

Commissioned for SaxOpen - XVII World Saxophone Congress & Festival - Strasbourg 2015

What If

composed for and premiered in July 2014 by an ensemble of ...

101 saxophones*

* 12 soprano + 12 alto 1 +12 alto 2 +12 alto 3 +12 alto 4 +12 alto 5 +12 tenor +16 baritone + 1 alto soloist

with electro-acoustic music and percussion (*optional*)

(2014)

(duration: c. 12 minutes)

Mark Phillips

*requires a minimum of 10 players
scored for 8 ensemble parts (with some divisi in baritone part)
plus 1 alto saxophone soloist

performance notes:

Where and How to begin:

What if requires 10 saxophonists to cover all parts, but is designed for performance by as many saxophone players as possible up to 101, including the soloist. Care should be exercised to ensure that balance is achieved between the eight sections. In particular is important to have enough baritone saxophones to provide a strong sonic foundation for the ensemble. The baritone sax part is also the only part that can not be doubled by alto saxophone. If the ensemble and/or the space is large enough, miking the alto saxophone soloist is an option to consider. Just be sure to set a level for the first movement that does not cause the soloist to sound harsh or for listeners to become uncomfortable.

Throughout the first movement, all performers have a great deal of freedom to interpret the notation of their motifs — especially as it pertains to the duration of notes and periods of silence. It is the role of the conductor to shape the performance in a manner that adheres to the overall plan and structure of the movement, using cues and (probably) a stopwatch. There are 15 numbered cues for the conductor to communicate to the ensemble in this movement. These could easily be conveyed with hand signals, or perhaps with 15 numbered sheets of paper or flash cards. Beyond these cues, the conductor and the soloist may also wish to work out cueing details for passages between these 15 cues.

The performance could begin with many of the ensemble members scattered throughout the hall (in the wings just off-stage, in the aisles, etc.). They could even remain offstage throughout most of the first movement, if so desired. During the opening alto saxophone cadenza (or again during the closing alto saxophone cadenza), members of the ensemble could make their way onto the stage. In any case, by the start of movement 2, the ensemble should be assembled into a typical concert arrangement, so that the conductor can more accurately and effectively communicate beats and tempo in a conventional manner.

Regarding the Boxed Motifs in Movement I:

Performers are free to choose among the musical motifs given in their part, playing any number of them in any order. Wide latitude is granted in the interpretation of these motifs in terms of pacing, note duration, and length of silent pauses. Performers should avoid exact synchronicity with other players as much as possible and should not repeat any motif in exactly the same manner. Whenever performers are currently playing as a new cue is directed toward them, they should finish whatever

motif they are currently playing before beginning to play motifs from the new set. This will have the desired effect of smoothing out the transitions between cues. The written dynamic levels for the ensemble parts in movement 1 are soft throughout, but do note that in cues 9-11, the dynamic level rises a couple of notches to mezzo piano. Then at cue 12, the top dynamic falls again to pianissimo. Players are welcome to use an airy, breathy tone throughout most of the piece, but especially in the beginning. On

rare occasions and at the conductor's discretion, individual ensemble players could be encouraged to exceed the global dynamic level, so that their playing briefly emerges as a distinct sound above the rest of the ensemble, but never to the point that it obscures the soloist. It will be easy to overdo this concept, so use it sparingly! The best strategy would probably be to add this element rather late in the rehearsal schedule, once cueing, balance, and pacing issues are well under control.

Additional Sonic Resources:

An electronic/computer music soundscape consisting of computer-processed saxophone drones will accompany movement I. Playback volume should be loud enough to make the players feel comfortable as they

improvise independently on their chosen motifs, but not so loud that the audience cannot hear any individual ensemble performers. In other words, there should be a balance between being able to hear

individual players at times and losing the individuality of parts in a cloud of saxophone sounds.

Movement II

This movement calls for a steady rhythmic ostinato in quarter notes throughout. It should begin very softly, emerging gradually out of the ending of the first movement. It is possible to do this using computer-generated audio and/or live percussion (a large bass drum, two tom-toms, cymbal, and large tam-tam). Bowed double bass (amplified, if necessary) could also be added to this line. Especially in situations where there is a very large ensemble and a large performing space, use of live percussion is desirable, as it will facilitate balance and enhance the conductor's control of tempo.

Near the beginning of the second movement, there a short solo for one tenor saxophone player. Throughout the movement, especially at the beginning, the score has several passages marked as *solì* (~ 3 players). If the ensemble is large enough, these passages should be played by three players, or perhaps a few more. (If the ensemble is rather small, these passages could be performed by a single player.) In either case, each time this *solì* marking occurs, the passage could be assigned to a different group of players within the section, to create antiphonal effects.

