The capital to be gained is partly economic but mostly cultural, and as my individual voice will be almost irrelevant, I will be a craftsperson rather than a composer, negating my habitus. How, then, do composers negotiate the demands of the field with their own aesthetic?

Volans, for example, one of the leading South African composers who has thought and written a great deal about identity and approaches to composition, differentiates between the "private" and "public" aspects of composition. He suggests that the private aspect of composing is like "dancing in the dark", the public aspect like "dancing with the lights on". However,

> If you dance in the dark, you know exactly what you are doing. Where you are and where you are going is less clear. [...] Only when [...] someone turns the lights on does it become a social question. Turning on the lights makes what you are doing public. It also makes you aware of what others are doing. (Volans 1989: 5; see also www.kevinvolans.com)

This, I suggest, illustrates the difference between the influences of habitus and the field: the one is less definable, less conscious; the other more open to scrutiny, more self conscious, aware of the public influences at play that are not necessarily musical.

Developing this distinction of Volans's further and applying it to myself, I would propose that perhaps the combination of the two is what creates the composer's aesthetic and guides the development of the individual "voice". My aesthetic is mostly about me "dancing in the dark" but also about who I see when I turn on the lights. When writing a work for saxophone, do I see a student tenor saxophonist from the nearby high school or Swedish virtuoso Leif Karlborg? Do I see the concert at a small art gallery in downtown Johannesburg or at the Arnold Schönberg Centre in Vienna? At some point, often early on in the compositional process, the (perceived) expectations of who is playing and where the performance will take place comes into play. Tied into this is my constantly shifting location both in contemporary music in general and in the South African field; all these factors will continuously push and pull against each other with each new composition.

Chapter 4: The Development of my Compositional Voice

The primary literature referred to earlier (the repertoire) has had a more profound impact on the development of my compositional voice than the secondary literature. The latter has been useful for contextualising my study of the context in which I write, how I perceive myself as a composer, and how I locate myself in the South African field of composition and the broader field internationally. The primary literature contributed to my compositional approach and technical decisions.

One of the most important points of departure for my compositional voice in saxophone writing has been the sound qualities of the instrument. These were discussed earlier in relation to the differences between the jazz and straight sounds, but I refer to it again here in the context of my composition portfolio. How did the shift in my perception of the different sound qualities of the saxophone ("sweeter" and cleaner as opposed to rougher, more attacking sound) affect my approach to writing for the instrument? As a result of this, the primary literature as scores had less impact on my voice than did recordings.

My early encounters with the straight saxophone were through recordings of saxophonists such as Haram (1999, 2001) and Harle (1992), and saxophone quartets such as the Adelphi Saxophone Quartet (1998). What is noteworthy about these performers is the quality of the saxophone sound: the cleaner sound of the straight saxophone, well suited to lyricism, very different to the jazz sound I had encountered up to this point.

Intrigued by this "difference", several of my earlier works reflect this: *Excursions 1 and 3*, written in 2005, were written to draw attention to the lyricism of the instrument, with this "clean" sound in mind. Even *Excursion 3*, based on more aggressive material, includes a lyrical middle section. Graham Fitkin, a British composer whose works appear on many of the Haram recordings, was influential at this early stage. I think here especially of works

such as *Glass* (2001), a lyrical work well suited to this sound quality, and *Hard Fairy* (1994), which combines a more aggressive rhythmic approach with a similar lyricism. The smooth, parallel harmonic movement of 4^{th}-based chords in *Excursion No 1*, that I felt favoured the clean, lyrical sound I was seeking to exploit, was influenced by the harmonic approach in Richard Rodney Bennett's *Saxophone Quartet* (2003). Fitkin continued to provide me with a reference point for saxophone writing, particularly his angular melodic construction, found in *Bob* (1998), sections of *Frame* (1991b) and *Glass* (2001), and is found in this portfolio, for example, in *Blink.*

The recordings of the saxophonists who favour the more French sound, particularly Delangle, influenced me not only because of their sound but also the French repertoire they favour. This includes the saxophone concertos that are considered standard repertoire by many saxophonists (such as the concerto by Alexander Glazunov, 1934, and Milhaud's *Scaramouche*, 1937), and *Displacement* was originally intended as a saxophone concerto, composed with this French sound in mind.

I was, then, rather surprised to encounter a completely different sound again in the straight saxophone when I participated in masterclasses with the Stockholm Saxophone Quartet in July 2006. Their more attacking approach, rougher, meatier, more biting sound and corresponding repertoire was not one I had encountered before. It is worth mentioning that this may partly be a result of the marked difference in sound between a recorded saxophone and a live saxophone, a difference more pronounced with this instrument than, for example, the clarinet. There is a problem in recording the saxophone – the large number of overtones produced by the instrument make it difficult to record and the sound is consequently "thinned out", no matter how good the quality of the recording or the heftiness of sound produced by the players. I am always taken aback by the sheer breadth and weight of sound when hearing the saxophone live. The limited opportunities to hear the straight saxophone live is, again, a problem of the South African field.

Through my interactions with the Stockholm Saxophone Quartet I discovered a "new saxophone", both in terms of players and composers for the instrument. It is interesting to note that the Stockholm Saxophone Quartet do not "restrict themselves to the genre's usual neo-classical repertoire but regard [...] themselves as a driving force in the generation of innovative Swedish music."[33] This appears to be a deliberate statement of difference from quartets such as the aforementioned Adelphi Saxophone Quartet whose sound and repertoire (that includes many arrangements of pre-saxophone works) reflect a very different approach.

The "new saxophone" I encountered had a profound effect on my compositional voice and I became interested in exploring the more aggressive character of the saxophone. There had been a hint of this in *Untitled*, a work that contains very few pitched notes. This exploration, however, was pushed further when I changed composition supervisors in 2007: the previous supervisor has a much more conservative approach (and did not approve of *Untitled*), whereas the new supervisor encouraged me to challenge my preconceptions about the instrument and the way in which I wrote for it.

I therefore went through three phases of discovery about the saxophone "sound": the first was the jazz saxophone I encountered in my teenage years; the second sweet, "classical" sound; the third rougher approach, but in an art music context. While the sound might be seen as going full circle – from the jazz sound to the classical sound and back again – what is strikingly different is the contexts in which I use the two jazz-associated sounds.

Through the new supervisor I came into contact with a far broader scope of primary literature and engaged in a search for recent works by composers in an attempt to fill in the gaps of my knowledge of which I had become acutely aware. These discoveries proved influential. Although each composition potentially draws on numerous musical influences, some of these new

[33] CD sleeve of Jörgen Pettersson. 1995. *Saxophone con Forza*, Phono Suecia, PSCD 81: pg 11

discoveries influenced my aesthetic approach more generally. Andriessen's *Worker's Union* (1990), for example, powerfully influenced the first movement of *Duodectet.* I also encountered this bold statement of opening material and uncompromising declaration of intention in Annie Gosfield's *Manufacture of Tangled Ivory* (1996) and Dror Feiler's *Anvil and Parachutes* (1993). A similar approach to opening material is found in the opening of *Blink* and *The Collision Project* although, in the latter case, on the other end of the sound spectrum: the opening of *The Collision Project* (sighing breaths) is so quiet it is almost inaudible.

The influence of Ligeti's interwoven textures, seen for example in his *Chamber Concerto* (1970), is evident in several of my works, such as *Blink.* But the block-like textures of *Worker's Union* and *De Materie I* (Andriessen 1990, 1988 respectively) can be seen too in, for example, *Duodectet.* My approach to melody is influenced by my early interest in music of the Celtic tradition, as already mentioned. More contemporary influences include Fitkin, particularly the angular melody lines in *Frame* (1991b) and *Glass* (2001), and Michael Torke's saxophone quartet *July* (1995) in its use of melody that emerges out of parallel harmonic textures, as does Tinoco's *Short Cuts* (2004).

A capella groups such as *Take 6* and *Manhattan Transfer* had a profound effect on my approach to harmony, particularly the way in which these harmonies sometimes obscure tonal centres. Chick Corea has been influential too in this way, but it is his deconstruction of rhythmic axes that has been significant, a multicultural rhythmic aesthetic that draws on African American, Latin American and 20th century art music influences. This dovetailed with my interest in some African rhythmic structures, and I was particularly drawn to Corea's multifaceted approach. Torke's *Adjustable Wrench* (1987) too draws on varying influences (jazz, rock and African, for example), detailed in Roeder (2003). These multicultural approaches resonate with me. I live in a multicultural society, after all, and my habitus, from which my aesthetic and musical language emerges, reflects this.

In the discussion of my works, I use "thick descriptions", a term conceived by anthropologist Clifford Geertz (1973) to explain a system of description that gives as many details of the context of an action as possible. A thick description is differentiated by Geertz from a thin description, which describes only the action – a thin description is the text, a thick description the context as well. In the context of this document, a thin description would offer only an analysis of my work; a thick description provides some idea of various contexts as well: explanations of the genesis of the works, the shape and materials and also the musical influences on them, performances of the works, their reception, and how the works relate to the field in which I work and especially my habitus.

PART II: COMMENTARY ON THE PORTFOLIO

DISPLACEMENT for alto saxophone and piano

This is one of the earliest works in the portfolio. It was composed with particular performers in mind – Ceri Moelwyn-Hughes on alto saxophone and Gregory Mollenz on piano, who had agreed to perform the still unwritten work.

