, or it could mean that classical trained musicians who read eighth notes as they are on the page. Either of those a person who is well trained could play even eighth notes in that sense. A
person who has a conception of swing music, a little bit of background, for instance, a saxophonist who has played in some rehearsal bands or whatever, they might be able to know the difference when someone says “lay back more”. The lead alto player may say, “I want you to lay back more,” or “play on top of the beat,” or “play right with the beat, don’t lay back.”

Terms like that are really important and very often are unspoken. But if someone does often the lead player will be the one to say something to the other players. But they’ll use terms like that. Lay back, or play on top of the beat, or play right with the beat, don’t lay back at all.

EG: In the jazz band there is a hierarchy for determining style. There may or may not be a conductor, but everyone’s trying to do what the lead trumpet player does, for instance, and it works its way down through the other lead players. When you’re sitting in a musical, is there a, “You always pay attention to this chair, and even that chair is paying attention to somebody.”? Who are the top one or two or three musical leaders who you have to have your ears on at all times?

JC: As a woodwind player you mean?

EG: Yeah, is there a hierarchy there?

JC: You listen to your lead player in your section and the lead trumpet. They’re the two things you listen to pretty much. Woodwind players, depending on the kind of musical—in a Leonard Bernstein musical many times you’ve got saxophones happening all at the same time, you’d be listening to your lead alto player and lead trumpet player. When you have various other doubles in your face it may be that you’re playing a solo
with the bassoon, so obviously you have to play a duet with the bassoon, you have to listen to them. Generally speaking who leads the band rhythmically is the lead trumpet and lead alto. In terms of priority, probably the lead trumpet is the one who leads the whole band, first. Your job is to keep your eye on the lead alto, you follow the alto, but you’re also listening to the trumpet as well. You don’t always play with the trumpets, but most often you’ll play with the saxophones, so therefore you’ve gotta go with the lead alto saxophone. Many times the conception that the lead trumpet player sets is what the lead alto will follow, and you’ll have to follow suit also.

Many times a problem, not a problem, but an issue is the conductors beat and where they put their downbeat. On Broadway shows the string players can get lax and play a very delayed downbeat. Since they’re doing a repetitive thing playing a show over and over and over and over it can get really long. So a person might give a beat and the actual music might start so much after the beat happens you don’t know where actually to play. When that happens you always go with the band and never with the conductor because if you stick out, you’re wrong. Sometimes you have to split the difference a little bit, but every time I’ve been insistent and gone with the conductor, I’ve been wrong. It sounds wrong.

EG: How does the conductor fit into this musical hierarchy? If he says something, do you follow him or the lead trumpet player?

JC: If they actually ever address you, which they very rarely do, you do what they tell you to do. If they say to you, “You go right with my stick. I want you to be with my
stick,” and they are talking to you in particular, yeah you go with the stick, you listen to them.

In a situation like this, it is very rare that you get to have too many words with the conductor. You look at the book while they’re conducting the show. You don’t get to talk to them then, obviously. They’re always busy on the breaks doing something or other. When you come in to work, it’s the same deal. He doesn’t walk to the podium until the moment he has to conduct. He comes in, he looks around, boom, gives you a downbeat, you start the show. Intermission he leaves. Comes back for the second half, same thing, and he leaves. If there is anything wrong, he’ll talk to the contractor and say, “Don’t have that guy back again.”

EG: So his job is to keep the music in sync with what’s going on with the rest of the show. But as far as the band, the band seems to take care of itself?

JC: It’s supposed to. He or she will be there to be the bottom line, to tell everybody what to do. They can get a little tyrannical sometimes and make the musicians miserable. When they do that they very involved with the band, unfortunately, and they’ll start nitpicking band members playing or whatever, and that’s one of the challenges of playing that kind of job.

EG: It almost makes it sound, then, when you said the band should take care of itself, it sounds kind of chamber music oriented.

JC: It depends on the show. And it depends on what the music is. On Phantom of the Opera—I used to sub on that one a lot. There are many times where it’s opera-like, and
there’s rubatos and you need a conductor because there’s no way to know when to come in or how fast or how slow to do something.

But in a show like *Cats*, I remember one time, the conductor had an attack and he had to go to the bathroom. Something he ate was bad and there was no way he was going to hold it in, and it just happened to be right during the show. So we all look up and, guess what, there’s no conductor there. He’s gone. What happened, the band just kept playing, kept going. There were a couple of cut-offs and things. One of the piano players stood up and cut the band off and started them again, but for the most part the thing kept chugging along.

Many times the musicians who have done the show enough times, they know the drill and go about their business and play the show. They look up for certain cues or whatever, but for the most part it’s on autopilot.

EG: With the saxophone specifically, is it primarily being used in most of this music as a jazz instrument and a popular instrument, or is it ever used as a classical instrument? Maybe that’s a false dichotomy, but even in Bernstein. Ramin says they conceived of it primarily as a jazz instrument. You look at *West Side Story*, there is non-jazz music in there, and the saxophone generally isn’t involved in those things. It’s clarinets and flutes. How do you see the saxophone used, specifically?

JC: At least from what I’ve seen, very rarely is the saxophone used other than jazz. Except for Leonard Bernstein where sometimes there is this split between the two where you’ll hear the saxophone in a part—for instance, on tenor, you’ll have to have a C* mouthpiece or Rousseau mouthpiece or something to be able to play a nice low register,
Prokofiev-type tone down there. On the whole, most Broadway music I’ve encountered, it requires you to have some jazz conception. Not like a loud, screaming mouthpiece or anything like that, but it’s more of a jazz instrument. Very rarely is it involved in classical type of stuff.