At letter **G** in this movement, the score calls for approximately half of a section to play some passages. Again, each time the marking occurs, it could refer to a different subset of players within the section.

Extra/Auxiliary Parts Provided

Parts suitable for performance on Alto Saxophone are available for both the Soprano Sax part and the Tenor Sax part.

(transposed score)

What If

Mark Phillips

alto soloist

Cadenza - slowly and freely
pp~mp (ad lib.)

c. 4"
dolce

tutti saxophones

Remove mouthpiece and blow air through instrument, while rattling keys.
pp~mp (ad lib.)

Note: Optimal timing for the alto sax cadenza is c. 1:30 – 1:40.

(start stopwatch)

1
0:00

2
0:10

3
0:15

Baritone

Tenor

Alto 5

Performers choose freely among the musical motifs in their boxes, playing any number of them in any order. Wide latitude is granted in the interpretation of these motifs in terms of pacing, note duration, and length of silent pauses. Performers should avoid exact synchronicity with other players as much as possible and should not repeat any motif in the exact the same manner.

4

Very freely and expressively;
with no clear sense of meter
(10")

5

(5")

6

(5")

Alto Soloist

mf

0:30

0:35

0:40

Detailed description: A single musical staff in treble clef. It begins with a whole rest. At 0:30, it starts with a half note G4 (marked with a circled 4), followed by a half note A4 (marked with a circled 5), and a half note B4 (marked with a circled 6). A slur covers the first two notes, and another slur covers the last two notes. The tempo/mood instruction 'Very freely and expressively; with no clear sense of meter (10")' is above the first two notes. The dynamic 'mf' is below the first note. Time markers 0:30, 0:35, and 0:40 are in boxes below the staff.

4

0:20

Alto 4

5

0:30

Alto 3

6

0:35

Alto 2

ppp ~ pp (ad lib.)

Detailed description: Three musical staves for Alto 4, Alto 3, and Alto 2. Each staff starts with a circled number (4, 5, 6) and a time marker (0:20, 0:30, 0:35). Each staff contains five measures of music. The dynamics are 'ppp ~ pp (ad lib.)'. Arrows point from the staves to the right, indicating they continue on the next page.

Alto 5

Tenor

Baritone

Musical staff with circled 7 and 8, time markers 0:45 and 0:55, and dynamic markings *mf* and (5''), (10''), (10'').

8
0:55

Soprano

ppp ~ pp (ad lib.)

ppp ~ pp (ad lib.)

ppp ~ pp (ad lib.)

ppp ~ pp (ad lib.)

ppp ~ pp (ad lib.)

7
0:40

Alto 1

ppp ~ pp (ad lib.)

ppp ~ pp (ad lib.)

ppp ~ pp (ad lib.)

ppp ~ pp (ad lib.)

ppp ~ pp (ad lib.)

(Bari, Tenor, and Altos 2-5)



Musical staff for Soprano and Alto 1. It features a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The staff contains a melodic line with a dynamic marking of *mf*. There are three time stamps in boxes: 1:15, 1:25, and 1:40. Above the staff, there are circled numbers 9 and 10 with arrows pointing to specific notes. Above the first measure, there is a circled number 10 with a double quote symbol (10"). Above the second measure, there is a circled number 10 with a double quote symbol (10"). Above the third measure, there is a circled number 15 with a double quote symbol (15").

(Soprano and Alto 1)

10
1:25

(Alto 2-5)

Musical staves for Alto 2, 3, 4, and 5. Each staff is labeled with its respective voice part. The staves contain musical notation with dynamic markings such as *ppp*, *mp*, and *mf*. Some staves include the instruction *(ad lib.)*. The staves are arranged vertically, with Alto 2 at the top and Alto 5 at the bottom.

9
1:15

(Bari & Tenor)

Musical staves for Tenor and Baritone. The Tenor part is at the top, and the Baritone part is below it. Each part has multiple staves of musical notation with dynamic markings such as *ppp*, *mp*, and *mf*. Some staves include the instruction *(ad lib.)*.

Musical staff showing dynamics and rehearsal marks. The staff includes a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). It features two measures of music, each with a dynamic marking of *mf* and a rehearsal mark of 11. The first measure is marked with a 10" duration and a time stamp of 1:50. The second measure is marked with a 20" duration and a time stamp of 2:20. There are also time stamps at 2:00 and 2:20. The staff is divided into two sections by a double bar line.

(Soprano)

Four staves of music for the Soprano part, showing dynamics like *ppp ~ mp (ad lib.)* and *mp*.

(Alto 1)

Four staves of music for the Alto 1 part, showing dynamics like *ppp ~ pp (ad lib.)* and *mp*.