The recordings of the saxophonists who favour the more French sound, particularly Delangle and Gauthier, were influential in *Displacement*. One of these recordings, *A la française*, is revealingly described as "part of the essential process of rediscovering the deep roots of the French saxophone school" (Delangle 2002, CD sleeve notes: 4). Works on these recordings, such as the *Croquembouches* by Claude Delvincourt (1931), Pierre's Sancan's *Lamento et Rondo* (1973) and Jules Demersseman's *Fantasie sur un thème orginal* (1860), would obviously have been written with particular sound quality in mind. Similarly, some of the works for saxophone and orchestra, such as the *Concertino da Camera* for alto saxophone and eleven instruments by Ibert (1935) and Milhaud's *Scaramouche* (1937) had an impact on my approach to writing for the instrument in the early stages of this project, even though I do not particularly like them (an opinion that has met with great disapproval from some saxophonists I have worked with).[34] It is this sound quality, therefore, that drove much of the approach in *Displacement*.

Displacement was originally intended as a saxophone concerto, composed with this French "sound" in mind. As work progressed, however, I realised the impracticality of writing a concerto and changed it to a work for alto saxophone and piano - an example of how the field influences composition decisions.

[34] I have since encountered some concertos – written more recently – that I find more "saxophonic", such as Takashi Yoshimatsu's *Saxophone Concerto "Albireo Mode"* (2004-2005).

Displacement, therefore, has a virtuosic "cadenza" section (bars 69 – 89), typical of a traditional concerto.

What is also interesting is my perception, at the time of writing the work, of virtuosity, a perception that changed as the portfolio progressed (also discussed below with reference to *Red Herring*). At the time, extended techniques were not really an option as the player for whom I was writing, although highly competent, is not a virtuoso. While I was aware of extended techniques from the literature, I did not feel that this work was the place to explore them partly because, unable to hear these techniques "live", I did not feel au fait with their application. Again, this is an example of how the limitations in the field affect compositional decisions, but the role of the players should not be exaggerated here as my supervisor at the time encouraged a more conservative approach to virtuosity. In *Displacement*, therefore, virtuosity is note-based, applied in leaps, rapid runs, ornamentation, and sudden dynamic changes.

The starting point of the work, however, was an idea gleaned from the use of repeated notes in works such as Reich's *New York Counterpoint* (1985). Its use in *Displacement* – the extended repeated notes, moving from a soft to loud dynamic – is certainly not minimalist in this sense, but the minimalists provided the springboard. The repeated notes, with the echoing falling two-note phrase ending, forms the basis on which the whole work is structured, gradually expanding on itself to become increasingly unrecognisable as the piece progresses.

In my mind, at the time of writing this work, I was located in the South African field of composition, if on the fringes as a student composer. Although I was seeking out and engaging with scores from outside South Africa, I was not anticipating any interaction with international composers and performers. Considering this and the French sound that drove the work and its (slight) minimalist influence, which makes *Displacement* indicative of my habitus at the time, it was rather surprising to hear the "differentness" of this work at a concert

in 2008.[35] The programme consisted of mostly traditional saxophone repertoire and one other South African work; in this context, *Displacement* sounded very contemporary and the audience response was polite, if somewhat bemused. Here, the work was pushed out of the more traditional sound and into one more current, even though I do not consider this work to be particularly new in its approach or execution. Location, then, can perhaps shift not only from work to work but also from context to context.

3 EXCURSIONS for saxophone quartet

This work evolved, in various forms over several years, starting as a one movement work, reworked into a *3-Piece Suite*, then reconstructed when one movement was replaced by another to finally emerge as *3 Excursions*. Unlike *Untitled*, *Excursion 1* and *Excursion 3* were written to draw attention to aspects of the ensemble with which I was familiar at the time. *Excursion 2*, a rearrangement of a clarinet trio, was added at a later point.

Excursion 1 favours the lyricism of the instrument, a result of my encounters with the sweet sound quality of ensembles such as the Adelphi Saxophone Quartet. The slow moving 4^{th}-based parallel harmonies are at their smoothest at the opening, becoming more rhythmic in the following two sections (bars 18 – 39, 40 – 46 respectively). A lyrically-driven melody, although present from the opening, emerges from the ensemble from bar 10, a technique I first encountered in Torke's *July* (1995), and have subsequently heard in works such as Wilson's ... *so softly* (1992). Torke's *July* was also informative in its harmonic and rhythmic fluidity that I strove to capture through the long smooth phrases; his jazz-influenced rhythmic construction in *Adjustable Wrench* was also useful. Hints of Bennett's *Saxophone Quartet* (2003) can be heard in the harmonic structures too.

[35] A saxophone recital by Matthew Lombard on August 16 2008 at the University of Pretoria's Musiaon.

Excursion 2 is a deliberately short movement, rather irreverent and deliberately refusing to take itself too seriously. It was originally written to be played in response to Intermède from Olivier Messiaen's *Quartet for the End of Time.* Considering the circumstances in which it was written, *Intermède* is a remarkably cheerful movement. Using Messiaen's material as a starting point, I wanted to take this cheerfulness even further, adding bounce and vigour. In its new incarnation as *Excursion 2,* sandwiched between two longer, somewhat weightier movements, it can be seen as an extended interjection. This interjection serves to bind the two outer movements together, not through relating material or mood but through a statement of character, continuing the driving motivation behind *Excursions.*

The opening of *Excursion 3* is deliberately bold, striven for through the use of unison writing, staccato, accents, and loud dynamics of the opening 24 bars. The stridency was drawn from works such as the second movement of Philip Glass's *Concerto for Saxophone Quartet* (1995), *Le Cle Des Chants* from *Une Semaine de Bonte* by Gary Carpenter (1998), and *Toccata* from John Buckley's *Saxophone Quartet* (1996). As the movement unfolds the different saxophones emerge as individual characters, and I wrote some sections (such as bars 37 – 65) as a conversation between instruments. While bars 78 – 106 suggest a similar approach, I was aiming here for something slightly different: a less confrontational, more fluid movement between the soprano and alto saxophones, drawing attention to their lyrical similarities. A meeting point between the two approaches occurs from bars 110 – 117.

The quartet was written for the Johannesburg Saxophone Quartet, who performed it in its earliest version in early 2005 and worked on the current version (without performing it, unfortunately). During Masterclasses at the NewMusic Indaba in 2006, the Stockholm Saxophone Quartet played through the first and third movements. The two ensembles experienced the technical challenges of the work very differently. I had written the work with competent but non-virtuosic performers in mind, wanting to present a challenge but not

something unplayable: I wanted to write a work they would enjoy playing. The Stockholm Quartet sight read the work with ease, finding it thoroughly unchallenging. The Johannesburg Quartet, on the other hand, found it quite demanding, struggling to "make music" of the irregular note groupings of *Excursion 1*, and the changing and irregular time signatures in *Excursion 3*. Once again, the field plays an important role in locating the work. In this case, a composition that presents technical and musical challenges in the local field may be considered uninteresting in fields that generate higher standards of performance.

My own perception of the work shifted again as my compositional voice developed and my habitus changed as a result of encounters with new repertoire and virtuoso saxophonists. The works I have written since *Excursions* are far more challenging for players. I began to think *Excursions* was rather dull, more so as I encountered a wider saxophone repertoire, the variety of approaches to the ensemble, and its sound possibilities. However, when attending the premiere concert of the South African Saxophone Quartet (SASQ),[36] I realised that the South African straight saxophone field is a very different animal to its international counterpart. The programme presented by the quartet was partly arrangements of western classical string quartets (Presto from Beethoven's *String Quartet* Op 18 No 3, and the Scherzos from Schubert's *String Quartet* Op. 42 No. 2 and Rimsky-Korsakov's *String Quartet* Op. 12), partly jazz arrangements (*Old Shoes Suite* by Ulrich Neels, *Deep River* and *Down by the Riverside*). It became apparent that, in this context, *Excursions* is unusual and would be considered quite inaccessible, if not by the players then certainly by the audience. Conversations with the players after the concert revealed a surprising lack of familiarity with the international repertoire – perhaps not unexpected, as the straight saxophone is still rather unusual in South Africa.

This concert, therefore, was an important moment in the development of the instrument in this country, particularly as the SASQ has concerts scheduled

[36] This premiere took place on 9 November 2008 at the University of Pretoria's Musaion.

around the country in the next few months. In this respect, the SASQ chose their repertoire cleverly, ensuring a receptive audience to what is an unfamiliar ensemble. The Stockholm Saxophone Quartet takes a similar approach. That they consider more accessible repertoire to be works such as Johan Jeverud's humorous *Piece in Colours of Autumn* (1989) is indicative of the more musically sophisticated audiences in places such as Sweden.

This reiterates my earlier argument about the difference between the local and international fields of composition. But here it is revealed starkly in the context of performers and audiences, and their knowledge and perception of contemporary repertoire. As a composer, then, locating myself in the field of saxophone composition becomes more complicated as writing for local saxophonists requires a very different approach to writing for international saxophonists. Perhaps two approaches are required: one for local players and audiences that is less technically challenging, more accessible, more "toned down"; another for international players that is virtuosic, riskier, more in keeping with international developments. There is a rather sad undertone to this, as mentioned below in reference to *Red Herring*: what is written for South African saxophonists is unlikely to be heard internationally; what is written for international saxophonists is unlikely to be playable by local musicians.

It is interesting to note two important spin offs from this concert: Matthew Lombard, the lead saxophonist in the SASQ, contacted me to request "contemporary saxophone repertoire"; the Johannesburg Saxophone Quartet is in the process of being revived as a result of this concert, and have contacted me for scores of saxophone quartets by South African composers for a planned concert in the new year. These are indicators of not only an increasing interest in the straight saxophone but also in contemporary repertoire. In a field as small as the one in South Africa, they are significant developments indeed.