To put that in a perspective for you, an academic perspective, it wasn’t until I came back to UNCG—even actually until now, when I got a job teaching clarinet and saxophone that I went out and bought a C* mouthpiece for my tenor. I’ve played an Otto Link since I was in college, and it suited every single circumstance I’ve ever had to play. Even that Bernstein thing where we did this recording. The Otto Link is not an open mouthpiece, it’s a number six and it’s a very mild mouthpiece.

The kind of stuff you have to do for some of the repertoire in academics requires you to have a different setup. Most situations you go onto, ninety-nine percent of them, the saxophone is perceived as a jazz instrument, I think. Al Regni may say differently because he’s so involved in the classical world. He’s involved so heavily, or he has been, with Lincoln Center. Anything that’s required (the saxophone), *Lulu*, the Berg and any of that stuff on saxophone for the Metropolitan Opera, the New York Philharmonic, he does that stuff, so he’s more involved with it.

But if you look across the boards for the average freelance player that plays saxophone that plays in Broadway shows, or any type of freelance work in New York, you need a jazz conception. Al is always working towards getting that, I know. He’s always trying mouthpieces and always working towards getting a better jazz conception, and yet I never heard him trying to talk about developing a classical conception. I mean,
it was a given. Jazz was it. I’m not talking about a hard be-bopper; I’m just talking about general style.

EG: Right. Your setup, or the setup you’d recommend would definitely be a big band setup?

JC: A medium, big-band setup. Something that will enable you to play with a little bit of bite, but the other thing is that in a Broadway situation, setup actually is a big deal. You’ll want to play on everything that is medium. Nothing extreme. Nothing too close, and certainly nothing too open.

Some guys would come in with a number nine Otto Link mouthpiece or a big Dukoff mouthpiece, and then when they would go to pick their flute up they could barely get a sound out of it. I learned that early on, too, again, out of necessity. Even on the clarinet I don’t play on a B45 mouthpiece. I didn’t, and I still don’t. That’s an open mouthpiece, a pretty open mouthpiece. When you have to switch over to flute or something you’re going to end up having to get readjusted to things. That’s a challenge, and you try to avoid those challenges if at all possible.

EG: That’s a good bit of advice. Some of this music you’ve played both in the pit, and you were talking with Wonderful Town doing staged versions. Do you play differently in the pit versus staged versions, musically, or is it mainly just an acoustics thing? Do you have to wear a tux on stage versus in the pit where you wear black? Is there a difference in approach there?

JC: Yes, it can be. It depends on the circumstances. For instance, it depends on the particular pit. Some pits you are more visible than others. In Cats we were in another
room completely. In *Phantom of the Opera* you’re literally in a pit and the audience is pretty visible there, so you’d wear black. Most Broadway shows require you just to wear straight black. Black shirt, black pants, black socks, black shoes. Some shows in the old days, they’d require you to wear a tux. Not so much anymore these days. The general dress for musicians in Broadway is black, so I had a big drawer full of black T-shirts and black pants.

How it affects how you play. Very often, well, all Broadway shows now are miked. There’s no acoustic. You don’t have to blow your brains out to be heard in a situation. When you play something like City Opera, it’s like playing on a concert stage where it’s not miked. So you have to keep that in mind. You make your adjustments.

You don’t necessarily play any differently because your essential goal is that you’re playing in an ensemble, so you’re trying to blend with your partners. That’s the primary goal. I have heard, on an extreme side, a number of recording musicians, who have had their careers focus on recording. Their sounds are not as big as someone else who might have played live more. That is because they are so focused on getting their sound so refined that there is not of that extraneous air because they know that the mike will pick that up. If they are doing two or three recording sessions every single day eventually they learn how to cut all of that out of their sound.

Regarding the saxophone, that’s just a lot more easy going setup. You can’t be playing on a hard setup. They have to be playing on a very easy setup. They go to play a low D on the tenor, it’s going to ‘huff’ into the horn. Live versus Broadway pit, a concert
stage versus the Broadway pit, it’s again the blending issue, the slight adjustments one
might make.

The funny thing was that I couldn’t put my finger on it necessarily beyond that
because this is the stuff you learn by experience, in a sense, just playing with other
people. Even in an academic situation someone might learn to blend properly just
playing in a saxophone quartet. With enough attention on it, a person is told to listen to
their partners enough, they learn to blend their sound. That’s the sort of training that
person might get that’s not in a professional situation that they can take into a
professional situation.

I think ego has a lot to do with it. That’s my theory these days; actually for a long
time. Many people who play Broadway shows that I have worked with over the years are
easy going people that don’t look to be in the limelight necessarily. They just like to do
their job well and come in and play it. They don’t care to be on stage. They get very
nervous, sometimes, if it is a new situation. They’re not the superstar mentality, but
that’s what makes them so good at what they do.

They are very reliable. They don’t mind doing something over and over. They
try to do something over and over better each time.

EG: We talked a little about tone color, and we were thinking more of a big band
sound. Speak to me about vibrato. We all know jazz vibrato tends to be wider. Do
aspects of playing the saxophone like vibrato change if you’re doubled with a flute
player, or you mentioned if you’re playing with the bassoon player, you better be
listening to the bassoon player. Would you use vibrato differently if you were playing
with a French horn versus playing with a flute? Maybe you’d go straight with one and
vibrato with the other? How do you guys handle that?

JC: That’s another interesting question. It’s really getting back to the idea that when
the conductor looks over to you and knows that you’re a substitute in that orchestra, then
there’s a problem. The idea is that you do whatever the other player has done before you.
You don’t necessarily take the lead. You don’t make the decision. At the point when
someone is hired to do the show and their playing lead alto, then you’re going to have to
make decisions. Ninety percent of the time that’s not the case.

