

**Spotlight on Low Frequencies:**  
**A Thematic Catalog of American Twentieth and Twenty-first Century**  
**Baritone Saxophone Repertoire**

*by Jeffrey A. Hart*

Collegiate saxophonists who discover their ideal solo “voice” in the baritone saxophone face the challenge of finding repertoire. Indeed, the baritone saxophone's solo library remains underdeveloped compared to its higher-sounding counterparts in Adolphe Sax's consort.<sup>1</sup> The repertoire that does exist is largely undiscovered, leaving music composed for the instrument underperformed and underappreciated in solo settings.<sup>2</sup> Fortunately, this repertoire is of great musical quality and variation, with new works being composed each year. My thematic catalog is an effort to acknowledge the time-tested repertoire that exists for the instrument, while also highlighting more recently composed works. Although European composers penned the very first solo baritone saxophone works, American composers are responsible for making significant contributions to this repertoire, spanning both the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

### The Saxophone's Birth & Early Years

Despite the warm reception it received from Hector Berlioz and Franz Liszt in the 1850s, the saxophone's role in orchestral music was limited to “cameo appearances” in this repertoire. Unfortunately, the symphony orchestra has long had an ambivalent relationship with the saxophone.<sup>3</sup> French military bands, on the other hand, embraced Sax's family of instruments, impressed with their powerful outdoor projection and ability to serve as a “crossover” between the woodwinds and brass. Indeed, the saxophone was born of Sax's own dissatisfaction with the inherent issues of bass instruments of the time, including the ophicleide (poor timbre and intonation) and bassoon (poor projection).<sup>4</sup> Thus, the earliest saxophones that Sax developed were the lowest-sounding members of the family (see Figure 1).<sup>5</sup> Baritone saxophones were

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1 Jason Lewin, “Developing Solo Repertoire for the Baritone Saxophone: An Examination, History, and Review of Selected Literature” (PhD diss., University of North Texas, 2025), 1, Proquest (32290473).

2 Ibid.

3 Stephen Cottrell, *The Saxophone* (Yale University Press, 2012), 228.

4 Cottrell, *Saxophone*, 38.

5 Cottrell, *Saxophone*, 49, Example 16.

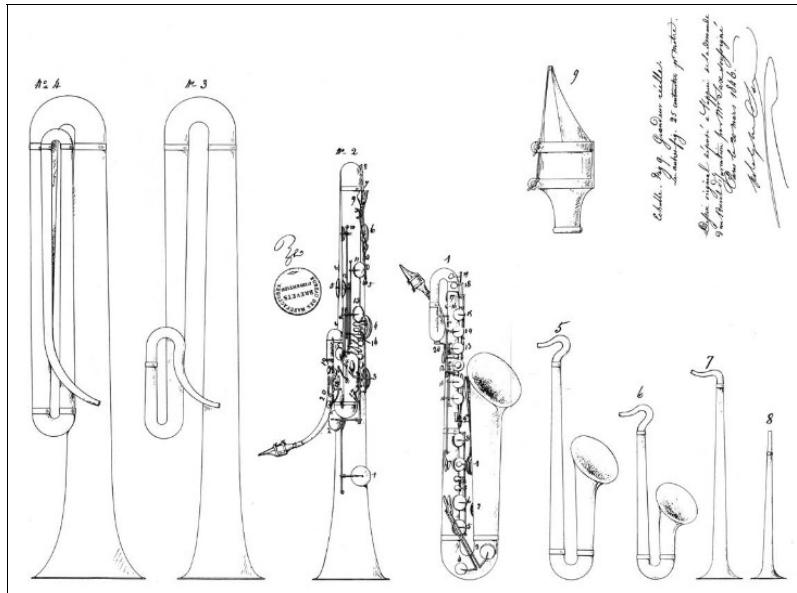


FIGURE 1. Sketches submitted as part of the 1846 saxophone patent.

The bass and baritone instruments, shown in the center, bear the lowest numbers and the most complete illustrations of their keywork.

produced in several different keys, and their role in French military ensembles was traditionally limited to playing bass lines, providing a low-end support role. The same can be said for the instrument's function in the concert bands and saxophone quartets during this time.<sup>6</sup> Only a handful of solo works composed for the baritone saxophone in the nineteenth century exist, including some by Sax's classmate and friend Jean-Baptiste Singelée, and others by flutist Jules Demersseman. Unfortunately, such pieces are anomalies; European composers would not write additional solo works for the baritone saxophone until later.