UNTITLED for saxophone quartet

Completed in 2006, *Untitled* was the first work in which I used extended techniques. It was disparaged by my supervisor at the time, who informed me that the extended use of such techniques in one composition "has already been done to death by the likes of John Cage and isn't relevant anymore"[37] – an interesting comment in light of some contemporary repertoire, such as Nicola Lefanu's microtonal *Moon Over Western Ridge Mootwingee for Saxophone Quartet* (1985), and Arne Mellnäs's *Stampede* (1985/1988) that makes extensive use of slap tonguing. Most notable in this context is the opening of Barbara Thompson's *Saxophone Quartet No 2* (2002) which uses the blowing technique found in *Untitled*, although to a much lesser extent. Originally integrated into a ten minute work, I then extracted the section and extended it, first as part of a three movement suite, then later as a stand-alone work.

There were several motivations behind using these techniques so extensively, all aspects of my habitus that profoundly affected my compositional aesthetic at the time. Jill Richards, a Johannesburg-based pianist who performs a great deal of new music, expressed the opinion that many contemporary compositions have "too many notes", evidence of laziness on the part of the composer, she believes.[38] At around this time, I heard Volans's *Cicada* (1994), a work I experienced as stripped of extraneous musical clutter. This sparked an idea to compose a work, or part of a work, with as few notes as possible. Another motivation was the result of getting up at 04h00 three times a week to compose – the only way time I had during a busy work schedule. These early mornings revealed a very different city to the one I was used to: gentle, still and very quiet. I relished these early hours, particularly hearing the birds start their day (Johannesburg is one of the world's largest man-made forests and is consequently home to a large and varied bird population). I noted this as a kind of "white noise" with gradual emerging aural points, and started thinking about

[37] Pers. comm. 16 February 2005.
[38] Pers. comm. 1 February 2005.

capturing a slow awakening using the saxophone quartet, in a way, as a living body.

This was in stark contrast to my physical work environment at the time: a large building housing the university departments of Art, Music and Drama, including drama studios and art workshops with no sound absorbing materials, and located on one of the busiest roads in the city. Music lecture rooms had no sound proofing, making listening to quiet music almost impossible. As a result of this, I became acutely aware of noise pollution, including the music that wallpapers every public space, and increasingly convinced that people are losing the ability to listen with attention. Theodore Adorno notes this too in relation to a discussion on radio music:

> Under the aegis of radio there has set in a retrogression of listening. In spite of and even because of the quantitative increase in musical delivery, the psychological effects of this listening are very much akin to those of the motion picture and sport spectatoritis which promotes a retrogressive and sometimes even infantile type of person. (Adorno 1998: 198)

Writing a work that demanded attentive listening was a reaction to this, an approach also found in *The Collision Project* and, to a lesser extent, in *Arc*.

The opening breathing into the saxophones without pitch with long rests in between, therefore, has several intentions: to make a clear statement that this is a different sound or character for the saxophone quartet; to force the audience to listen carefully; and finally to create the sense of the ensemble as a living organism that breathes. The work is structured around the concept of the gradual wakening of a living creature, the key rattles indicating slow movement, the gradually emerging pitches the emergence of awareness. This concept does not need to be understood by the audience. Indeed, the work is called *Untitled* because I do not want to prescribe how the audience interprets the work.

The saxophone quartet repertoire I had encountered at the time of writing this work was influential not in driving me to aspire to what I had heard but rather in terms of what I perceived as lacking. Many of the quartets I had listened to

treated the ensemble as one would expect of a saxophone quartet: bold and rambunctious, such as Bernardo Sassetti's *Smoking Aria* (2004), and the opening of Fitkin's *Stub* (1991a); or as a "singing" ensemble that focuses on the lyricism of the instrument, such as Jan W. Morthenson's *Hymn/Chorale* (1987/1990) or Alexander Levine's *Faces* (1999). Of course, this is a very simplified categorisation and many works combine the two. What is important here, however, was that I wanted to work against expectation, to draw out the quiet, intimate character of the ensemble that was neither bold nor lyrical. When an audience sees a saxophone quartet walk on stage, I imagined them assuming a work of boldness because the saxophone's jazz associations suggest a brass band treatment. I wanted to contradict these expectations, surprising the audience with an altogether different ensemble character. There are saxophone quartets in the repertoire that explore the gentler nature of the ensemble, such as Wilson's ... *so softly* (1992), Daan Manneke's *Soyons plus vite / Syrinx* (1991) and Gavin Bryars' *Alaric I or II* (1989). None of these, however, push the quietness of the ensemble as far as *Untitled.*

After the first performance of the work, some comments from the audience revealed different interpretations of the sounds produced by these techniques. One audience member was convinced I had been to Swakopmund, a ghost town in the desert of Namibia, as she heard wind-driven sand moving through the abandoned buildings; another heard the whispers of her ancestors.[39] This was my first experience of creating a sound environment that allowed the audience to create its own interpretation or narrative, an experience I drew on when conceptualising *The Collision Project.*

Untitled was the first work of mine performed outside of the university at which I was working and studying, which immediately shifted my location in the field of art music composition.[40] For the first time I gained cultural capital, partly by

[39] Pers. comms. 30 June 2006.
[40] The work was premiered on 30 June 2006 by the Stockholm Saxophone Quartet at the NewMusic Indaba in Grahamstown.

having a work performed by the highly reputable international ensemble (the Stockholm Saxophone Quartet), partly by the performance being part of an established new music festival (the NewMusic Indaba, held at the Grahamstown Arts Festival), and partly as a result of a positive review in the festival publication, *Cue*. In one performance, my location shifted from the student fringes and towards the core of established South African composers. Although this impact should not be exaggerated, it is probably unlikely that one performance in a larger field would have such an impact on a composer's location. But it is indicative of how small the South African field is, and how one performance can have an influence on a composer's location in that field.

THE COLLISION PROJECT for car wreck and attached string parts

This work requires the most explanation. It does not feature the saxophone and is the most experimental work in the portfolio: it seeks new ground between the disciplines of music, Fine Art and theatre; and pushes the boundaries of what may be considered acceptable in music, especially in the conservative South African composition field.

It must be noted that the use of saxophone was considered, but the sound was too foreign in the context of the rest of the work. It became apparent that using the saxophone would only serve the purposes of this doctorate, and was abandoned.

My collaborator on *The Collision Project* was Gerhard Marx, a colleague at the WSOA at the time, a Fine Artist who has extensive theatre experience as a "scenographer"[41] and director. Because we were working within the university environment at the time, and received some support from the institution for the project, we were free to be more experimental than if presenting the work in a

[41] Marx prefers this term to "set designer".

more commercially demanding environment. "If we fail, we fail spectacularly", Marx commented.[42]

This work partly reflects my years of theatre work, as discussed earlier. But my habitus as a teacher also came into play. Having worked with students from a wide variety of musical backgrounds during my eight years of teaching at Wits, I had become acutely aware of the difficulties faced by students who came into the university system without a rigorous training in western classical theory. Having seen students with talent and strong musical imaginations struggle to find a space for themselves, I was eager to find a "level playing field" in which these students could draw on their musical backgrounds without anxiety about their lack of western classical training. *The Collision Project* seemed to me to provide just that, and students were chosen to work on the project based on their eagerness to explore and engage with other disciplines rather than technical proficiency.

The aim of *The Collision Project*, from the outset, was to create a work in which the music and the object are inseparable. The resultant work can be seen as a combination of a concert performance and installation art, each dependant on the other; the object is the source of the sound – without it, the music cannot exist. The most obvious point of reference for interdisciplinary work in South Africa is William Kentridge and his collaborations with, for example, the Handspring Puppet Company. However, what is noteworthy about Kentridge's works and other collaborations (such as Bräuninger and choreographer J. Pather) is that the music can be removed from the works and played separately: Volans's score for his collaborative work with Kentridge, *Zeno at 4am* (2000-2001), could be rendered as a concert performance; similarly, the music by Bräuninger for Pather's works can be separated from the dance performance. *The Collision Project* takes a different approach, excluding text and, indeed, any kind of dramatic narrative, focusing instead on an object – the wreck – and using that as the sound source.

[42] Pers. comm. 15 June 2006.

Obviously the dismantling or deconstruction of traditional sound environments is nothing new; neither is the creation of sound environments using unconventional sound sources. Cage's *4' 33"* springs to mind as the best known example of the former and Harry Partch as an enthusiastic exponent of the latter, "propounding a philosophy of music as a 'corporeal' art" (Griffiths 1986: 116). Many composers today continue this challenge to audiences and performers, in various ways, through the use of contemporary sound sources, such as the use of cell phones in Aryan Kaganoff's *Ringtones* (2006),[43] and continuously exploring the sound possibilities in instruments.