The most common situation you’re going to encounter playing a Broadway show
is that you’re going to have to fit in with the rest of them. So there is no right or wrong
when it comes to vibrato on the saxophone. If the others are doing it, you do it. If the
lead alto is doing it, you may compliment what they do. Generally speaking you do a
little less than everyone else does, less prominent. Let the lead alto color the sound of the
saxophone section by them doing it, and you may support them a little bit. You just don’t
want to stick out.

Now if the conductor says at some point, “Now can you guys just really ham it up
there?” or “Be Guy Lombardo there.” Then they want an extreme situation and you can
really let loose with your vibrato. But when you’re playing with a bassoon, for instance,
or an oboe, oftentimes I’m more focused on the intonation than the vibrato, and many
times I think the vibrato makes it more difficult for the other player to focus and get their
sound inside my sound.
I try to be sympathetic in that if I play vibrato, I make it very light and very mild. Usually a straight tone is a safe way to go because if you’re playing a straight tone and they’re playing a vibrato and it’s in tune, then you’re okay. If you’re playing vibrato they have a straight tone, then you stick out. Again, the bottom line rule is let them be the leader not you.

EG: Which gets back to the humility and being an ensemble player.

JC: Yes. Being a good ensemble player is what it’s about.

EG: How has being a doubler affected your approach to playing the saxophone. You’ve studied flute. You’ve studied clarinet. I don’t know if you play oboe or bassoon, but did that bring any particular skills set or expand your ears so that when you’re listening to a clarinet player you’re used to it when you’ve got the saxophone in your hands, and in that sense, instinctively know what to listen for? How have the other instruments influenced your saxophone playing or what you bring to the saxophone, how you approach it, how you play it?

JC: That’s a good question. This is why it is helpful to study each instrument as if it’s your primary instrument. That’s one thing—if you get back to the question you asked a number of questions ago—the difference between players who might be a soloist with some great singer and they come in and try to play a Broadway show, what mistakes might they make or whatever, they don’t always take the time to study the instrument.

If you take the time to study the instrument—for instance, with me on the clarinet, the idea of playing legato, making a very legato connection in my lines, or my tongue placement, and the way I’m starting to learn how to project my sound. This transfers
over directly from my clarinet playing to my saxophone playing. It has definitely helped my saxophone playing.

Articulation is a big concern. The way I’ve studied the articulation and dealt with it, had to learn how to articulate on the clarinet. The saxophone is so much more forgiving than the clarinet in many ways when it comes to articulation. At least I’ve found so. You can get by on the saxophone in a Broadway situation without having to think about your tongue too much.

On the clarinet, it’s a given. You have to deal with it at some point because there are going to be some soft entrances you’re going to have to make with the flute and you’re going to have to learn to make a breath attack or whatever, or make, sometimes, light bouncy staccatos, where the saxophone doesn’t have those circumstances as frequently in an ensemble situation. I would say that it most definitely helps and carries over to have this training and focus as if it is your primary instrument.

A rule of thumb I used to tell players all the time is if you want to be a doubler, you take one instrument and study it for about a year, as if it is your primary instrument. Deal with that one. That was the approach that I took and found to be helpful. When I left Eastman it took me about nine or ten months before I went back to school again, and I studied the flute with Al Regni and I played three or four hours a day on the flute. That was it. I played gigs at nighttime on the tenor, but I felt like I was a flute player after about six or seven months. That was the one period of my life where I focused on that instrument really intensely.
Each of those instruments, if you have your focus for a period of time where you can develop your fundamental abilities on that instrument, then you’re in good shape. You’re on the road there.

EG: So you might be “a doubler”, but you want to try as much as possible to be approach things as a specialist.

JC: Right. When they point at you, they want to hear an oboe or whatever that is. Many times the doublers will be called to play other things. Once in a while-and this is the thing you strive for, if you’re playing a Broadway show every night--you want to get those calls once in a while to play a concert version of Leonard Bernstein’s *Wonderful Town* or a recording of something. They’ll call you because they know you’re a good clarinet player or a good oboe player or a bassoon player.

When they point to you, they want to hear a bassoon. They don’t care that you play five other instruments. They want to hear a bassoon that sounds like you play in the New York Philharmonic. That’s really what they want. This is the attitude that many of the good musicians go into it with. They strive to really do that. Though you know it’s physically impossible to ever be at that level on all of your instruments, you do strive to do it.

Many of the musicians, we used to get together to play chamber music a lot and switch off on instruments once in a while. When I first started working at Radio City, we used to meet in this guys loft and we used to play quintets together. Each week we’d bring a variety of instruments and we’d switch off. “Okay, who’s gonna play flute this
week?” A couple of the guys played oboe. They’d play oboe, and we’d switch off. That way you got experience on one of your weaker instruments.

EG: What a great idea from a teaching standpoint and from someone who, this is their goal is to get involved with that music. It sounds like a round robin thing. You could switch every movement in that sense.

EG: Is there any advice or something I haven’t asked or addressed that you’d think is important? Things you think about when you say, “Okay, I’m going to go sit down and play Broadway or play Bernstein or do this that you want to make sure that other people have heard about or read about?

JC: The only thing we haven’t touched upon, is not a pet peeve of mine but something, is unions. I mentioned this once in the conversation but the involvement of the musicians with the musicians union and how that directly affects people’s livelihoods and subsequently how they approach music and their commitment to what they do as a professional.
APPENDIX G

INTERVIEW WITH MR. SID RAMIN

Questions sent to Mr. Sid Ramin via E-Mail

There is a great deal of rhythmic variety in this music, including a lot of syncopation, writing across barlines and time signatures, cross rhythms, etc. It seems as well that there is a great deal of attention paid to and care in marking articulation in the music, with various shades of accent and staccato highlighting this rhythmic activity. Could you speak to this, and maybe other aspects of rhythm and articulation that a performer should be aware of?

