

# 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)

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## Mark Phillips

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

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## 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.

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## 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.

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(transposed score)

# What If

Mark Phillips

alto soloist

*C. 4<sup>th</sup>* *ad lib.* *Cadenza - slowly and freely*

*pp-mp (ad lib.)*

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

Baritone

2  
0:10

Tenor

3  
0:15

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 circled '4' and a downward arrow. The music starts with a whole rest, followed by a half note G#4, a quarter note A4, a quarter note B4, a quarter note C5, a quarter note D5, a quarter note E5, a quarter note F#5, and a whole note G5. A slur covers the notes from G#4 to G5. Above the staff, there are three circled numbers: '4' at the start, '5' above the G5 note, and '6' above the final G5 note. Performance instructions include 'Very freely and expressively; with no clear sense of meter (10")' and '(5")' above the final note. The dynamic is marked *mf*. Time markers are placed below the staff: '0:30' under the first G#4, '0:35' under the final G5, and '0:40' at the end of the staff.

6

0:35

Alto 2

*ppp - pp (ad lib.)*

*ppp - pp (ad lib.)*

*ppp - pp (ad lib.)*

*ppp - pp (ad lib.)*

*ppp - pp (ad lib.)*

5

0:30

Alto 3

*ppp - pp (ad lib.)*

*ppp - pp (ad lib.)*

*ppp - pp (ad lib.)*

*ppp - pp (ad lib.)*

*ppp - pp (ad lib.)*

4

0:20

Alto 4

*ppp - pp (ad lib.)*

*ppp - pp (ad lib.)*

*ppp - pp (ad lib.)*

*ppp - pp (ad lib.)*

*ppp - pp (ad lib.)*

Detailed description: Three musical staves for Alto 2, Alto 3, and Alto 4. Each staff has a circled number (6, 5, 4) and a downward arrow. The time markers are 0:35, 0:30, and 0:20 respectively. Each staff contains five measures of music with dynamic markings *ppp - pp (ad lib.)*. Arrows point from the right side of each staff towards the right. The Alto 2 staff is enclosed in a box.

Alto 5

Detailed description: A horizontal line representing a musical staff for Alto 5, with a right-pointing arrow at the end.

Tenor

Detailed description: A horizontal line representing a musical staff for Tenor, with a right-pointing arrow at the end.

Baritone

Detailed description: A horizontal line representing a musical staff for Baritone, with a right-pointing arrow at the end.

A musical staff in treble clef. It features a circled number 7 with a downward arrow at the beginning. The staff contains notes with dynamic markings: *mf* and *ppp*. Time stamps are present: 0:45, 0:55, and 0:55. Performance instructions include (5"), (10"), and (10").

Two vocal staves are shown. The top staff is labeled "Alto 1" and the bottom staff is labeled "Soprano". Both staves contain musical notation with dynamic markings *ppp* and *pp*, and the instruction *(ad lib.)*. A circled number 7 with a downward arrow is positioned above the Alto 1 staff at the 0:40 time mark. A circled number 8 with a downward arrow is positioned above the Soprano staff at the 0:55 time mark. Large grey arrows point from the vocal staves towards the right.

A large, thick grey arrow pointing horizontally to the right, spanning most of the width of the page.

(Bari, Tenor, and Altos 2-5)

(Soprano and Alto 1)

(Alto 2-5)

(Bari & Tenor)

Tenor

Baritone

(Alto 3)

(Alto 4)

(Alto 5)

Musical staff showing dynamics and rehearsal marks. The staff contains two measures of music. The first measure starts at 1:50 and ends at 2:00, marked with a circled '11' and a downward arrow. The second measure starts at 2:00 and ends at 2:20, also marked with a circled '11' and a downward arrow. The dynamics are *mf* for both measures. Rehearsal marks (10") and (20") are placed above the staff.

(Soprano)

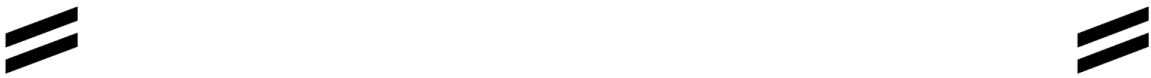
Four staves of music for the Soprano part, showing dynamics like *ppp ~ mp (ad lib.)* and *mp*.

