

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.¹ The repertoire that does exist is largely undiscovered, leaving music composed for the instrument underperformed and underappreciated in solo settings.² 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.³ 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).⁴ Thus, the earliest saxophones that Sax developed were the lowest-sounding members of the family (see Figure 1).⁵ Baritone saxophones were

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.

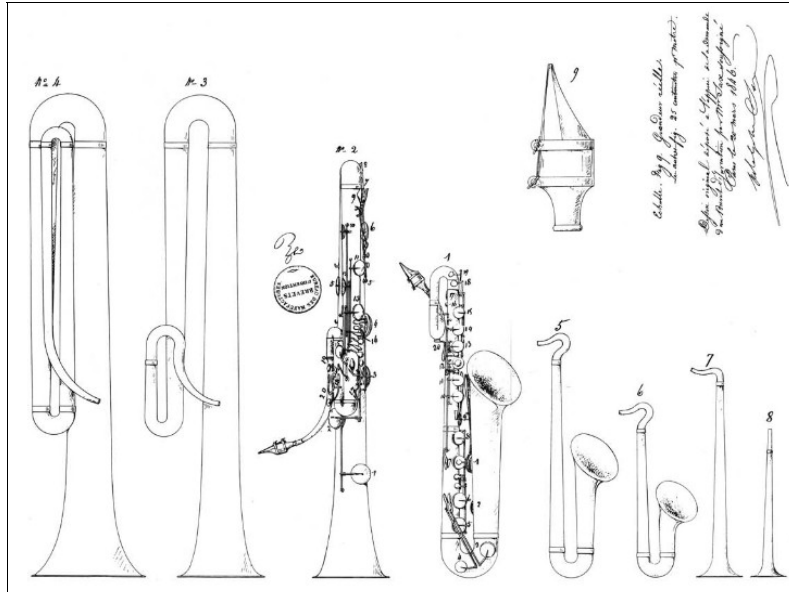


FIGURE 1. Sketches submitted as part of the 1846 saxophone patent. The bass and baritone instruments, shown in the center, bear the lowest numbers and the most complete illustrations of their keywork.

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.⁶ 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 \flat alto and sometimes C melody saxophones serving melodic roles. Most of these bands utilized a tuba, or sometimes a B \flat bass saxophone, as the lowest sounding instrument within the rhythm section. The Great Depression fueled the evolution and

⁶ 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.⁷ Gerry Mulligan followed soon after, making pioneering contributions as a baritone saxophonist, while commissioning and composing new works for the instrument.⁸

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.⁹ 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.¹⁰

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.

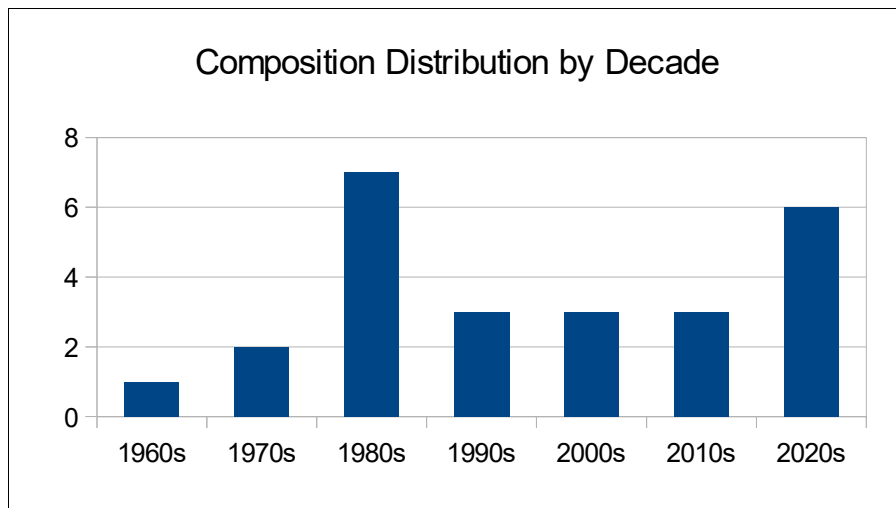


FIGURE 2. Chronological distribution of solo baritone saxophone works composed by Americans since the 1960s (counting all 25 works in this catalog's bibliography).

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^b 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

mp

mf

mp

p

mp

mf

mp

mf

f

mf

f

Notes

- Length: 4 minutes
- Difficulty: medium-easy

To Nick and Anita Brightman

Sonata

for Baritone Saxophone and Piano

GARLAND ANDERSON
Opus 6

I. Allegro Con Spirito

Baritone Sax.

Piano

f

2 3 4

secco

f

sf

simile

5 6 7

8 9

Notes

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

Sonata

for Baritone Saxophone and Piano

WALTER S. HARTLEY

1976

I. Andante ♩=66

Baritone Sax.

Piano

Solo

Notes

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

to Roger Greenberg
Sonata
for Baritone Saxophone & Piano

WILLIAM SCHMIDT

1. ♩=60

Baritone Sax. *ff*

Piano *ff*

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

JARED SPEARS
(ASCAP)

Slowly and mysteriously (♩=60)

Baritone Sax.

Piano

Measures 1-6: Baritone Saxophone and Piano. Dynamics: *p*, *mp*, *mf*, *dim.*, *pp*, *p*. Tempo: *Slowly and mysteriously* (♩=60). Performance markings: *sost.*, *Ped.*

Freely

Measures 7-10: Baritone Saxophone and Piano. Dynamics: *mf*, *p*, *mf*, *p*, *mf*, *p*, *mp*. Performance markings: *3*, *10*. A decorative asterisk (*) is placed below the piano part at measure 7.