Is there a Broadway style, or is style more dependent upon the composer, and perhaps, the genre of the musical number?

What, in your eyes, makes Bernstein’s music unique? Are there any special challenges, requirements, or difficulties that you find in working with his music? Are there any insights or insiders perspective about a specific work, or even passage of music in a piece, that you can share?

Bernstein’s music is so important to the saxophone specifically, as major works by major composers give the instrument certain legitimacy. Did he have any particular conception of the instrument itself? For example, did he see it as a jazz instrument, or did it seem to
him to have any potential as a classical instrument, or maybe all of these categories are somewhat artificial to him, etc.

What kind of player was Bernstein looking for, or maybe, did he require any unique qualities of performance out of those he worked with? Did he have an ideal player in his mind, or any favorite players or leaders, and why?

Undoubtedly you’ve had frequently heard performances by the ‘best in the business’ playing this music. What separates a successful performance from a lesser one? Have things gotten better over the past fifty years? Aside from the strongest players, is there anything you find lacking in many performers, particularly on the saxophone, in their approach to the music?

When Bernstein creates a score, where does his creativity leave off and yours begin in setting the orchestration? Do you listen to the music differently as an orchestrator versus a performer who is more removed from the creative process, and what might we gain trying to think as you do?

In your mind, what is the ideal saxophone sound for this music? Big band era style, a classical approach, something in between? When you hear this music in your head, who’s sound do you hear as your ideal?
I’ve played his music in both dramatic and staged presentations. Should the approach to playing change at all, minus the obvious physical differences of being in a pit versus on stage, etc.?

As a performer, how do you see Bernstein as having influenced other composers who follow, both in terms of style and writing for the saxophone?

What does Bernstein do differently from those who came before him that makes him unique? How does playing his music differ in approach from playing, say, a Lerner & Lowe or Rogers & Hammerstein musical, etc?

Bernstein’s music is always quite eclectic with a wide variety of styles. What would you highlight as the differences between the playing the more vernacular styles of music and approaching the classical or operatic writing?

Do you think that his vision of his own music is what others try to emulate, or has the manner of performing his music developed relatively independent of his performing influence and recordings? Who or what might those strong external influences be?

Is there anyone else you would recommend interviewing for this project?
Responses of Mr. Ramin via E-Mail

Obviously, Bernstein’s music has a foot in both camps since his love for “pop” music and his classically oriented background made his music naturally unique with his use of time signatures, harmonic devices, etc. His classical training made him aware of the importance of careful articulations but the nature of pop music made those markings rather difficult because of the natural instincts and phrasing of the players. It was to Bernstein’s credit that he allowed, and actually welcomed, interpretations from the “jazz” players in his theatre works. As you know, many composers have tried by the use of a 12/8 sig (sic) to get the “long-hairs” to swing, but it really never works and Bernstein knew it.

As to a Broadway style: I think much of it depends upon the genre but also much depends on protecting the performer on stage, who has to think about projection, placement, etc. That’s where the arranger steps in!

Bernstein’s music is certainly unique and instantly recognizable as written by Bernstein. Trying to figure out why is difficult except to note that his use of time signatures appear to be complex but sound so “right”. Most people feel at home with music in 2/4, 3/4 or 4/4. Lenny felt completely comfortable in 5/4, 7/4 and such. Actually, his admiration of Copland, Barber, etc. is ever present.
As for his use of the saxophone, I think he considered it to be a jazz instrument and used it as such (“Cool”, for example, in West Side Story). The timbre of the saxophone suggests pop music and its use by other composers sometimes sounds incongruous. He was very much at home with the saxophone as part of the orchestra. The saxophone, as you know, is not only used as a solo instrument but is invaluable in ensemble playing by the orchestra. It has the weight when you need it. And, of course, if someone who doesn’t understand the worth of the instrument uses it, it can sound dated and wrong. In my case, as an arranger in the big band era, I gravitated towards its use.

When we orchestrated West Side Story, Lenny insisted on a legitimate bassoon chair not played by a “doubler”. The other four woodwinds players had to play sixteen instruments between them and the trick was to allow enough time for them to switch to their various instruments. (Not much use for your thesis but I thought you’d be interested). And, of course, the players had to be technically proficient as well as jazz oriented.

As for working with Bernstein, you probably know that he was a very good orchestrator in his own right. However, the demands of the theatre usually makes it necessary for the composer to enlist the services of an orchestrator to get things done in time for rehearsals and performance. Many times, a composer doesn’t have the ability to orchestrate and must get an orchestrator. In Bernstein’s case, he and the orchestrator worked very closely.
and discussed each composition very carefully to make sure his wishes and concepts were exactly what he wanted. He was very much involved in the process.

As for the approach in both dramatic and staged presentations, I don’t see any difference. The difference, if there is one, would be one of balance with the stage.

And, as for Bernstein’s influence on other composers in writing for saxophone, I think he absorbed certain sounds from the big bands of the era and younger composers will obviously do the same.

There is a big difference between a composer and a songwriter. Richard Rodgers or Jule Styne or Cy Coleman are all considered fine composers but, in essence, were songwriters who needed an orchestrator. Bernstein could have done his own scoring but the time limits made it impossible.

If I sound in awe of Bernstein, it’s because I am in awe of someone who could literally do it all. I’m sure I’m biased but I’m hard pressed to think of anyone else, and I’ve worked with many others, who could do the many things he could do so well.