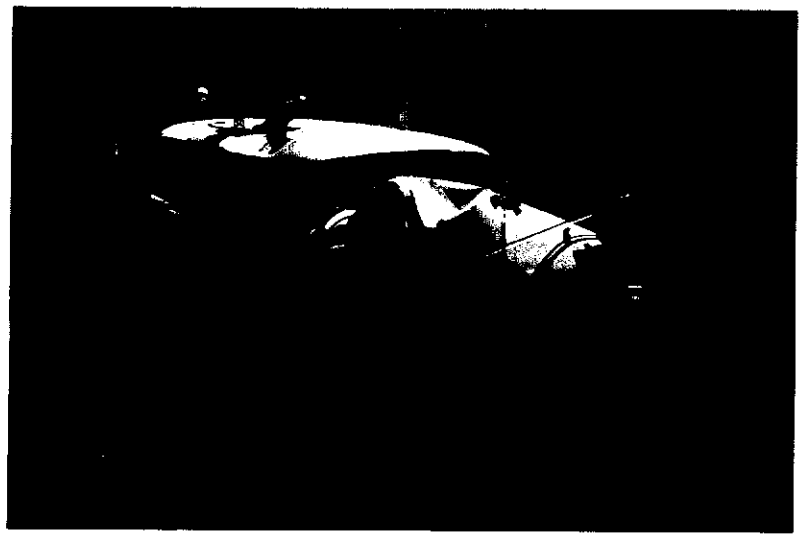
While Cage and Partch are examples of composers who explored new avenues of aesthetics in music composition, now it seems that composers rarely write works involving extended techniques or invented instruments for the sole purpose of challenging perceptions of music; instead unconventional methods are now used to achieve a particular compositional intention. Volans's *Etude No 5* (2003), for example, uses plucked piano strings in conjunction with the more traditional sonorities of the piano, echoing each other with a slowness that is almost static. Bräuninger's work written for the Stockholm Saxophone Quartet, *13 very short movies for 4 saxophones and 0 electronics* (2002), includes sections in which the players blow into the instrument without the mouthpiece that, combined with the African-derived rhythms, suggests the sound of an African-style accordion. My work for saxophone quartet, *Untitled*, utilises blowing without creating pitch and key rattles to draw attention to the quietness of the ensemble and evoke sound images for the listener.

The advantages provided by linking into the fields of theatre and Fine Art have already been discussed in some detail. There was, however, a disadvantage to presenting a work in a theatrical context: limited time in the venue. The wreck was a large object requiring a large space. From the arrival of the wreck in the venue, there were four weeks in which to build the string parts, attach them to appropriate parts of the wreck, assess the acoustic character of the venue, find

[43] I saw this work performed at the 2006 New Music Indaba in Grahamstown.

the sounds, structure and compose the work, and rehearse. This is different from a concert performance for which existing scores can be given to musicians weeks ahead of time and rehearsal venues are much more flexible.

Marx created the steel scrolls and tails of the two violins and cellos that were grafted onto the wreck and visible to the audience: the cellos parts onto the roof and the flank of the wreck, the violin parts onto the bonnet and the rusted section behind the front wheel. Conventional string bridges conducted the sound into the hollow sections of the wreck; the wreck is thus used as a sound box. C and D cello strings were attached to the roof cello, G and A strings to the flank cello; G and A violin strings were used on the bonnet violin, the D and E strings on the rust violin.



The Collision Project
From left to right: Barry Sherman, Sisekelo Pila nd Vusi Ndebele

A car wreck was chosen as the object only after extensive discussion. It was finally chosen partly because it was an extension of Marx's own work (his last exhibition used maps, the borders and roads used to create outlines of, for example, skulls or body parts), but also because I believed a car wreck offered good musical possibilities, and could be explored as a whole, three-dimensional, musical object with which the musicians could engage physically.

I was intrigued by the thought of making an inanimate object animate. Of course all musical instruments are inanimate, but they are designed to create music. I was drawn to the idea of an inanimate object, loaded with non-musical associations, being given a musical "voice". On a strictly practical level, I could not envisage the sustainability of 45+ minutes of percussion on the car – there is only so much tapping one can do on a hunk of twisted metal. (This percussive-driven approach has been done, and continues in such works as *AutoAuto!*.[44]) But by attaching strings, we gave the wreck a musical voice, expanding not only the sound source possibilities but also their expressive potential.

Visually, a car wreck is an evocative object. Each member of the audience will bring to the experience their own associations, memories, fears and possible stories of a wreck – their habitus, then, plays a role in their perception of the work. An old station wagon was chosen because its role as a "family car" is suggestive, further provoked by the visibly violent impact suffered by the car, and the visible rust and decay tells of the wreck's abandonment. Practically, the large and intact back section was an ideal sound box for the strings.

We elected not to present meaning, metaphor or symbolism, and the music does not attempt to reconstruct a history of the wreck. Instead, my aesthetic approach was conceptually driven and the music is structured around two interlinking concepts: decay; and the emerging voice of the wreck. Starting from the point of "deconstructed" sounds (the opening breathing and first string sounds created by pulled dental floss away from the wreck), the work slowly progresses from distant to closer floss-created sounds to pulling the strings to plucking to the whole sound (the bowing in the final section). This is decayed sound in reverse. The emerging voice of the wreck is imagined with this reversing decay: as the sound moves toward wholeness, so the voice of the wreck emerges, slowly drawn out by the musicians. This emerging voice does not tell a story. I aim

[44] *AutoAuto!* was staged at the Riverside Studios in London in April and early May 2008. A different car wreck was destroyed each performance, exploring the various sound possibilities in each wreck.

instead to create a sound environment that allows each listener to find her own meaning or interpretation.

Within this broader structure, the performers are given a great deal of freedom; the work is intended to reflect the personalities and musical histories of the musicians. Performers from different cultural backgrounds will present different versions, resulting in a work that renegotiates its location in each new group of performers and geographical space in which it is performed.

The score, while providing symbols for the various sound sources and a clear structural outline, gives the performers a significant amount of leeway. Although I give detailed explanations as to how the sound sources are created or used, much of the score is open to interpretation, such as how the performers interact with one another in certain sections, or the rhythms they create.

Much of the music is very quiet, demanding intensive listening from the audience. Using a car wreck to create explosive sound seemed predictable and obvious; once again, I wanted to work against expectation. While the act of collision is loud, the consequent sound world of a car wreck is very different – a scrapyard of wrecked and abandoned cars is almost graveyard-like in its quietness. The grotesquely bent bonnet, impacted doors and broken windows suggested the wreck's voice "buried" beneath twisted metal, needing to be coaxed out of silence. A similar approach to silence is found in the second movement of Blake's *String Quartet No. 1* (2001), of which Marx observed: "you didn't realise there was silence until it was broken".[45] It suited the extremely resonant SubStation venue, where the high ceiling, lack of windows and dampening materials make quiet sounds easily audible. Furthermore, in a world overwhelmed by sound, I wanted to encourage the audience to engage in intense listening. This was not a new approach for me and was discussed in more detail in reference to *Untitled.*

[45] Pers. comm. 27 July 2005.

From the outset, I was clear that any allusions to the conventional string ensemble should be avoided. The point of this project was not to write a string quartet played on a car wreck. Instead, the wreck itself becomes the instrument: if the work sounded like a conventional string ensemble, the wreck would become a mere gimmick and is partly why so few conventional string techniques are used. The alternative techniques, however, offer a multitude of sound sources and have more than enough expressive potential. The wailing sounds (created by running rosined fingers along the strings) are an example, and unwaxed dental floss offers a wealth of sound opportunities. As the floss is sometimes not visible, an illusion is sometimes created of sound emerging from the empty wreck (some of the audience thought the sound was electronically created), adding dramatic and musical tension.

Each performer "specialises" in a particular string part on the wreck, and has a solo section in which to explore this. In the version presented here, one player chose the cello parts on the flank of the car, another the cello parts on the roof, the third player the violin on the distorted bonnet. Each player presented distinct areas of interest: the flank cellist, Barry Sherman, chose the sound possibilities in dental floss; Siskelo Pila, the roof cellist, used sculptor's metal rasps to explore the instrument's strings, scroll and tail piece, and surrounding roof – noting that the sound on the strings reminded him of Xhosa bow music – and changing pitch by bending the scroll and shifting his weight on the car roof. Vusi Ndebele explored the timbre of the strings rubbing them with resined fingers and using attached dental floss, integrating these with the surrounding metal by, for example, stroking and slapping the flatter surfaces, moving the bonnet up and down.

While most of the work uses newly created sounds, bowing on the strings with conventional string bows is used at the end to create, as mentioned before, a fully "constructed" sound. It is the only time where any kind of sustained harmony is produced. While the production of harmony suggests a more conventional approach, it is highly unpredictable; precise tuning of the strings is

impossible as activity around the string areas in previous sections changes the tuning. No harmonic structure or direction is created. The purpose of the bowing section is tied to the underlying concept that drives the musical structure of the whole work.

The reception to the work was revealing, particularly in terms of the South African art music field. The cultural capital gained was significant (as discussed earlier), but the audience comprised mostly Fine Artists and theatre-goers. Several high profile South African artists, such as Willem Boshoff and Karel Nel, were delighted by the work, perceiving it as ground-breaking and courageous. By contrast, the response to *The Collision Project* from much of the music community in Johannesburg was somewhat stony, confirming my perception that the fields of Fine Art and theatre are more open to experimentation and the pushing of boundaries. Given that *The Collision Project* was subsequently chosen to represent South Africa at the 2008 World Music Days, these negative responses, I believe, reflect more on the conservatism of the field of composition here than on the work itself.

***RED HERRING* for alto saxophone**

Composed in 2007, this work, in a way, announces my departure from the aesthetic approach found in *Displacement* and *Excursions*. There is a significant change, for example, in my approach to virtuosity, as mentioned earlier in reference to *Displacement*, an abandonment of the need to have my works played by South Africans. It was therefore written without concern for technical limitations, is unashamedly demanding of the performer, and requires a virtuoso saxophonist. Jörgen Pettersson, the alto saxophonist in the Stockholm Saxophone Quartet to whom *Red Herring* is dedicated, relishes technically demanding works:

> He likes to work with music that presents new problems, music that provides a challenge and forces him to develop further. "There are works

> that are physically challenging to learn – after five minutes the mouthpiece almost tastes of blood", he says happily.[46]

I had decided to write for alto saxophone because, at the time, I felt it was highly versatile, bridging the lightness of the soprano sax and weightiness of the tenor, offering a wide range of character and expression.

Red Herring also marked a shift in my perceived location as a composer by recognising the need to interact with the international field of composition. My approach to composing this work acknowledges that works can – and when possible should – be written for the best performers who are not necessarily available locally and, thus, the limitations of the South African field. This brings its own set of problems, as outlined in the discussion on *Excursions*. But *Red Herring* was an important departure point in terms of wanting to engage with a field beyond the South African borders.