### The Innovating Influence of Jazz

During the 1920s in the United States, early jazz bands began incorporating saxophones into their instrumentation, with the E♭ alto and sometimes C melody saxophones serving melodic roles. Most of these bands utilized a tuba, or sometimes a B♭ bass saxophone, as the lowest sounding instrument within the rhythm section. The Great Depression fueled the evolution and

<sup>6</sup> Brian Landrus, “The Evolution of the Baritone Saxophone Concerto” (PhD diss., Rutgers The State University of New Jersey, 2019), 8, ProQuest (13856823).

flourishing of jazz, with bands growing in size, number, and sophistication as Americans turned to music for relief and distraction. By the middle of the 1930s, the E♭ baritone saxophone had supplanted the bass saxophone as the standard lowest sounding part of the (typically) five-member “big band” saxophone section. As these bands continued evolving in the 1950s, Harry Carney brought the sound of the baritone saxophone to the ears of jazz fans as a featured soloist in Duke Ellington and Billy Strayhorn compositions.<sup>7</sup> Gerry Mulligan followed soon after, making pioneering contributions as a baritone saxophonist, while commissioning and composing new works for the instrument.<sup>8</sup>

#### Gradual Academic Acceptance

In mid-twentieth-century American collegiate music programs, students who desired to play the saxophone did so in the capacity of a “double” in addition to their major instrument (e.g. clarinet or flute). In 1953, the University of Michigan appointed Larry Teal as the first full-time professor of saxophone in the United States.<sup>9</sup> Other prominent music schools such as The University of North Texas, The New England Conservatory, and Towson University added saxophone studios to their programs, with the first saxophone degrees conferred in the 1960s.<sup>10</sup>

Solo repertoire for the classical alto saxophone had already enjoyed several decades of contributions from European and American composers alike, resulting in a respectable number of pieces available for study. The groundbreaking efforts of jazz baritone saxophonists had inspired American composers, while the concurrent establishment of collegiate saxophone programs created a need for baritone saxophone repertoire. At last, the stage was set for American composers to make significant contributions to this body of work (see Figure 2). As illustrated in

7 Landrus, “Evolution,” 1.

8 Landrus, “Evolution,” 2.

9 Landrus, “Evolution,” 17.

10 Landrus, “Evolution,” 21.

Figure 3, my thematic catalog chronicles this journey by presenting 15 of these works. It serves as a guide for suggested repertoire for collegiate baritone saxophonists, as well as a hopeful impetus for American composers to continue contributing to this growing repertoire.

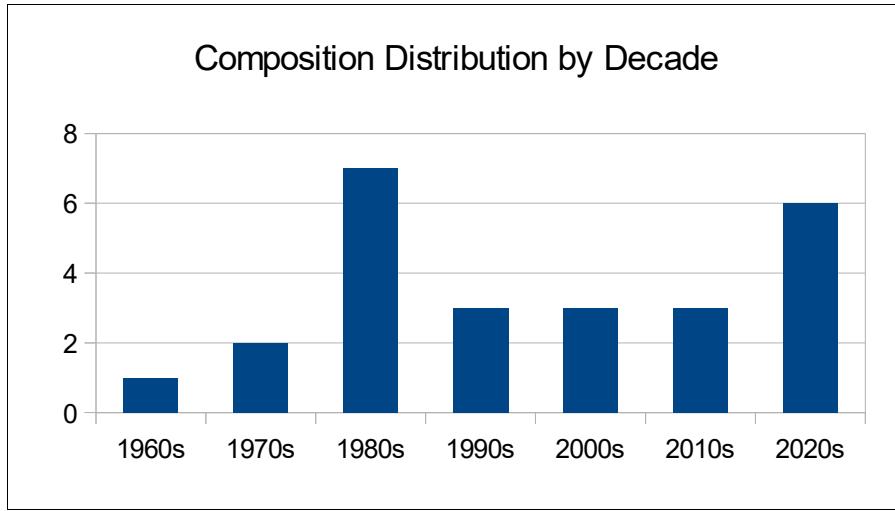


FIGURE 2. Chronological distribution of solo baritone saxophone works composed by Americans since the 1960s (counting all 25 works in this catalog's bibliography).