I’m sure this response to your questions may not be very helpful for you in writing your thesis but, unfortunately, I’m an orchestrator and not a writer. Good luck!
EG: In your Saxophone Journal articles you mention listening to recordings a lot, and I was wondering how these factor into your preparation for performance. Would you use them to prepare for a musical as well?

AR: Sure. I always like to be familiar with the material that you’re going to play. Even if you’re playing a couple of notes it is nice to know when you’re playing and whom you’re playing with, how exposed it is. I like to be able to hear it beforehand. Just for preparation’s sake you should know what you’re doing.

EG: I would assume if it is a new piece you’d look along with the score or with your part and follow along.

AR: Yes, with the recording, the whole thing, just learn the piece. Learn it as thoroughly as you can. And for a show, that’s a strong necessity today. For a show you make a recording. Go in the pit, bring a little tape recorder, and record the show. They give you parts to study at home, and you listen to the score. Just playing the show is not enough. You have to play it like the guy you are subbing for. If you’re doing a new show you don’t have that luxury. You have to read it and learn it with everybody else. But if you’re going in to sub for somebody you have to not only be able to play it, but play it in the manner of the person you’re replacing does it.

EG: You don’t want to stand out as being the new guy, I take it.
AR: No, no. You want to make your presence felt, but not so that it is out of place.

EG: What was Bernstein like as a conductor, and were there any aspects of performance that he seemed to emphasize through his conducting or that he seemed to think were particularly important through his instructions?

AR: He was very dramatic. I think he liked somebody with personality and who was not afraid to take chances. You know, stories of him jumping around and making all kinds of gyrations. He was spur of the moment. He was very theatrical in things that he did. It made him very exciting. He would do unexpected things at the very last minute. Sometimes not always successfully, you know. He wasn't afraid to take chances.

EG: Now then, did he seem to appreciate that out of his performers, the players themselves?

AR: I think for the most part. (laughs) You never knew with him because he could also be a man of many moods. If you did something that caught him at the wrong moment, he might have some backlash. He might jump on you for it, but I think for the most part…you know what I mean when I say chutzpah?

EG: Yes.

AR: He was probably the epitome of that word. He was very strong-minded, very cocky, very sure. I think he liked that in people, but if somebody used it in what he considered to be the wrong manner at the wrong time he would jump all over them.

EG: So he liked you to take chances, but you were taking chances by taking chances?

AR: (laughs) That’s a good explanation. Yes.
EG: How do you think he viewed the saxophone? Did he see it as a jazz instrument, a classical instrument, maybe both, not either?

AR: I think both. I think he liked the saxophone very much. He didn’t write an awful lot for it. At the time he was writing his pieces, he wrote a fair amount of things. When you look at *West Side Story*, there is the famous lick right at the beginning, but most of the stuff is woodwinds.

EG: I was just thinking, as I was transcribing the saxophone parts out of the musicals that for as much as we think of *West Side Story* and saxophone there’s actually more saxophone writing in *Wonderful Town*.

AR: Oh Yes, *Wonderful Town* there’s a lot of saxophone writing in that. That’s true. You’ve got the famous *Prelude, Fugue and Riffs*, that section that’s in *Wonderful Town* that has a little section of saxophones going.

EG: Unfortunately I’m not familiar with *Prelude, Fugue, and Riffs*. I know the piece exists, but I haven’t gotten to study it. I’ll definitely have to take a look at the score.

AR: Oh Yes, check that out. That’s one of his more famous jazz influenced works. It is got a sax section in it. And even in that piece a couple of the sax players double on clarinet so you have very legit sax and clarinet parts even though it is jazz influenced.

EG: How does this dual nature of our instrument, at least the music we play and Bernstein’s awareness of it, how does that affect how you play? Would you approach playing his music in a concert version differently than you’d approach it in a pit? Would you approach playing *West Side Story* in a pit differently than you’d approach *Symphonic Dances from West Side Story*, for instance?
AR: I think Bernstein’s music you’d approach generally the same, even in the orchestra. It is jazz inflected, but it is not out and out jazz. His music is very out front and in your face when you play it, but its not really…it is not Count Basie. You’d play it more legit oriented with little jazz influences. By that I mean with a certain vibrato, with little lip slurs maybe where notated (sings opening solo of the Prologue), that kind of stuff. You would play that the same on the stage; at least I do, as I would play it in a show, sure.

EG: But probably not as full bore as you would if you were sitting in a jazz band section?

AR: Right. It is got to be a pronounced jazz feeling but not obnoxious.

EG: Right. What are your setups for playing musicals and how might they differ from your classical setups, or do they differ?

AR: I’ve played the show…different shows, for well over thirty-five years, and I tell you the truth, I never really changed my setups much. Once in a while I did. I did a show once called Over Here, which was an Andrews Sisters, a WWII kind of big band, and I was playing lead alto. I changed my mouthpiece to get more of a covered, dark sound, and I used a white Brilhart. But more than not I pretty much used the same kinds of setup in the pit.

First of all, they never called me to do out and out extended things where I had to sound a certain way. Usually, if they wanted somebody to do that, they would get somebody who was a specialist, a David Sanborn type. I never really had to do any of
that kind of stuff. I probably stayed pretty much in the middle. I would use a setup that I
could incorporate in studio work or classical work.

EG: Something like maybe a Meyer?

AR: No. I stayed pretty much with a Vandoren A35 or A28, a studio facing. I did use
the white Brilhart for a few years. I had a Berg Larsen that Frank Wells fixed for me,
which had a legit-like facing on a jazz mouthpiece. It was a good mouthpiece for what I
was doing at the time. Then I found the flexibility of the Vandoren, which I feel is very
good. The A28 is very good for legit but it can also be used for certain kinds of studio
playing. I’ve even used it playing lead alto in a big band. Worked pretty well.