The aesthetic approach was largely informed by the fact that I was writing for a Swedish saxophonist. But why write a work that could be written by a Swedish composer? It made sense to draw on sources closer to home as a mark of difference, and a recording of the Baka Forest People of Southeast Cameroon (1993) that had long interested me provided the starting point for the work. (Although Cameroon is a long way from South Africa, at least it is on the same continent.) I did not, however, transcribe the song, *Yelli*, from which I drew my inspiration. Instead, I used the technique and created my own melodic material from this. The melody is fragmented: indeed, there are two melodies in this work and I drew the application for this context from the singing style found in *Yelli*. One is created by the shorter notes and/or accented grace notes, the other by the longer notes, precluding the possibility of a single, lyrical line. The melodic material is evolved by, for example, gradually introducing more and more grace notes that lead to an exuberant run of material at bars 97 - 122. (The unrelated run of semiquavers in bars 72 - 73 and 75 gave the work its title.) The

[46] CD sleeve of Jörgen Pettersson. 1995. *Saxophone con Forza*, Phono Suecia, PSCD 81: pg 11.

pulse-based rhythm, seen in the quaver-based time signatures, alludes to the rhythmic construction of *Yelli*.

The second section, from bar 133, is a stretched out treatment of the material from the first section. The short and/or grace notes are still present but surrounded by less intense melodic writing, making these shorter notes seem lighter in this new context. Multiphonics emerge from, and draw out, the surrounding melody, serving to extend the colour realm.

The melodic construction in *Red Herring* no longer focuses on drawing attention to the "singing" saxophone and its close association with the human voice, in the same way *Displacement* and *Excursions* had, indicating a shift in my aesthetic as a result of my changed habitus. Here, the melody is driven by the material rather than lyricism.

There is still, however, a powerful element of "voice" in this work. One of the reasons I was intrigued by *Yelli* was the very different quality of the singer's voice: harder and more penetrating than the warmer, more dulcet qualities of much western classical singing. This difference echoes, in a way, some of the differences in the approach to sound on the straight saxophone. A more extreme version of this style is heard in Karin Rehnqvist's *Rädda mig ur dyn* (1994/1996) that draws on the Swedish goatherd singing style, and requires a similar tone quality from the saxophone. It is a startlingly harsh sound to western-trained ears, and I found it intriguing. Perhaps, then, the sound quality required in *Red Herring* bridges the gap between this very harsh sound and the sweetly lyrical sound necessary in a work like Fitkin's *Pam & Jim & Jim & Pam* (1995).

Because *Red Herring* is unlikely to be performed in South Africa, yet draws on a strong African influence, it negotiates an interesting space in the art music field. While it is, I believe, obviously African, it locates itself in the international field because of its technical demands on the player. It is not an entirely

comfortable position for me as a composer: on the one hand the motivation and core material of the work locates me in South Africa; on the other hand, I am seeking to extend my location beyond the borders of South Africa, but am dependant on performers who are geographically distant. I do not know if *Red Herring* has been performed – Pettersson indicated that he liked the work, would perform it and requested programme notes, but I have received no confirmation. (He has noted that his fingers work better on a saxophone than a computer keyboard.[47])

BLINK for two saxophones and chamber ensemble[48]

While *Blink* presented the opportunity to extend my location beyond the restrictive boundaries of the South African field, it also posed aesthetic considerations in terms of my representing South African music, or Africa, at a concert in Vienna. Would Viennese audiences expect to hear something distinctly African? What do they imagine is an African sound? Should I write according to that expectation?

My habitus reflects a strong European influence, as described earlier. But at the same time I am (obviously) powerfully influenced by the place in which I live and I was aware when creating this work of the relentless energy of Johannesburg. This led me to aim to capture in *Blink* a sense of an adrenaline-rushed environment. Living in such an environment is significant – this city is, after all, a substantial part of my habitus. But there was also an intention here that lay beneath many of my decisions: to work against expectation (as is often typical of my approach), in this case what I imagined the Austrian audiences' expectations of music from "Africa". I also wanted to divert from the serious,

[47] Pers. comm. 7 February 2008.

[48] *Blink* came about because of a request by Roland Freisitzer, conductor of Ensemble Reconsil Vienna, for a concert featuring new music from Africa in October 2007 at the Arnold Schönberg Centre. The African composers were myself, Michael Blake, and Justinian Tamasuza from Uganda.

Germanic style I heard on Ensemble Reconsil's recordings, choosing instead to reflect my musical and geographical location.

To this end, the work opens with fast semiquavers in the strings that provide an underlying pulse, gradually changing through subtle shifts in the pulse groupings, accents, texture and dynamics and occasionally through changes in pitch. The rest of the ensemble is given accented punctuation points, giving some groups prominence at different points, changing colour and shifting texture. This randomness and irregular shifting continues through much of the work, and is described by Cameron Harris as a "bundle of troublesome energy" (Harris 2008: 4). It serves to capture, at some level, the unpredictability of life in Johannesburg, including its random violence and rapid rate of change. I did not want the material to emerge gradually. Instead, I state my intention fully from the first bar – this approach is influenced in part by Volans who said (informally) that he likes to hear a composer's intention in the first few bars.

The coda of *Blink* was in fact the starting point of the composition process. It began as a send-up of what I thought of as an archetypal German drinking song, using parody to break the barrier of the blank page. This section sparked off ideas for other material that suggested the Johannesburg environment, and moved away from parody.

Several works informed this. Stravinsky's *Rite of Spring* (1913) was an obvious entry point into the use of strident pulse-based rhythms and irregular rhythms in a western art music context; Gosfield's *The Manufacture of Tangled Ivory* (1996) was influential in its aggressive approach to rhythm. Reich's *Six Pianos* (1973) helped to inform the subtle shifts in texture, seen, for example, in the strings' first section (bars 1 – 68), the texture of the second section (bars 79 – 136), the gradual join between the two (bars 69 – 78 and 79 – 135 respectively). The influence of the minimalists is particularly evident in the texture disintegration of the second section (bars 178 – 198). The textural writing of Ligeti's *Chamber Concerto* (1970) in which numerous instrumental lines create

an aural impression that belies the individual parts was also influential. Barry's fearless use of crashing cluster chords in *Piano Quartet No. 2* (1992) gave me the confidence to pile notes without concern for ease on the ear or interrelationships. This was particularly useful in the opening where I was aiming to communicate a modern and not necessarily attractive urban environment.

The varying and interweaving pulses were influenced by some of the African music I have been exposed to: the use of pulse as a basic unit at the beginning of *Blink*, which I then play with by groupings, accents, texture and dynamics, underlies my approach in this work. It should be noted that the "playing" I engage in is not particularly African, or at least not "traditional". African music that involves interlocking players will create patterns of shifting texture and rhythmic patterns but no one player creates these shifts.

It is the percussive character of the piano that I utilise most, as is common in many contemporary compositions and particularly in African art music of Ghana, Nigeria and Uganda. Often associated with the piano and giving rise to the notion of African pianism, Nketia refers to this as a "style of piano music which derives its characteristic idiom from the procedures of African percussion music". (quoted in Kimberlin and Euba 2005: 3) Akin Euba defines this as, among other things, the "percussive treatment of the piano ... making the piano behave like African instruments." (Kimberlin and Euba 2005: 3)

The saxophones are at first absorbed in the broader ensemble (bars 1 to 78), emerging later as solo instruments. The soprano sax features in bars 79 – 141, the tenor sax bars 141 – 176. From bars 177 to the start of the coda at bar 235, they feature equally as solo instruments. The coda has small sections featuring the individual saxophones: bars 276 – 302 for the soprano, bars 303 – 314 for the tenor.

I chose to feature the soprano and tenor saxophone because they are so different in character: the soprano is lighter, potentially more frivolous; the tenor is weighty, rougher, and rounder. Yet there are also surprising meeting points: the tenor, for example, is capable of unexpected lightness as Christopher Bochmann demonstrated in *Lampoons* (2004). Furthermore, because I was writing for highly skilled saxophonists,[49] I knew I could make technical demands of these players I could not of local musicians and, although not deliberate, much of the saxophone writing in *Blink* is technically challenging.

As already mentioned, I find many works written for saxophone and orchestra or ensemble disappointing. But some of the recorded repertoire played by the Stockholm Saxophone Quartet provided insights into composing for the instrument. Daniel Nelson's *Full Throttle* (1999) and Rehnqvist's *Rädda mig ur dyn* (1994/1996) are examples of works that intrigued me for their saxophonic character, and they seem to revel in the full, somewhat raunchy aspect of the instrument.

It was this newly discovered sound quality of the saxophone that I had in mind when writing the saxophone parts of *Blink*. I was not seeking the clean sound suited to smooth lyricism that I sought to highlight in *Excursions I*. Instead, I wanted an almost jazz-like edginess – the work as a whole was intended to have a certain "rawness". This was tied into the motivation behind the work, which partly aimed to capture the tough challenges of living in the city of Johannesburg. There are moments of singing lyricism, but these are not a core feature of the work. Possibly I was also rebelling against the more conservative approach I had left behind when changing composition teachers and was taking an aesthetic stand in flouting the high art/low art divide by acknowledging the saxophone's associations with jazz.