Cat. #	Year	Composer	Title	Publisher
1	1967	Koepke, Paul	<i>Recitative and Rondino</i>	Rubank Publishing, Inc.
2	1976	Anderson, Garland	<i>Sonata Op. 6 for Baritone Saxophone and Piano</i>	Southern Music Co.
3	1977	Hartley, Walter	<i>Sonata for Baritone Saxophone and Piano</i>	Dorn Publications
4	1980	Schmidt, William	<i>Sonata for Baritone Saxophone and Piano</i>	Western International Music
5	1981	Spears, Jared	<i>Ritual and Celebration</i>	Southern Music Co.
6	1981	Worley, John	<i>Sonatina for Baritone Saxophone and Piano</i>	Dorn Publications
7	1988	Giovannini, Caesar	<i>Romance</i>	Southern Music Co.
8	1989	Caravan, Ronald	<i>Sonata for E<sup>b</sup> Baritone Saxophone and Piano</i>	Ethos Publications
9	1990	Spears, Jared	<i>Loyalton Place</i>	Concert Works Unlimited
10	1996	Nelson, Robert	<i>Concertino for Baritone Saxophone and Orchestra</i>	RobertNelsonMusic
11	2000	Krzywicki, Jan	<i>Fable</i>	Tritone-Tenuto Press
12	2007	Jex, David	<i>Three Dances for Baritone Saxophone and Piano</i>	Wingert-Jones Publications
13	2010	McMichael, Catherine	<i>Fusion Suite</i>	C. Alan Publications
14	2012	Canfield, David	<i>Sonata for Baritone Saxophone and Piano</i>	Jeanne Inc.
15	2022	Herndon, Brooke	<i>Vignettes</i>	Brooke Herndon

FIGURE 3. Chronological table of this thematic catalog's 15 selected works.

## 1

## Recitative and Rondino

E♭ Baritone Saxophone and Piano

PAUL KOEPKE

Moderato, quasi recitativo (♩=88)

Baritone Sax.

Piano

Notes

- Length: 4 minutes
- Difficulty: medium-easy

To Nick and Anita Brightman

2

**Sonata**  
for Baritone Saxophone and Piano

GARLAND ANDERSON

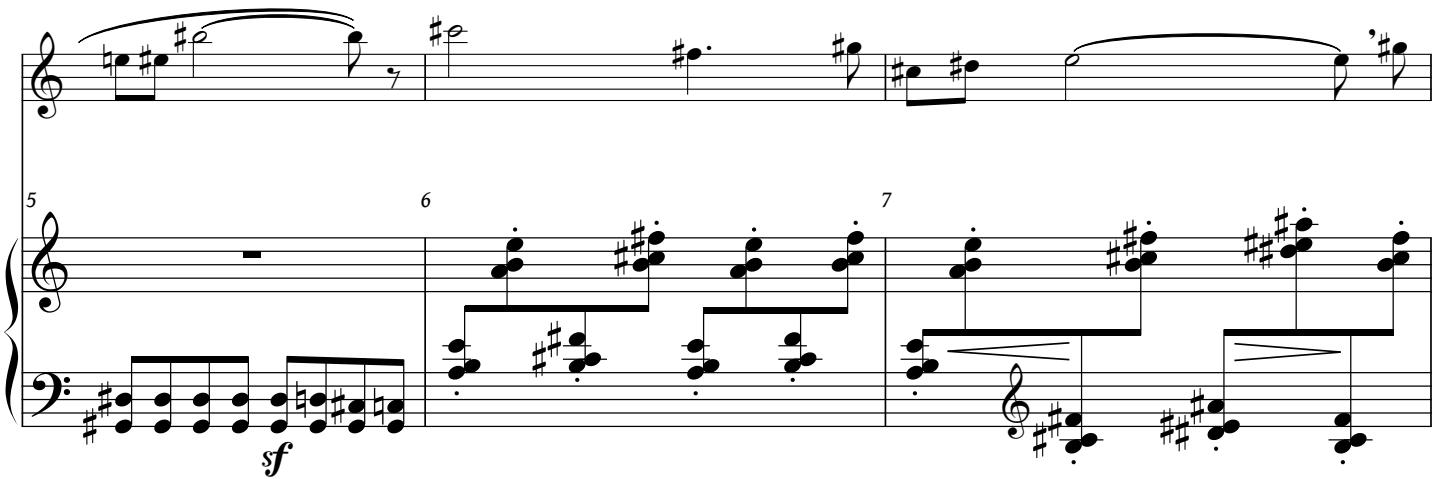
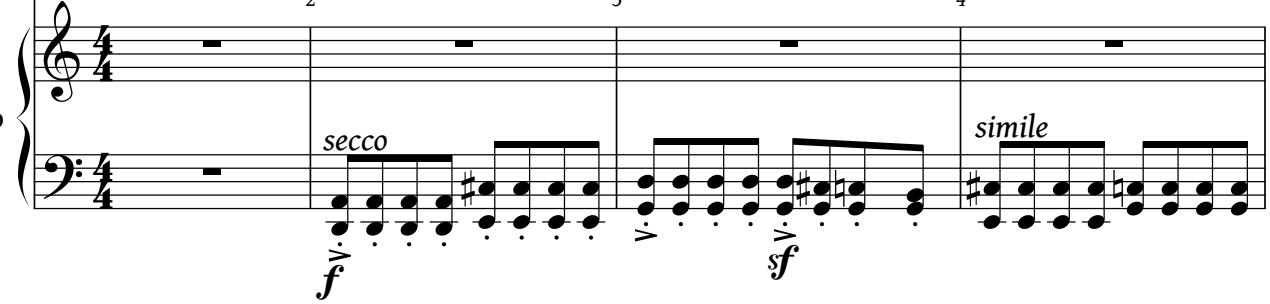
Opus 6

**I. Allegro Con Spirto**

Baritone Sax.