The Meyers I think are good. I have a very good Meyer, which I use once in a
while playing in a big band. If I’m playing lead alto I’ll use that. I have another Ron
Coelho—I have a million mouthpieces. I’m working now on a piece I am playing in a
couple of months that has a real screeching alto part. I’m using a Ron Coelho
mouthpiece. It has more brightness, more fullness of sound.

EG: So in playing musicals you might use something a little bit more “classically”
oriented, but you supply the aggressiveness and the sound concept?

AR: Well, when you say classical setup I think of a close Vandoren or close Selmer
mouthpiece, which I’ve never been prone to use. I’ve never really used a Sigurd Rascher
type facing for classical music; it is never been my cup of tea, that kind of sound. So I’ve
accommodated my sound from a mouthpiece that can be a little more flexible.
EG: Right. I’m a Vandoren mouthpiece guy myself for my classical playing, so I understand where you’re coming from. What kind of sound were you going for in playing Bernstein, something not quite full bore lead alto but not quite classical, just kind of a combination therein between the two. Would that be a good summary?

AR: It is more of an American influenced sound. When I grew up I listened more to the Americans than I did to the French. I did listen to Marcel Mule, but I was more prone to listening to the big bands in the 50s. When I was a kid I would listen to the 40s and 50s big bands, and my heroes were the guys that played really in an American style. It was an outgrowth of the French style, but people like Toots Mondello Al Gallodoro, and Jimmy Abato. Those were guys who listened to whose sounds I tried to emulate, and who I considered to be American influenced sounds. They were sounds that came out of jazz but also were influenced by the radio days, when they played the studios.

EG: Right. I understand. I can hear that in my head. How do you handle vibrato in this music, and does it depend on who you’re playing with in the ensemble—say, French horn or flute. In section playing would the whole group of saxophones use vibrato or just the lead player?

AR: Oh no, I think that you should match vibratos. When we play them in the quartet, we try, I try to get the quartet to match the vibrato that I like. Or if somebody else is playing a particular passage that we have to emulate; say if the tenor has the lead part, I try to, we try to match vibratos. I think that vibrato is probably one of the most important facets in music performance. Vibrato is very important.
Now there are times when you’re playing unisons in the sax section where you play with no vibrato. You have to use vibrato very discriminately and consistently. You either use it or you don’t. People sometimes they use it on one note and not on another. It is inconsistent and the music I think suffers from the inconsistent use of vibrato.

EG: Now if you were playing a line in *Wonderful Town* or *West Side Story* and you were playing with French horn, would you use vibrato to try to distinguish the saxophone character from the French horn or would you take your vibrato out in that instance?

AR: I might color it a little with vibrato. It depends upon the situation. You have blend your sound. Playing with a blend is what is important. A wise player once told me, “Playing in tune is playing with a blend.” So whomever you’re blending with you have to make your sound fit. You ‘blanket’ your sound in so that your vibrato is not obnoxious.

Vibrato should be like the vermouth in a martini. If you can taste it, it is no good. It should be there, but not ever-present. You know, it is like the garlic in spaghetti sauce. If you put too much in, it ruins it.

EG: Right. So you’re not necessarily opposed to using vibrato with a vibrato-less instrument, it is just that it ought to not call attention to itself.

AR: Yes, exactly. That goes for other instruments too. If you’re playing flute, you have to be careful with the flute. Even more so than the saxophone because flute players tend to really get carried away with the vibrato, especially in the low register, low octave. If you’re playing with a clarinet and bass clarinet and you’ve got your vibrato going
(laughs), it can stick out and ruin the blend. Again, I think you have to use it
discriminately.

EG: That leads into my next question. How has your experience doubling, and I don’t
use that word lightly, on the other instruments affect how you approach the saxophone? I
know from your articles that you don’t try and approach doubling like a ‘doubler’, you
try to approach each instrument seriously in and of itself. How has your experience
studying and working with the clarinet for so long affected your saxophone playing?
Your work on flute, does it change how you approach the saxophone in and of itself and
maybe practically speaking when you’re sitting in the pit and having to jump between
instruments

AR: I think you develop a feel for each instrument, but you play each instrument
essentially the same. My suggestion to people who want to become particularly doublers
is the first teacher you should go to is a voice teacher to learn about voice production.
Learning what it takes to produce a sound and then applying that to each instrument so
that you have a similar approach, but yet it still is a different instrument. You have to
know the similarities and the differences between each instrument. But essentially you’re
blowing the same. It is learning the technique of blowing that I think is very, very
important.

EG: Yes, as a clarinetist and saxophonist myself I agree with that whole-heartedly.
What makes for a successful pit musician? What are the most important skills that a pit
musician needs to be successful and how might those be different from someone who’s
just a studio musician or is just playing recitals all day…what specific things do you need
to bring in your toolbox?

AR: If you ask ten different people you’ll probably get similar answers in someways
and very dissimilar ones in a lot of other ways. To be a successful pit musician, I think
first of all you have to be a very good player, without question. If we’re talking about
woodwind doubling you have to play each of your instruments on a very, very high level.
You can’t play second flute. You can’t be a second clarinet player. You can’t be an
inside saxophone player. You should be able to play them all on the first chair level.

Almost equally important is the way you handle yourself; the way you deal with
the people around you. The way you deal with the contractors that hire you. The way
you present yourself to the conductor. I’ve seen some very good players who turn off
conductors, and conductors have become very powerful people on Broadway today. If
they just don’t like the way you look it doesn’t matter how well you play, or if you’re not
able to fit into any given situation, you could be a terrific player and still not be
acceptable to certain conductors.