[49] The two saxophonists, Thomas Schön on tenor and Sabine Zwick on soprano, play in the Vienna Saxophone Quartet

There are sections in the work, particularly bars 141 - 176, that require a jazz-influenced "sound" – rough, less refined, and somewhat aggressive. Given my early interest in jazz, it is not surprising I was intrigued by roughness of Lindwall's *Jiin* (1993/1996), described by Pettersson as "like driving Formula 1 on a newly laid gravel track through a forest".[50] This approach, so different to the one that views the saxophone as a primarily lyrical instrument, appealed to the contrary composer in me and was influential in my approach to the tenor saxophone writing in *Blink.*

The main tenor saxophone section (bars 141 - 176) is technically demanding and focuses on what I perceive as the very "masculine" sound of the instrument. The aggressive writing I use here I have heard for bass and baritone saxophone, but not to this extent for the tenor in the straight repertoire I have encountered. This section flirts with the jazz associations and, if unintentionally, alludes to the jazz techniques of bebop, a bridging point, in a sense, of the jazz-straight divide. However, the section is not improvisatory, nor is it stating a theme that may lend itself to improvisation. Any perceptions of this are offset by the very deliberate writing of the accompanying ensemble. There are moments of light sweetness in the tenor saxophone in some of the longer melody lines (such as bars 91 - 100), a meeting point between the soprano and tenor as mentioned earlier, but these are not the feature of the tenor's main section.

The soprano saxophone writing was informed by the angular melody lines found in works such as Fitkin's *Frame* (1991b) and *Bob* (1998). *Frame* uses the hard-edged sound of the soprano saxophone in some sections that seem to echo that of the marimba. The contrasting "sounds" of the saxophone impacted on my approach to the soprano sax in *Blink.* I chose to focus on the soprano's agility rather than its lyricism as I think this has been underutilised in the repertoire, particularly its ability to leap about the registers with apparent lack of effort. Although the lyricism is there, the melodic lines are fragmented (unlike *Frame*

[50] CD sleeve of Jörgen Pettersson. 1995. *Saxophone con Forza*, Phono Suecia, PSCD 81: pg 14

where the melody lines are long) and angular, removing a sense of expected melodic flow.

The review of the concert noted the distinctly different character of the works presented by the three African composers, compared to those by Austrian composers Roland Friesitzer and Alexander Wagendriestel: "In each of our African composers, there is something of the rebellious firebrand. Their music is obstinate and fierce, big-boned and raw".[51] Maybe this is not surprising. African composers are less encumbered by the weight of tradition, perhaps, leaving them more prone to risk-taking.

One of the most obvious areas of difference is rhythmic fluidity and complexity. The ensemble struggled with the rhythmic fluidity in Tamasuza's work *Ekikujjuko* which required a loose approach within and across the bar. *Blink* required a similar shift of perception in some ways. Although the time signature is relevant, the musicians struggled with the rhythms, finding them, as with Tamasuza's work, difficult to make music of. The first cellist commented that this approach was different for them, adding that she found the music "coherent", almost as though this was something of a surprise. This was later confirmed by the artistic director of the ensemble, who told me that when he first received my score he was "sceptical", thinking the work far too "simple" for the ensemble. He was proved wrong, however, finding the work was far more complex in its *realisation* than it looked on paper.

The element of narrative in the African works was striking. It was not a narrative of "telling a story"; both my and Blake's work (*Rural Arias*) were driven by the need to dispel myths about life in South Africa in oblique representation rather than narrative. In Blake it was stripping the myth of rural life, instead drawing attention to the hardships and difficulties. Similarly in my case, people without experience of life in Johannesburg find it hard to imagine its chaos and the toughness required of its inhabitants, I think, and struggle to

[51] Mary Jordan, *Business Day*, 9 October 2007

understand the more tender side. *Blink* strives to convey this duality. In trying to capture the sheer modernity and complexity of Johannesburg, I was also hoping to unsettle expectations of "Africa".

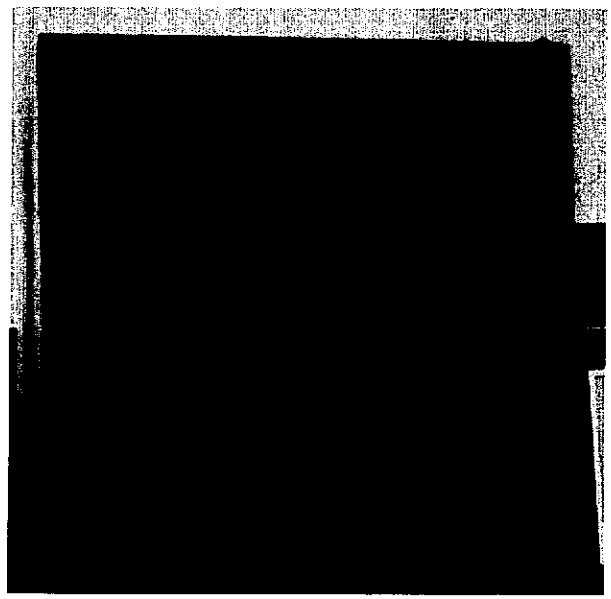
All these responses added another dimension to my location as a composer. Before working in Vienna, I had perceived myself as a South African composer trying not to be restricted by the South African field of art music composition. Added to this is now the idea of being "seen" from somewhere else, a sense of difference that is not necessarily negative. South African composers, probably similar to composers in fields like our own, often struggle with a sense of inadequacy, "a lingering lack of self-confidence" (Harris: 2008: 3), largely due to the difficulties in the field as outlined earlier.

It is difficult for any composer in South Africa to negotiate a space in a broader field that is, to all intents and purposes, informed by a European tradition. Certainly, the credibility I had lost in the South African field by focusing on an instrument of dubious reputation was regained by a performance in such a revered place. The post-colonial view is inevitable. The experience of working in the Viennese field, and the responses to *Blink* in that field, caused a shift in what was a rather colonial perspective of myself. Harris suggests confronting the issue head-on: "making the point explicit that colonialism still affects us is the best way to counter its continued negative implications." (2008: 3)

Although I am not entering the field of art music composition in the same way as European composers, and while I may not have similar resources at my disposal, as an African composer perhaps I have something distinct to offer. Dr Christian Meyer, head of the Arnold Schönberg Centre, commented to me after the performance that he had never heard a sound or style like he heard in *Blink*, that he found it "fresh" and distinctive. My compositional voice, perhaps, is immediately different from those of my European counterparts simply by merit of the world in which I live, my habitus and how I negotiate the field in South Africa.

ARC for baritone saxophone

Like *The Collision Project*, *Arc* involved collaborative work. With this work, however, the collaboration was more distant and is probably better described as a cross-disciplinary conversation. The artist with whom I collaborated, Jill Trappler, had nothing to do with the musical work; similarly, I had nothing to do with the art work. Although Trappler and I discussed the form the collaboration would take, there was no interaction during the creation of the works. There is no core concept underlying the works we respond to – they are chosen at our discretion. This collaboration continues: I wrote *Arc* in response to Trappler's work *Stella Rose*; Trappler is now painting in response to *Blink*. There are plans to create two works simultaneously. The resultant works, however, will probably be independent of each other, able to be seen and heard separately, a very different approach to *The Collision Project*.



Stella Rose by Jill Trappler

Stella Rose is a large painting (approx 1.5 x 1.5 metres) and is based on incomplete circles, or arcs. Trappler has a series of paintings based on this idea but in varying colours. I am not a composer who hears music in colours, but I was attracted to colours in *Stella Rose*, perceiving strength and stridency in the

black and brown, softness and lightness in the underlying hints of lilac. In this early phase, the structure and colours triggered musical possibilities in my mind and guided my aesthetic approach to the composition.

Arc is constructed in a similar way to *Stella Rose*, using "arcs" of musical material and fragments of melody that allude to incomplete circles. As in the painting, these arcs vary in length, articulation, dynamics, note duration; where the fragment is placed in the bar changes its emphasis. The opening three bars, for example, suggest a complete arc, as do bars 112 - 115. A short, incomplete arc can be seen, for example, in bar 19; a longer but still incomplete arc at bar 29; an even longer arc (by merit of long note values) from bars 44 - 47. As the work is for one instrument, the changing note values and their register can also imply thicker or thinner textures. The changes in dynamics can also imply differences in depth – in the same way that the artist uses colour to create foreground and background in this abstract painting.

Stella Rose was not the only influence on the structure of *Arc*, however. The venue in which the painting was exhibited and *Arc* premiered – The Seippel Gallery in Doornfontein, Johannesburg – played an important role. Before deciding even which instrument to write for, I visited the gallery to find a large space with high ceilings, several interleading open chambers and large windows, resulting in an extremely resonant space with powerful echoes. Considering the size of the painting, the size of the gallery and resultant echo, it made sense to fully utilise the largeness rather than work against it, and was one of motivations for writing for baritone saxophone.

Fighting the powerful echo would have been pointless, in my opinion. I chose instead to work with it, incorporating echo into the piece so that it acted within rather than outside it. The score therefore contains a large number of rests, sometimes with instructions to the performer "until echo fades" (see bars 6, 14, 107). At times, the intention is for the played notes to emerge out of the echo, such as at bar 44 where the player re-enters after a rest at a ***p*** dynamic marking.

Echo was also incorporated into the played notes, resulting in "played" echoes as well as the echoes that occurred as a result of the venue. The "echo" instruction indicates this (bar 23). Instructions such as "whispy", "lesser grumble", "throw away" imply this echo, but also serve to expand the sound colour of the instrument or even give moments of character – how many people imagine the baritone saxophone as "whispy", for example? In a way, then, I am challenging what I perceive as audience expectations of the baritone saxophone. In another way, this is an extension of my habitus that resulted in *Untitled. Red Herring* too imagines the saxophone as a living creature, but in this case responds to its surroundings.

