



Saxophone Virtuosity: Manifestation and Effect in Classical Saxophone Repertoire

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Abstract:

To ascribe the word 'virtuosity' to a single and absolute definition is an impossible task. It is a term that is multifaceted in its meaning and which is understood differently in a variety of contexts. This thesis investigates how the word virtuosity has been used in music discourse, and then considers virtuosity in three aspects of saxophone performance: altissimo, fast finger technique and soloistic roles. The application of these three aspects of virtuosity to the classical saxophone repertoire is then examined. Specifically, I examine the application of altissimo in Jacques Ibert's Concertino da Camera for Alto Saxophone and Eleven Instruments; fast finger technique in the cadenzas of Pierre Max Dubois' Concerto for Alto Saxophone and String Orchestra and Alexander Glazunov's Concerto for Alto Saxophone and String Orchestra; and soloistic roles in classical saxophone orchestral repertoire. I also consider the relevance of the saxophone as a non-standard orchestral instrument to the notion of soloistic virtuosity. With these three aspects of virtuosity established, I explore the relationship between virtuosity and Claude Debussy's Rapsodie for Orchestra and Alto Saxophone. This exploration first demonstrates how adaptations made to the Rapsodie can be seen to increase the virtuosic nature of the work. Second, it looks at how these adaptations could be contradictory to the composer's intentions. Last, it considers the motivation and purpose behind these adaptations. The aim of this thesis is to disclose ways in which virtuosity may be understood in the context of the classical saxophone repertoire and how this understanding has affected Debussy's Rapsodie in particular.


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