There are a lot of little things that go into being successful on Broadway. It is
kind of a hard thing to answer and say one simple answer.

EG: So you have to be excellent at your instrument but you would say that equally,
even though it doesn’t seem to…it’s not part of the conservatory training…your
professionalism and your showing up and not ruffling feathers and such, things like that
are equally important?
AR: Well, I don’t know how equally important they are but they are all important
tidbits of what goes into being successful. The most important is probably your level of
musicianship, the way you play, certainly. However, you could have deficiencies in the
way you present yourself that could really nullify any success you have as a musician.

EG: When one’s in a jazz band… (At this point, the recording has playback problems.
The question regards performers following musical leadership and the hierarchy in an
ensemble: who sets the style, etc.)

AR: It depends on what you’re playing. If you’re playing a big band kind of thing I
would sort of yield to the lead trumpet player’s suggestion of how something is going to
be phrased--if it is a long note or a short note, or this or that. You certainly would go
with that. It depends. If someone does something that you question I would tactfully ask
the trumpet player if it might be better to do it a different way and if they say no, I would
probably yield to their lead. It is cooperation. If somebody’s a dictator that’s not going
to make for a good democratic musical scene.

EG: It sounds to me like there’s a little chamber music kind of atmosphere going on?

AR: Yes, a give and take.

EG: You’re not dealing with a huge, seventy piece orchestra. How does the conductor
factor into things? Does he expect the orchestra to kind of take care of itself while he’s
busy uniting it to whatever else is going on, or are they making big musical decisions
themselves?
AR: It is not only he’s now. It is she’s, as well. Remember, there are a lot of women conductors, especially on Broadway. I just throw that in because it is important.

The conductor—the conductor never makes a mistake. The conductor has the final say. Whatever the conductor says is right, and I think that’s what you have to go with. Regardless of how much you disagree with it, you can’t go against it.

I’ve seen it happen in shows, particularly on Broadway, where you’re playing the same thing over and over, and guys snap. They start to freak out because something’s unmusical or not done to their given taste, and they start becoming insubordinate. In that case, conductors freak out. They have a fit. They want something done a certain way, and you’ve got to do it regardless of what your musical feeling or thought is.

I’ve seen that played out where they’ve actually fired people from jobs who have been there a long time because of insubordination. So, sure, the conductor has the final say. Does that answer your question?

EG: Yes, I think it does. This is kind of an education question. When a musician is coming in to play a musical they’re going to be required to play a vast number of styles. What’s the best way, in your opinion, for a musician to learn that—to get the experience necessary so that when the music is set in front of them that they’re not wondering ‘how to swing’, for instance?

AR: Well, you have got to be able to do it. By doing it. Not only practicing. Listening, first of all. Listening to a lot of different people that play different styles. Being exposed to different styles and if you have the opportunity to play then you should take that opportunity. Playing rehearsal bands, playing chamber music, whatever it is
you’re doing. Playing folk music, playing all kinds of music so that you know what the style is. Playing rock and roll to pick up the difference between the phrasing in a rock band and the phrasing in a jazz band.

The exposure comes from listening to it and studying it, and not only that, but also from doing it. Seeing people come into the pit, and they’ve never even played in a sax section in a big band. It is noticeable right away.

EG: The best and probably most successful pit musician is going to have had a lot of, a real varied performing experience outside of the pit before they get in there so that they can handle the various styles that are thrown at them.

AR: I think so. I think it is hard to get that experience today, but there are a lot of rehearsal bands. Every town I go to there’s rehearsal bands all over the place. I think making yourself get the experience is important.

EG: In your view how are Bernstein’s musicals different from other’s works? How are they different from Lerner and Lowe, maybe even Andrew Lloyd Weber? How is it different from the other music you’ve played?

AR: There are similarities, but there’s more jazz inflection in Bernstein. I think a lot of times when you say, “What’s the difference between certain composers?” you have to also consider the difference in the arrangers that they use. You know, Bernstein had a very famous arranger who’s a great, great writer…

EG: Sid Ramin and Irwin Kostal
AR: Sid Ramin! Yes, Sid Ramin did a lot, did most all of Bernstein’s arranging. He put his stamp on (Recorder problem, picks up after brief pause) You had different arrangers that were more, coming from the legitimate background. So, Yes, there was a difference, but I think the difference came mostly from the way they’re arranged…well, not mostly, but as much from the arranger’s stamp as from the composer’s.

Incidentally, Lloyd Weber had a wonderful arranger. I played *Cats* for ten years. You get tired of the music, naturally, after that much time, but I always thought that the arrangements in that show were among the best I ever played. I thought that the arrangements were wonderful. The music was not my favorite, but the arrangements were done very, very well. It required a lot of different feels. It required a rock and roll feel, a legit feel, a jazz feel, and the arranger thoroughly understood all the different feelings that he was trying to get across in the music. And I would say he did a wonderful job with some very tenuous material.

EG: It is interesting that you mention the influence of the arranger. I have had an email dialogue going with Sid Ramin…

AR: Oh, really?

EG: Yes. He, in most of his answers, was deferring to Bernstein, which I understand. He said the arranger is just kind of a humble part of the process. One thing that he did mention—he kept calling himself ‘just a big band arranger’—that sounds to me like what you’re saying, was that big band arranging experience really has an influence in how the music sounds in the end.
AR: Sid Ramin is so humble that he’s one of the all-time greats. I don’t think that he ever really got the accolades he deserved. He was responsible for a lot of Bernstein’s success, I always say, in those shows. The way he put them together. He may have come from the background of a big band but he understood music thoroughly.