Notes

- Length: 6 minutes
- Difficulty: medium-easy

for Linda Bangs
Sonatina
for Baritone Saxophone and Piano

JOHN C. WORLEY
1978

I. Allegro Moderato ♩=96-100

Baritone Sax.

Piano

The first system of the musical score is for the first movement, 'I. Allegro Moderato'. It is written for Baritone Saxophone and Piano in 2/4 time. The Baritone Saxophone part begins with a melodic line starting on a whole rest, followed by a series of eighth and sixteenth notes, with a mezzo-piano (mp) dynamic marking. The Piano part features a complex accompaniment with chords and moving lines in both the right and left hands, starting with a forte (f) dynamic and transitioning to mezzo-piano (mp). Measure numbers 1 through 5 are indicated above the piano part.

The second system of the musical score continues the first movement. The Baritone Saxophone part has a long, flowing melodic line with a slur over measures 6 through 9. The Piano part continues its accompaniment with chords and moving lines, with measure numbers 6 through 9 indicated above the right hand.

Notes

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

Romance

for Baritone Saxophone in E \flat and Piano

CAESAR GIOVANNINI

Freely, with much expression ($\text{♩}=69$)

Baritone Sax.

Piano

L.H.

mp

mp

6

7

8

3

Red.

9

10

11

12

13

mp

3

Red.

Notes

• Difficulty: medium-easy

For my students
Sonata
for E♭ Baritone Saxophone & Piano

RONALD L. CARAVAN

I. Prologue: ♩=c. 76 *Espressivo*

Baritone Sax.

p

Piano

mp

mp

mp

moving forward

tenuto

Notes

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

Loyalton Place

JARED SPEARS
(ASCAP)

Allegro brillante (♩=132)

Baritone Sax.

f *mf* *f*

Piano

mf

5 6 7

8 9 10 11

mf *f* *mf* *f*

mf *f*

Notes

- Length: 6½ minutes
- Difficulty: medium-easy

Concertino

for Baritone Saxophone and Orchestra

ROBERT NELSON

I. Moderato - poco misterioso

Baritone Sax.

p

Piano

p

l.h.

The first system of the musical score for 'Concertino' features a Baritone Saxophone and Piano. The Baritone Saxophone part is in the upper staff, starting with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). It begins with a half note G4, followed by a half note A4, and then a half note B4. The Piano part is in the lower staff, starting with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp. It begins with a half note G4, followed by a half note A4, and then a half note B4. The piano part includes a left-hand (l.h.) section with a bass clef and a key signature of one sharp, starting with a half note G3, followed by a half note A3, and then a half note B3. The piano part also includes a right-hand (r.h.) section with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp, starting with a half note G4, followed by a half note A4, and then a half note B4. The piano part includes a left-hand (l.h.) section with a bass clef and a key signature of one sharp, starting with a half note G3, followed by a half note A3, and then a half note B3. The piano part also includes a right-hand (r.h.) section with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp, starting with a half note G4, followed by a half note A4, and then a half note B4.

The second system of the musical score for 'Concertino' continues the Baritone Saxophone and Piano parts. The Baritone Saxophone part is in the upper staff, starting with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp. It begins with a half note G4, followed by a half note A4, and then a half note B4. The Piano part is in the lower staff, starting with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp. It begins with a half note G4, followed by a half note A4, and then a half note B4. The piano part includes a left-hand (l.h.) section with a bass clef and a key signature of one sharp, starting with a half note G3, followed by a half note A3, and then a half note B3. The piano part also includes a right-hand (r.h.) section with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp, starting with a half note G4, followed by a half note A4, and then a half note B4. The piano part includes a left-hand (l.h.) section with a bass clef and a key signature of one sharp, starting with a half note G3, followed by a half note A3, and then a half note B3. The piano part also includes a right-hand (r.h.) section with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp, starting with a half note G4, followed by a half note A4, and then a half note B4.

Notes

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

Fable

for E♭ Baritone Saxophone and Piano

JAN KRZYWICKI

2000

Freely, expressively ♩=52

Baritone Sax.

Piano

pp

pp

8va

8vb

pedal sempre

poco rit.

n

mp

n

mf

ppp

6 7 8 9 10

Notes

- Length: 12 minutes
- Difficulty: medium-advanced

Three Dances

for Baritone Saxophone and Piano

DAVID JEX

I. Quickstep-Romp ♩=88

Baritone Sax.

Piano

The musical score for 'I. Quickstep-Romp' is written for Baritone Saxophone and Piano. The tempo is marked as ♩=88. The score is divided into two systems. The first system contains measures 1 through 4. The Baritone Saxophone part (measures 1-4) starts with a rest, followed by a triplet of eighth notes (f), and then a series of eighth and sixteenth notes (mf). The Piano part (measures 1-4) features a melody in the right hand (mf, f) and a bass line in the left hand. The second system contains measures 5 through 8. The Baritone Saxophone part (measures 5-8) continues the melodic line. The Piano part (measures 5-8) features a bass line with slurs and rests.

Notes

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

Fusion Suite

CATHERINE McMICHAEL

Con moto $\text{♩} = 92$

Baritone Sax.

Piano

8va

8vb

5

6

7

8

Notes

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

Sonata

for Baritone Saxophone and Piano

DAVID DeBOOR CANFIELD

I. Tempo di Bolero ♩=76

(slap tongue, key clicks, or staccatissimo)

Baritone Sax. *ppp* possibile *pp*

Piano *ppp* possibile *pp*

4 *p* *mp* *pp* *p*

7 *pp* *mp* *pp*

Notes

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

Commissioned for Bonson Lee

Vignettes

for Baritone Saxophone & Piano

BROOKE C. HERNDON
(b. 1995)

Baritone Sax. **Lively** ♩ = 80

mp

Piano

mp

6 7 8

Red.

9 10 11 12

Notes

- Contains optional 8va passages

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