Piano



Notes

- Length: 12½ minutes
- Difficulty: medium-advanced
- Movements: 3

## 3

for Lynn Klock  
**Sonata**  
 for Baritone Saxophone and Piano

WALTER S. HARTLEY  
 1976

**I. Andante**  $\text{♩} = 66$

Baritone Sax.      Piano

5      6      7      8

**Solo**

## Notes

- Length: 11 minutes
- Difficulty: medium-advanced
- Movements: 3

## 4

to Roger Greenberg

**Sonata**  
for Baritone Saxophone & Piano

WILLIAM SCHMIDT

1.  $\text{♩} = 60$

Baritone Sax.

Piano

6

7

8

9

10

11

12

## Notes

- Length: 15 minutes
- Difficulty: medium
- Movements: 3

Commissioned by and dedicated to Ken Kistner

# Ritual and Celebration

5

JARED SPEARS  
(ASCAP)

**Slowly and mysteriously (♩=60)**

Baritone Sax.

Piano

1 2 3 4 5 6

7 8 9 10

**Freely**

7 8 9 10

Notes

- Length: 6 minutes
- Difficulty: medium-easy

for Linda Bangs  
**Sonatina**  
for Baritone Saxophone and Piano

JOHN C. WORLEY  
1978

**I. Allegro Moderato**  $\text{♩} = 96-100$

Baritone Sax.

Piano

Notes

- Length: 12 minutes
- Difficulty: medium-advanced
- Movements: 3

# Romance

for Baritone Saxophone in E $\flat$  and Piano

## CAESAR GIOVANNINI

**Freely, with much expression (♩=69)**

Baritone Sax. Piano

9 10 11 12 13

mp 3

mp 6 7 8

L.H. mp

Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped.

## Notes

- Difficulty: medium-easy

**Sonata**

for E♭ Baritone Saxophone &amp; Piano

RONALD L. CARAVAN

**I. Prologue: ♩=c. 76 *Espressivo***

Baritone Sax.

Piano

Notes

- Length: 13 minutes
- Difficulty: medium
- Movements: 4

Commissioned by and dedicated to Ashley Alexander

# Loyalton Place

9

JARED SPEARS  
(ASCAP)

**Allegro brillante (♩=132)**

Baritone Sax.      Piano

5      6      7

8      9      10      11

Notes

- Length: 6½ minutes
- Difficulty: medium-easy

10

# Concertino

for Baritone Saxophone and Orchestra

ROBERT NELSON

## I. Moderato - poco misterioso

Baritone Sax.

Piano

*p*

*l.h.*

14 15 16

17 18 19 20

Notes

- Length: 12 minutes
- Difficulty: medium-advanced
- Movements: 3

for Matthew Sexauer

11

**Fable**  
for E♭ Baritone Saxophone and Piano

JAN KRZYWICKI  
2000

**Freely, expressively** ♩=52

Baritone Sax.

Piano

**poco rit.**

Notes

- Length: 12 minutes
- Difficulty: medium-advanced

# Three Dances

for Baritone Saxophone and Piano

DAVID JEX

I. Quickstep-Romp  $\text{♩} = 88$

Baritone Sax.

Piano

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

Notes

- Length: 11 minutes
- Difficulty: medium
- Movements: 3

# 13

Dedicated to Mr. Lynn Klock  
Professor of Saxophone, University of Massachusetts at Amherst

## Fusion Suite

CATHERINE McMICHAEL

**Con moto**  $\text{♩} = 92$

Baritone Sax.

Piano

Notes

- Length: 12 minutes
- Difficulty: medium-advanced
- Movements: 3

## 14

to Kenneth Tse  
**Sonata**  
 for Baritone Saxophone and Piano

DAVID DeBOOR CANFIELD

I. **Tempo di Bolero**  $\text{J}=76$ 

(slap tongue, key clicks, or staccattissimo)

Baritone Sax.

Piano

Notes  
 • Length: 15 minutes  
 • Difficulty: advanced  
 • Movements: 3

Commissioned for Bonson Lee

15

**Vignettes**  
for Baritone Saxophone & Piano

BROOKE C. HERNDON  
(b. 1995)

**Lively**  $\text{♩} = 80$

Baritone Sax.

Piano

6 7 8

9 10 11 12

Notes

• Contains optional 8va passages

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