(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 contains three measures of music. The first measure starts at 2:35 and ends at 2:50, marked with a circled '15"'. The second measure starts at 2:50 and ends at 3:05, marked with a circled '15"'. The dynamics are *f* for both measures. Rehearsal marks (15") are placed above the staff.

Tutti saxophones

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

Piano accompaniment staff showing dynamics and time stamps. The staff includes a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a 3/4 time signature. It features a melodic line with a slur and a fermata. Dynamics include *mf*. Time stamps are 3:10, 3:15, and 3:35. There are two circled numbers '12' with arrows pointing to specific notes in the melody.

Vocal staves for Soprano, Alto 1, Alto 2, Alto 3, Alto 4, Alto 5, Tenor, and Baritone. Each staff contains musical notation with dynamics *ppp ~ pp* and the instruction *(ad lib.)*. Large grey arrows point to the right from the right side of each vocal staff group.



(transposed score)

What If

-7-

Musical staff in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The staff contains a melodic line with several notes beamed together. Above the staff, there are markings: (10<sup>th</sup>) above the first group of notes, (5<sup>th</sup>) above a later note, and (10<sup>th</sup>) above the final group of notes. The dynamic marking *mp* is at the beginning. Below the staff, there are two time markers in boxes: 3:45 and 3:50. A circled number 13 with a downward arrow points to the 3:45 time marker.

(Soprano, Alto 2-5, & Tenor)

Gradually fade out and stop playing, one by one.

Baritone

Two musical staves. The top staff is for Soprano, Alto 2-5, & Tenor. The bottom staff is for Baritone. The Baritone staff has the instruction *divisi à 2* above it and the dynamic marking *pp* below it. A circled number 13 with a downward arrow points to the 3:45 time marker on the Baritone staff.



Two musical staves. The top staff is for the soloist, starting at measure 14. It contains a cadenza with the instruction *Cadenza - slowly and freely dolce*. The dynamic marking *mp* is used. A circled number 14 with a downward arrow points to the start of the cadenza. A circled number 15 with a downward arrow points to a later measure in the cadenza. The bottom staff is for tutti saxes, starting at measure 15. It contains a wavy line representing a tremolo effect. The dynamic marking *pp~mp (ad lib.)* is at the beginning. A box with the instruction *Drop out one by one.* is placed above the staff. A circled number 15 with a downward arrow points to the start of this section.

*attacca* →

What if  
(movement II)

transposed score

♩ = 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* *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, soprano, five vocal parts (a1-a5), tenor saxophone, baritone, synth, and percussion. A section marker 'A' is in a box above measure 16. Dynamics include *mp*, *p*, and *ppp*. Performance instructions include "solo (1 player)" and "soli (~3 players)".

23

Musical score for measures 23-29. The score includes staves for solo, soprano, five vocal parts (a1-a5), tenor saxophone, baritone, synth, and percussion. Dynamics include *ppp*, *p*, and *mp*. Performance instructions include "soli (~3 players)".

30 **B**

musical score for section B, measures 30-36. The score includes staves for solo, sopranos, five alto parts (a1-a5), tenor saxophone, baritone, synth, and percussion. Section B begins at measure 30. A1 has a "-1/2 section" marking at measure 33. Soli parts for A2, A3, A4, and T.Sax start at measure 34. Dynamics include mp and p.

37 **C**

musical score for section C, measures 37-42. The score includes staves for solo, sopranos, five alto parts (a1-a5), tenor saxophone, baritone, synth, and percussion. Section C begins at measure 37. Soli parts for A2, A3, A4, and T.Sax start at measure 38. Dynamics include mp and p.



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

solo

sop.

a 1

a 2

a 3

a 4

a 5

T. Sax.

bari.

synth

perc.

F

divisi

ff

65

solo

sop.

a 1

a 2

a 3

a 4

a 5

T. Sax.

bari.

synth

perc.

f

mp

unison

**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

a 2

a 3

a 4

a 5

T. Sax.

bari

synth

perc.



**H**

solo *f*

sop.

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.

81

solo

sop.

a 1

a 2

a 3 *mp* ~1/2 section

a 4 *mp* ~1/2 section

a 5

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

bari

synth

perc.