In the early working stages of *Arc*, I based the start and/or end of the melodic fragments and the short one- or two-note interjections on the overtone series. The intention was to work with the echo in the Seippel Gallery, leading off each echo in the progression of overtone sounds. This quickly became predictable, however, and was consequently reworked, although numerous points of this overtone series do remain – several of the melodic fragments start or end with the interval of a perfect 4^{th} or 5^{th}. By contrast, some of the longer melodies, particularly those using semiquavers, are written to produce an indistinguishable cluster of notes that clash with the echo (such as at bars 112 - 113). It is important to note that I slowed down the pace of the work considerably after the first rehearsal in the space to allow the performer to work with the echo rather than against it.

It is worth mentioning here the adjustments that were required to the score at *Arc*'s second performance, this time on alto saxophone and in a different venue.[52] The venue, the Wits Atrium, used for chamber music performances, is smaller and has a drier acoustic. Because the echo was much less evident, the rests were shortened significantly. While this could have been potentially damaging to the work, instead the strong contrasts in character, as mentioned above, became more apparent.

[52] *Arc* was performed by Matthew Lombard on 25 November 2008.

There were other considerations in writing this work that had more to do with the composition field than the performance space and painting to which I was responding. I had no funding; I could afford one performer. I chose the saxophonist for the premiere (Charles Baggott) because of his lyrical tone. This is somewhat contrary to some of my other preferences, in which I favour a more attacking saxophone sound. The lyricism of the baritone saxophone, however, I consider to be underutilised as it is often relegated to a supportive role in an ensemble, rarely given the opportunity to come to the fore or demonstrate its gentler side. With *Arc*, I wanted to draw attention to this gentle lyricism, seen in the long lyrical lines (such as bars 55 - 59, and 117 - 127) and to its extraordinary expressive range; the performer was suited to this. Baggott, while competent, is not a virtuoso and I had to consider his limitations. *Arc* therefore contains no extended techniques, focusing instead on the strengths of the performer.

The premiere of *Arc*, held in conjunction with the opening of an art exhibition, revealed some interesting insights into the location of the work. Attendance was small – twenty-three people – of whom only one was there for the music, indicating to me *Arc*'s location more in the field of Fine Art than music. The audience was quiet, attentive and receptive but, while most people sat through the work, a few walked around while listening (as can be seen on the recording – a rather surreal moment), as though the music was part of the art and could be "viewed".

Perhaps, then, a performance not only in an art gallery (as in the case of *The Collision Project*) but in the opening of an art exhibition pushed this performance onto the outer boundaries of the music field. Is there cultural capital to be gained by a work that is not in the more traditional concert performance format? In the field of Fine Art, it would appear so, in the field of music much less so. Considerable interest was generated in this work from Fine Artists, particularly the gallerist who expressed interest in similar events in the

future, and even a documentary film maker, but little interest from the music community.

DUODECTET for saxophones

By contrast, *Duodectet* was written with an international ensemble in mind. Saxophone orchestras are not common – the only recording I could access was *New York Counterpoint* by the Raschèr Saxophone Orchestra (2002), which, with the exception of two works, plays arrangements or transcriptions of existing works. Large ensembles of saxophones do occur, however, usually in conjunction with events such as the World Saxophone Congress. And the rising interest in larger saxophone ensembles is addressed in Ballard's work (2007), mentioned earlier, although this provides arrangements for student saxophone orchestras rather than new works.

Writing for a saxophone ensemble of this size may seem foolish in the South African context. But the international field does offer possibilities, as works written for saxophone orchestra seem few and far between. With the increasing interest in the instrument showing every sign of continuing, works for larger ensembles are likely to be in demand.

Duodectet presented some problems in terms of repertoire for reference material. The saxophone orchestra presents very new ground. By comparison, there is a body of contemporary string orchestra works on which to draw – Howard Skempton's *Lento* (1994) springs to mind. Writing for string orchestra would present some similar problems, such as limited timbral contrast, but at least composers have a wealth of repertoire to consult if problems arise. It is perhaps important to note that the approach writing for a string orchestra cannot be applied to the saxophone orchestra: the weight of sound of the saxophones disallows the approach found in Skempton's *Lento*, for example. If played by twelve saxophones *Lento* would, I believe, become tiresome for the listener – certainly not a problem with the string orchestra. In spite of, or perhaps because

of its newness, the saxophone orchestra does offer some irresistible possibilities. The sheer volume of sound the ensemble can produce is undeniably exciting and begs exploitation. The seamless way in which the instruments combine allows other parameters to come to the fore – articulation, for example, can become a feature.

Andriessen's *Worker's Union* (1990) provided the inspirational trigger for the first movement of *Duodectet*. Although I had already been intrigued by the aggressive approach of the second movement of Gosfield's *The Manufacture of Tangled Ivory* (1996) and Feiler's *Anvil and Parachutes* (1993), *Worker's Union* offered a similar approach but sparser material. It was not only the minimal approach itself that attracted me to *Worker's Union*, however. It was also the attacking, almost rough material, the chopped articulation and use of accents that roughen the material even further. This approach seemed ideally suited to saxophone orchestra. The opening of *Duodectet* is similarly aggressive, the impact of twelve saxophones punching out short notes is intentionally forceful, belligerent even, and was described by a colleague as "heavy metal for intellectuals".[53] The subtle articulation changes, such as the difference between staccato and marcato, become more apparent in such a context; similarly the legato section in bars 180 - 225 is noticeably more legato, in stark contrast to what precedes it. The triplet section from bars 269 - 341 is punctuated by accents, yet is still legato compared to the punchier approach that guides the rest of the movement, leading into the closing section of rapid legato scale runs intended to lead to a breathless close.

The second movement takes a more fluid approach and is driven by melody. The opening melody, or call, is smooth and legato, constructed in the feel of the farm workers calling across the hills of the southern Drakensberg I remember hearing as a child. The response is similarly legato. As the work progresses, while the call and response continues to some extent, it becomes less apparent and more fragmented. Bars 82 - 119 smooth out this fragmentation with its six-

[53] Pers. comm. Nishlyn Ramanna, 28 November 2008.

part counterpoint and two-part melody, the latter given to the baritone and bass saxophones that rarely feature as melodic instruments in ensembles. The treatment of counterpoint here is somewhat Baroque, originally written in this style with, for example, underlying tonal harmonic progressions. This was consequently "undone", although moments remain. The melody that acts as the call was similarly constructed using western classical techniques: originally written as a long "theme and variation" melody, I deconstructed the result, unravelling some sections and stitching together others.

In contrast to the first movement in which the ensemble is mostly treated as a single entity, here it is often divided up into sections – often three groups of four saxophones each – that react to one another (bars 24 - 36 and 57 - 73, for example). This is a more complicated treatment of reaction explored to some extent in *Excursion 3* (bars 33 - 61 and 74 - 113) in which the saxophone as a "voice" was first explored. In *Excursion 3*, however, the voice was explored as a dialogue between instruments; in the second movement of *Duodectet*, the conversation is more reactive, with responses based on exploring and reacting to material rather than imitating conversation.

As the most recent work in the portfolio, *Duodectet* reflects my current habitus, and how that habitus affects my compositional aesthetic. Rhythmic displacement is a feature of both movements. Indeed, many of my works feature this: unpredictable rhythm with shifting beats or pulses that apparently contradict time signatures. A similar approach to rhythm is found throughout the works in the portfolio, becoming increasingly complex with each new work. Early indications of this are found in *Excursions*; in *Blink*, *Red Herring* and *Duodectet* it becomes more apparent. As mentioned earlier, this treatment of rhythm is perhaps one of the most distinctive features of my compositional voice.

The opening melody of the second movement hints at African influence, but also at some Celtic melodic influence. It also harks back to my earlier interest in

the saxophone as an instrument closely aligned with the human voice, although the treatment of melody shows more interest in working with material than imitating the human voice. This opening melody is somewhat reminiscent of the opening eleven bars of *Red Herring*, and the consequent fragmentation of melody in both works is seen too in *Blink*. The earliest signs of melodic fragmentation can perhaps be noted at the dialogue between instruments in *Excursions 3*, even though the intention was very different.

Embedded in *Duodectet*, to varying degrees, are the different "sounds" of the saxophone that I encountered and explored through the course of this project, changing as my musical habitus changed. The lyrical saxophone can be found in the second movement, particularly the opening single-line melodies. These lines are, however, not the long, slow lines that so attracted me to the works for saxophone by composers such as Fitkin. Instead, they are more statement-driven, working towards coherence in the ensemble rather than remaining outside it. It is in the counterpoint section of this movement that the sound is most lyrical and smooth, a deliberately "singing" section. This is somewhat in contrast to *Blink* where, although this singing sound is apparent in the second section (from bar 77), the melody is often fragmented, preventing the singing sound from dominating. The more restrained French sound that was so influential in *Displacement* can be seen in the responses in *Duodectet*'s second movement (bars 5 - 6 and 11 - 13, for example) but these soon move into the more aggressive sound that hint at the instrument's jazz associations. The rough, edgy sound favoured by ensembles such as the Stockholm Saxophone Quartet, is most prominent in *Duodectet*. The first movement is obviously geared towards a biting sound and aggressive attack; the second movement too favours this, if to a lesser extent. *Duodectet*, then, can be seen as a culmination of the various sounds encountered in the saxophone repertoire, leaning towards the jazz-influenced sound, while exploring the many different facets of the instrument.

Conclusion

My engagement with this portfolio has covered various approaches in an attempt to explain the personal negotiations during the course of the composition process. Although this is a reflexive engagement, taking place, for the most part, after the portfolio was completed, it nonetheless reflects some of the negotiations that composers face. These take place on a number of levels, ranging from aesthetic approaches to decisions around musical material to the ongoing concerns of how they locate themselves and their works in their chosen field. This is by no means a reflection of how all composers conduct these negotiations: my circumstances, habitus and consequent decisions take me on a different path from those of other composers. One of these paths has been in collaborative work, but the clearest for me has been that of the straight saxophone.