(Soprano & Alto 1)

(Alto 2-5, Bari, & Tenor)

Musical staff showing dynamics and rehearsal marks. The staff includes a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). It features three measures of music, each with a dynamic marking of *f* and a rehearsal mark of 11. The first measure is marked with a 15" duration and a time stamp of 2:35. The second measure is marked with a 15" duration and a time stamp of 2:50. The third measure is marked with a 15" duration and a time stamp of 3:05. The staff is divided into two sections by a double bar line.

Tutti saxophones

(Soprano, Alto 2-5, Tenor, & Bari)

Piano solo introduction. The score shows a melodic line starting at 3:10, marked with a circled 12 and a downward arrow. It features a five-measure phrase (5") and a twenty-measure phrase (20"). The dynamic marking *mf* is present. The introduction concludes at 3:35.

Vocal staves for Soprano, Alto 1, Alto 2, Alto 3, Alto 4, Alto 5, Tenor, and Baritone. Each staff contains musical notation with dynamic markings *ppp ~ pp* and the instruction *(ad lib.)*. Large grey arrows point to the right from the Alto 2, Alto 5, and Baritone staves, indicating further musical material on the following page.

(transposed score)

What If

-7-

Musical staff with notes and markings. The staff is in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#). It contains several measures of music. Above the staff, there are markings: "(10'')", "13" in a circle with a downward arrow, "(5'")", and another "(10'")". Below the staff, there are time markers in boxes: "3:45" and "3:50". The dynamic marking *mp* is written below the first measure. A hairpin symbol indicating a crescendo is at the end of the staff.

(Soprano, Alto 2-5, & Tenor)

Gradually fade out and stop playing, one by one.

Baritone

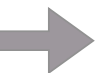
13
3:45

Musical staff for Baritone. It shows a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a dynamic marking *pp*. The notes are *divisi à 2*, meaning divided into two parts. The staff is mostly empty, with a few notes and a hairpin symbol.



Musical staff for soloist and tutti saxes. The soloist part is in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#). It features a cadenza section labeled "Cadenza - slowly and freely" and "dolce". The dynamic marking *mp* is used. The tutti saxes part is in bass clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a dynamic marking *pp~mp (ad lib.)*. A box labeled "Drop out one by one." is positioned above the tutti saxes staff. A circled number "14" with a downward arrow is above the soloist staff, and a circled number "15" with a downward arrow is above the tutti saxes staff. The tutti saxes staff ends with a double bar line and a hairpin symbol.

attacca



What if
(movement II)

♩ = 80-88

alto soloist (repeat 2-4 times)

soprano (or alto)

alto 1

alto 2

alto 3

alto 4 *p* soli (~3 players)

alto 5 *pp* soli (~3 players) *p*

tenor (or alto) *p* soli (~3 players) *p*

baritone (repeat 2-4 times)

synth (gradually fade in)

percussion *pppp* 2 tom-toms *p* simile

8

solo

sop.

a 1 *p* soli (~3 players)

a 2 *p* soli (~3 players) *p*

a 3 *p* soli (~3 players)

a 4

a 5

T. Sx.

bari

synth

perc.

16 A

musical score for measures 16-22. The score includes staves for solo, sopranos (sop.), five vocal parts (a1-a5), Tenor Saxophone (T. Sx.), Baritone (bari), Synth, and Percussion. The vocal parts feature melodic lines with dynamics like *mp* and *p*, and markings for "solo (~3 players)". The T. Sx. part has a "solo (1 player)" marking. The synth and percussion parts consist of rhythmic patterns.

23

musical score for measures 23-29. The score includes staves for solo, sopranos (sop.), five vocal parts (a1-a5), Tenor Saxophone (T. Sx.), Baritone (bari), Synth, and Percussion. The vocal parts feature melodic lines with dynamics like *pp*, *p*, and *mp*, and markings for "solo (~3 players)". The T. Sx. part has a "solo (1 player)" marking. The synth and percussion parts consist of rhythmic patterns.

30 **B**

musical score for section B, measures 30-36. The score includes staves for solo, sopranos (sop.), vocalists a1-a5, Tenor Saxophone (T. Sx.), Baritone (bari), Synth, and Percussion (perc.). Section B begins at measure 30. The vocalists a1-a5 and T. Sx. have melodic lines with dynamics like *mp* and *p*. Some vocalists have "soli (~3 players)" markings. The synth and percussion parts consist of rhythmic patterns.

37 **C**

musical score for section C, measures 37-42. The score includes staves for solo, sopranos (sop.), vocalists a1-a5, Tenor Saxophone (T. Sx.), Baritone (bari), Synth, and Percussion (perc.). Section C begins at measure 37. The soloist has a melodic line starting at measure 37 with a dynamic of *mp*. The vocalists a1-a5 and T. Sx. have melodic lines with dynamics like *p*. Some vocalists have "soli (~3 players)" markings. The synth and percussion parts consist of rhythmic patterns.