It is what we were saying before. He understands all of the different styles very, very well. I did a number of jingle dates for him, commercials where he would write classical kind of things that were just exquisite. Beautiful things you would expect to come from somebody like Aaron Copland. He was more than a big band writer; he’s just a very humble person.

EG: Wow. Well, one of the things I’ve been impressed with--his handling of the saxophone is excellent. He really writes good saxophone parts. What are some of the unique challenges playing Bernstein’s music?

AR: Well, the music is technical. I think, again, you have to be very astute on your instruments from a lot of different angles. Being exposed to jazz is important, but also being very classically oriented in your approach to certain things you have to play.

EG: This might get back to a little bit of what we were talking about earlier as to what he was like as a conductor and what he expected of his players, but in the music it seems to be very particular about markings for articulation, particularly as they go along with rhythms. How do you as a player balance the specific markings in the music with the freedom normally accorded a jazz musician?

AR: Well, I would try to play the markings, the dynamic markings in Bernstein. I think he was pretty exacting in what he wrote. What Sid Ramin might have written
would be pretty much what I’d stick to, wouldn’t take too much liberty from. Piano is a piano. If it was a solo you’d make it a solo piano, but I wouldn’t try to deviate too much from that.

EG: Right, and also being quite careful with the articulation, as well, that even though Bernstein, you’re saying, was flamboyant and liked a certain chutzpah, that’s not license to change or ignore markings in an improvisatory sense.

AR: No, but I think he liked it if you did take a little initiative and put your own stamp on something. If you used your vibrato a certain way, or approached something with a sense of individuality I think he would appreciate that. If it was out of place, he would also let you know. If it was something he disagreed with, he’d jump all over you, but I think he respected you for initiative.

EG: Saxophone, for better or for worse, is sometimes the blacksheep of the woodwind family. I mean, we’re the youngest instrument, and classical musicians who are not saxophonists have often looked down upon the saxophone because of jazz. What in your mind can we do to overcome this notion amongst our peers, or what has been happening over the past thirty or forty years that you’ve been involved?

AR: I think the first thing is that you get most of these reactions from string players because we have a very wide dynamic range. We can play very loud. It is a loud instrument. If you don’t make it work right in a certain situation it can be a problem for certain people whose tastes are not along the same lines that we as saxophone players would do.
If we play in a big band, we’re going to play with a pretty out-front sound. We’re going to blow pretty loudly. But when you play in the orchestra you have to blend your sound. Again, it is going back to the sound; blending your sound to work with other instruments.

Who was it, Stravinsky, who said that “saxophone sticks out like a sore thumb”? That’s the way people played, when they went into an orchestra and played like they’re playing lead alto in a jazz band. It hit certain people the wrong way. Now today everything’s so loud anymore people have become accustomed to wearing earplugs, so they’re not using that so much as an argument.

I think the biggest thing is that you have to be able to use the saxophone sound discriminently within whatever situation you’re playing.

EG: You’ve mentioned blend a number of times, and it seems like that’s one of your peak concerns. I know that Ramin said the arranger was mainly concerned with blend; being very particular with how he arranged so that the music came through clearly.

When I asked Cipolla what was the most important thing about playing in a musical pit musically, he said blend. Making sure you, in a sense, get along musically with your peers.

AR: Yes, musically and you need to blend in as a personality as well. You know, your humanness has to blend. It is nice to be an individual and have a sense of humor and keep things lively and everything, but you also have to be able to fit in with the people around you.
APPENDIX I

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS
August 28, 2003

Mr. Eric Gargrave
3834 B Cotswold Ave.
Greensboro, NC 27410

Dear Mr. Gargrave:

RE: Music of Leonard Bernstein
1600 PENNSYLVANIA AVENUE
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Mr. Eric Gargrave  
5305 Bayberry Lane  
Greensboro, NC 27455

Dear Mr. Gargrave:

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WONDERFUL TOWN  
ON THE TOWN

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[Signature]

Frank Korach  
Business Affairs Assistant
9/15/03

Dear Mr. Gargrave,

Enclosed are full scores for Bernstein’s On the Town, Wonderful Town, and Mass. (The On the Town scores are for the concert version of the show; the narration differs but the music is the same as it is for the staged version.) Please note that they are signed out for a two-month perusal period. If you will need them for a longer period of time, please let me know. If you need to mark the scores or otherwise keep them permanently, we can invoice them to you; please let me know if that is what you need.

The score for West Side Story is in print and available for sale; your library should be able to obtain it, or to borrow it from another music library.

It may take somewhat longer for a score of 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue to be available to send to you. Once I have a copy I will send it along as quickly as I can.

Also, if you need to print excerpts from any of the scores in your research, please contact our business affairs department to obtain any necessary permissions. Their fax number is (212) 358-5305.

Please let me know if there’s anything else I can do for you!

All best,

Jack Borrebach

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Fax (212) 358-5306
jack.borrebach@boosey.com
March 28, 2006

To Whom It May Concern:

With this letter I grant Wayne Eric Gargrave permission to include a transcript of our interview in his dissertation entitled *The Use of the Saxophone in the Music of Leonard Bernstein: A Guide for Informed Performance*.

Respectfully,

[Signature]

Albert Reznik
March 29, 2006

To Whom It May Concern:

With this letter I grant Wayne Eric Gargrave permission to include a transcript of our interview in his dissertation entitled *The Use of the Saxophone in the Music of Leonard Bernstein: A Guide for Informed Performance*.

Respectfully,

[Signature]

Sid Ramin
March 28, 2006

To Whom It May Concern:

With this letter I grant Wayne Eric Gargrave permission to include a transcript of our interview in his dissertation entitled *The Use of the Saxophone in the Music of Leonard Bernstein: A Guide for Informed Performance*.

Respectfully,

[Signature]

5/30/06