These are exciting times indeed for the straight saxophone. It has found its place on the international concert stage as a solo instrument, in ensembles and with orchestras, and South Africa is starting to show signs of following suit. Although its jazz associations mean that the straight saxophone may still be fighting some remnants of snobbery, these associations have contributed greatly to the development of the instrument, particularly in expanding its sound palette. Performers of and composers for the instrument are in a position to exploit the many different aspects and characters of this multi-faceted instrument. It is, after all, still relatively new, and offers a wealth of unexplored possibilities.

The straight saxophone and my collaborative work were ideal vehicles for challenging the boundaries of my small world. Yet, at the same time, they allowed me to draw on a range of familiar experiences (my habitus). This portfolio, therefore, highlights both my immersion in the field and my rebellion against it.

Appendix A

SAMRO ARCHIVE OF SOUTH AFRICAN MUSIC

CATALOGUE

WORKS FOR SAXOPHONE

as at June 2008

Call No:	A06486
Title:	SAXOPHONE QUARTET **ST:** SONG OF THE BULLFROGS
Composer:	BLAKE, MICHAEL
Comp date:	2005
Duration:	12'
Instrumentation:	SOPSAX,ALTOSAX,TENSAX,BARSAX
Commission:	SAMRO ENDOWMENT FOR THE NATIONAL ARTS 2006 FOR PERFORMANCE BY THE STOCKHOLM SAXOPHONE QUARTET AT THE GRAHAMSTOWN FESTIVAL
No of Pages:	24+27
Parts in File:	FS+PT
Remarks:	ORIGINALLY REQUESTED BY THE STOCKHOLM SAXOPHONE QUARTET FOR A PREMIERE PERFORMANCE IN GOTHENBURG. SWEDEN.

Call No:	A00430
Title:	PREMIERE ENTREVVE AVEC LA MER
Composer:	BLIQUY, MARC DE
Opus:	29A
Duration:	1'50"
Instrumentation:	SAX(4)
No of Pages:	5
Parts in File:	FS

Call No:	A00438
Title:	SMALL PIECE FOR SOPRANO SAXAPHONE
Composer:	BLIQUY, MARC DE
Duration:	1'06"
Instrumentation:	SSAX
No of Pages:	2
Parts in File:	FS
Remarks:	DEDICATION: ROBIN GOLDIN

Call No:	A06012
Title:	THREE ECOSSAISES/TROIS ECOSSAISES/ECOSSAISES
Composer:	CHOPIN, FREDERIC
Arranger:	ZUILENBURG, PAUL LOEB VAN
Opus:	72, No. 3
Instrumentation:	ALTO SAX, PF
Commission:	
Publ-Title:	3 ECOSSAISES
Publisher:	A-Z PUBLISHERS
Pub City/Date:	STELLENBOSCH 2002
No of Pages:	7 + 2
Parts in File:	FS + PT

Call No:	A05499
Title:	ROCKODISIAC
Composer:	DAVIDSON, KEVIN
Instrumentation:	TSAX
No of Pages:	2
Parts in File:	FS

Call No:	A05505
Title:	SPACED IN
Composer:	DAVIDSON, KEVIN
Instrumentation:	TPT/TSAX
No of Pages:	2
Parts in File:	FS

Call No:	A05511
Title:	WHAT IS IT CALLED MAN
Composer:	DAVIDSON, KEVIN
Instrumentation:	ASAX
No of Pages:	1
Parts in File:	FS

Call No: A01517
Title: FANFARE FOR TWO SAXOPHONES
Composer: HALL, WENDY LOUISE
Instrumentation: SAX(2)
No of Pages: 1
Parts in File: INCOMPLETE SCORE

Call No:
Title: RHINOCEROS GAMES
Composer: HOENIGSBERG, DAVID
Duration: 10'
Instrumentation: ASAX
Commission: RHINO ELEPHANT FOUNDATION

Call No: Q00487
Title: VERY DARK BLUE FANTASY WITH A SEVILLE ORANGE
Composer: HOENIGSBERG, DAVID
Comp date: 1982
Opus: 14
Instrumentation: TSAX,PF
No of Pages: 3
Parts in File: FS
Remarks: FOR WILLIAM RAMSAY

Call No:
Title: GARIANA
Composer: HONEY, ALBERT
Instrumentation: ASAX,PF

Call No:
Title: INS LICHT
Composer: JORDAN, BARRY
Source Title: INS LICHT
Duration: 21'
Instrumentation: TSAX,ORG

Call No:
Title: FOUR PIECES FOR SAXOPHONE AND PIANO
Composer: LAPIERRE, GERALD
Comp date: 1970
Duration: 6'
Instrumentation: ASAX,PF

Call No:	A06514
Title:	3 PIECE SUITE FOR SAXOPHONE QUARTET **ST:** THREE PIECE SUITE FOR SAXOPHONE QUARTET **ST:** THREEPIECE SAXOPHONE QUARTET
Composer:	LOVEDAY, CLARE
Comp date:	2006
Duration:	15'
Instrumentation:	SOPSAX,ALTSAX,TENSAX,BARSAX
No of Pages:	19+24
Parts in File:	FS+PT
Remarks:	DEDICATION: TO CERI MOELWYN-HUGHES.

Call No:	A02768
Title:	AYRE
Composer:	LOVEDAY, CLARE
Comp date:	2005
Duration:	9'00"
Instrumentation:	SOPSAX,ALTSAX,TENSAX,BARSAX
No of Pages:	7+11
Parts in File:	FS+PT
Remarks:	COMPOSER'S NOTES INCLUDED IN FILE

Call No:	A06414
Title:	BREATH **ST:** CERI FOR B-FLAT SOPRANO SAXOPHONE AND PIANO
Composer:	LOVEDAY, CLARE
Comp date:	2005
Duration:	5'
Instrumentation:	SOPSAX,PF
No of Pages:	5+2
Parts in File:	FS+PT
Remarks:	NAME CHANGE IN 2006: 'CERI' NOW 'BREATH'

Call No:	A06364
Title:	DISPLACEMENT **ST:** A WORK FOR ALTO SAXOPHONE AND PIANO
Composer:	LOVEDAY, CLARE
Comp date:	2004
Duration:	5'
Instrumentation:	ASAX,PF
No of Pages:	6+2
Parts in File:	FS+PT

Call No: Q00142
Title: LIVING CEREMONIES
Composer: LOVEDAY, CLARE
Comp date: 23-1-1996
Instrumentation: ASAX, PF
Commission: FOUNDATION FOR THE CREATIVE ARTS 1995
No of Pages: 38/21
Parts in File: FS

Call No: A05560
Title: WIND PLAY
Composer: LOVEDAY, CLARE
Comp date: 2001
Instrumentation: SAX,PF
No of Pages: 7
Parts in File: FS

Call No: A02254
Title: SAXOPHONE QUARTET
Composer: MERWE, JACO VAN DER
Comp date: 1996
Instrumentation: SAX(4)
No of Pages: 1
Parts in File: INCOMPLETE SCORE

Call No: A06059
Title: MEDITATION
Composer: RHYN, CHRIS VAN
Instrumentation: SOP SAX, PF
No of Pages: 12
Parts in File: FS
Remarks: SUBMITTED FOR SAMRO INTERMEDIATE BURSARIES FOR COMPOSITION STUDY IN SOUTHERN AFRICA 2003

Call No: A00677
Title: MUSIC FOR TENOR SAXOPHONE AND PIANO
Composer: ROUX, ISAK
Comp date: 1981
Instrumentation: TSAX,PF
No of Pages: 12
Parts in File: FS

Call No: A02589
Title: CONCERTO FOR B FLAT SOPRANO SAXOPHONE AND SMALL ORCHESTRA **MT:** 1.ANDANTE 2.POCO ADAGIO 3.MOLTO VIVACE
Composer: STEPHENSON, ALLAN
Comp date: 1996
Duration: 26'
Instrumentation: SSAX(Bb),FL,OB,CL,BN,HN,STR
No of Pages: 124
Parts in File: FS
Remarks: DEDICATION: DOUG

Call No: A00976
Title: INTRODUCTION AND ALLEGRO
Composer: STEPHENSON, ALLEN
Comp date: 1996
Duration: 7'30"
Instrumentation: SSAX,VLN(2),VLA,C
No of Pages: 16
Parts in File: FS
Remarks: DEDICATION: DOUG, WITH AFFECTION AND ADMIRATION

Call No: A00976
Title: INTRODUCTION AND ALLEGRO
Composer: STEPHENSON, ALLEN
Comp date: 1996
Duration: 7'30"
Instrumentation: SSAX,PF
No of Pages: 11
Parts in File: FS
Remarks: DEDICATION: TO DOUG, WITH AFFECTION AND ADMIRATION.

Call No:
Title: CONCERTINO
Composer: WATT, NIEL VAN DER
Duration: 6'
Instrumentation: SSAX,PF

Call No:	A02747
Title:	KONZERTSTUECK **ST:** CONCERT PIECE FOR SOPRANO SAXOPHONE AND STRINGS
Composer:	ZUILENBURG, PAUL LOEB VAN
Comp date:	1998
Duration:	8'
Instrumentation:	SSAX,STR
Publ-Title:	KONZERTSTUCK
Publisher:	A-Z PUBLISHERS
Pub City/Date:	STB/2004
No of Pages:	14+4
Parts in File:	FS+PT
Remarks:	**DO NOT SUPPLY.** TO BE OBTAINED FROM PUBLISHER DIRECT.

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