Musical score for measures 84-86. The score includes staves for solo, sopranos (sop.), alto 1 (a 1), alto 2 (a 2), alto 3 (a 3), alto 4 (a 4), alto 5 (a 5), Tenor Saxophone (T. Sax.), baritone (bari), synth, and percussion (perc.). Measure 84 features a complex melodic line for the soloist with sixteenth-note patterns and a forte (*ff*) dynamic. Measures 85 and 86 show vocal entries for sopranos and altos, marked with mezzo-piano (*mp*) dynamics and a half-section (~1/2 section) of the ensemble. The percussion part includes a rhythmic pattern with a tam-tam instrument.

Musical score for measures 87-90. The score includes staves for solo, sopranos (sop.), alto 1 (a 1), alto 2 (a 2), alto 3 (a 3), alto 4 (a 4), alto 5 (a 5), Tenor Saxophone (T. Sax.), baritone (bari), synth, and percussion (perc.). Measure 87 is marked with a box containing the letter 'I'. Measures 88-90 feature a tutti section with a forte (*ff*) dynamic. The soloist part includes a melodic line with a forte (*ff*) dynamic and a wavy line above it. The vocal parts (sopranos and altos) also feature melodic lines with a forte (*ff*) dynamic. The baritone part has a rhythmic pattern with a forte (*ff*) dynamic. The percussion part includes a rhythmic pattern with a tam-tam instrument.

92

solo

sop.

a 1

a 2

a 3

a 4

a 5

T. Sx.

bari

synth

perc.

Detailed description: This block contains the musical score for measures 92, 93, and 94. The score is arranged in a grand staff format with ten staves. The top staff is for the solo instrument, followed by soprano (sop.), and five vocal parts (a 1 through a 5). Below the vocal parts are the tenor saxophone (T. Sx.), baritone (bari), synth, and percussion (perc.) staves. The music is written in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The solo part features a melodic line with a wavy, tremolo-like effect. The vocal parts have complex, overlapping melodic lines. The baritone part has a steady, rhythmic accompaniment. The synth and percussion parts are marked with diagonal slashes, indicating they are not present in this section.

95

solo

sop.

a 1

a 2

a 3

a 4

a 5

T. Sx.

bari

synth

perc.

Detailed description: This block contains the musical score for measures 95, 96, 97, and 98. The score is arranged in a grand staff format with ten staves. The top staff is for the solo instrument, followed by soprano (sop.), and five vocal parts (a 1 through a 5). Below the vocal parts are the tenor saxophone (T. Sx.), baritone (bari), synth, and percussion (perc.) staves. The music is written in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The solo part features a melodic line with a wavy, tremolo-like effect. The vocal parts have complex, overlapping melodic lines. The baritone part has a steady, rhythmic accompaniment. The synth and percussion parts are marked with diagonal slashes, indicating they are not present in this section.

99 **J**

Musical score for measures 99-101, section J. The score includes staves for solo, soprano (sop.), alto 1 (a1), alto 2 (a2), alto 3 (a3), alto 4 (a4), alto 5 (a5), Tenor Saxophone (T. Sx.), baritone (bari.), synth, and percussion (perc.). The solo part has a rest. The vocal parts feature melodic lines with slurs and accents. The baritone part has a complex rhythmic pattern with 'divisi' and 'unison' markings. Dynamics include *ff*. The synth and percussion parts have rhythmic patterns indicated by slashes.

102 **K**

Musical score for measures 102-105, section K. The score includes staves for solo, soprano (sop.), alto 1 (a1), alto 2 (a2), alto 3 (a3), alto 4 (a4), alto 5 (a5), Tenor Saxophone (T. Sx.), baritone (bari.), synth, and percussion (perc.). The solo part has a rest. The vocal parts feature melodic lines with slurs and accents. The baritone part has a complex rhythmic pattern with 'divisi' and 'unison' markings. Dynamics include *ff*. The synth and percussion parts have rhythmic patterns indicated by slashes.

107

solo

sop.

a 1

a 2

a 3

a 4

a 5

T. Sax.

bari.

synth

perc.

110

solo

sop.

a 1

a 2

a 3

a 4

a 5

T. Sax.

bari.

synth

perc.