44 D

musical score for measures 44-49. The score includes staves for solo, soprano, five vocal parts (a1-a5), tenor saxophone, baritone, synth, and percussion. The key signature is D major. The time signature changes from 2/4 to 4/4 at measure 44. Dynamics include "tutti ff" for the vocalists and "ff" for the baritone and percussion. Performance markings include "divisi" for the baritone and "cym" for the percussion.

50

musical score for measures 50-54. The score includes staves for solo, soprano, five vocal parts (a1-a5), tenor saxophone, baritone, synth, and percussion. The key signature changes to B minor. The time signature remains 4/4. Dynamics include "ff" for the baritone and "f" for the percussion. Performance markings include "unison" for the baritone.

53

E

solo

sop.

a 1

a 2

a 3

a 4

a 5

T. Sx.

bari

synth

perc.

57

solo

sop.

a 1

a 2

a 3

a 4

a 5

T. Sx.

bari

synth

perc.

61

This musical score block covers measures 61 to 64. It features a solo part at the top, followed by vocal staves for soprano (sop.), five alto parts (a 1 to a 5), tenor saxophone (T. Sax.), and baritone (bari). The piano (pnc.) and percussion (perc.) parts are at the bottom. A dynamic marking of **f** is present in a box above the solo part in measure 62. The vocal parts have various dynamics including *ff* and *fff*. The baritone part has a *fff* marking and the instruction "divisi" in measure 63. The piano part has a *fff* marking in measure 63. The percussion part consists of a steady rhythmic pattern.

65

This musical score block covers measures 65 to 68. It features a solo part at the top, followed by vocal staves for soprano (sop.), five alto parts (a 1 to a 5), tenor saxophone (T. Sax.), and baritone (bari). The piano (pnc.) and percussion (perc.) parts are at the bottom. The solo part is silent in measures 65-68. The vocal parts have dynamics of *f* and *mp*. The baritone part has a *ff* marking and the instruction "unison" in measure 67. The piano part has a *ff* marking in measure 67. The percussion part consists of a steady rhythmic pattern.

G

solo *mf*

sop.

a 1 *mp* ~1/2 section

a 2 *mp* ~1/2 section

a 3

a 4

a 5

T. Sax.

bari

synth

perc.

75

solo *mf*

sop.

a 1 *mp* ~1/2 section

a 2 *mp* ~1/2 section

a 3

a 4

a 5

T. Sax.

bari

synth

perc.

H

solo

sop.

a 1

a 2

a 3

a 4

a 5

T. Sx.

bari

synth

perc.

f

mp

~1/2 section

~1/2 section

~1/2 section

~1/2 section

81

solo

sop.

a 1

a 2

a 3

a 4

a 5

T. Sx.

bari

synth

perc.

mp

~1/2 section

~1/2 section

~1/2 section

84

solo *ff* ~1/2 section

sop. *mp* ~1/2 section

a 1 *mp* ~1/2 section

a 2 *mp* ~1/2 section

a 3

a 4

a 5 *mp* ~1/2 section

T. Sx. *mp* ~1/2 section

bari

synth

perc.

87

I

solo *ff*

sop. *tutti ff*

a 1 *tutti ff*

a 2 *tutti ff*

a 3 *tutti ff*

a 4 *tutti ff*

a 5 *tutti ff*

T. Sx. *tutti ff*

bari *tutti ff*

synth

perc. *tam-tam*

F# G

side Bb side Bb

92

This system of musical notation covers measures 92 to 94. It features ten staves: solo, sopranos (sop.), five vocal parts (a 1, a 2, a 3, a 4, a 5), Tenor Saxophone (T. Sax.), Baritone (bari), Synth (synth), and Percussion (perc.). The solo part has a wavy line above it. The vocal parts have complex melodic lines with many accidentals. The baritone part consists of a simple bass line with notes on a whole note. The synth and percussion parts are marked with diagonal slashes, indicating they are not present in this section.

95

This system of musical notation covers measures 95 to 98. It features the same ten staves as the previous system. The solo part has a wavy line above it. The vocal parts have complex melodic lines with many accidentals. The baritone part consists of a simple bass line with notes on a whole note. The synth and percussion parts are marked with diagonal slashes, indicating they are not present in this section.

99 **J**

solo

sop.

a 1

a 2

a 3

a 4

a 5

T. Sx.

bari

synth

perc.

ff

ff

ff

ff

divisi

unison

102 **K**

solo

sop.

a 1

a 2

a 3

a 4

a 5

T. Sx.

bari

synth

perc.

divisi

unison

divisi

unison

