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Variations on a Theme by Ravel

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# Variations

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# VARIATIONS

## on a Theme by Ravel

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# Ravel

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# Theme by Ravel

For Solo  
Soprano Saxophone

**Ethan Dymit**  
**(ASCAP) (2024)**  
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## Program Notes

"Variations on a Theme by Ravel" is a piece for solo soprano saxophone, originally written for saxophonist Adib Young in early 2024. The titular theme is lifted from the opening bars of Maurice Ravel's String Quartet in F Major, which is a personal favorite piece of mine. The theme itself is quite ambiguous; while six out of seven notes of the F Major scale are present in the melody, the line never feels quite at home in F Major or in the relative minor. This ambiguous quality lent itself to the type of piece I was trying to write, allowing me to draw upon a wide variety of genres, styles, and techniques to get as much material out of a solo work as possible. In many cases, the theme is buried under layers of transformation and abstraction, and doesn't truly reveal itself until the final moments of the piece, where it is lifted verbatim from the original quartet.

This piece was completed in February of 2024. For any questions or professional inquiries, you can contact the composer at his email, [ethandymitrowicz@gmail.com](mailto:ethandymitrowicz@gmail.com).

## Performance Notes

This score is transposed.

Unless otherwise indicated by a final bar, each variation is *attaca*.

Breath marks can generally be interpreted as miniature caesuras.

"Variation 9: Sheets of Sound" is inspired by John Coltrane's conception of the same name. While this variation doesn't lift his approach exactly, the performer is advised to listen to Trane's playing as a potential stylistic model for performance.

"Variation 13: Hocket" uses a technique lifted from Thomas Giles alto saxophone adaptation of Meredith Monk's "Hocket," where the performer alternates between pitches played by the instrument and pitches sung by the performer. In this piece, sung notes are marked by "x" noteheads. The performer should sing these pitches in whatever octave is most comfortable for them.

**Duration: 10-11"**

# Variations on a Theme by Ravel

For Solo Soprano Saxophone

Ethan Dymit (ASCAP)

## Variation 1: Chromatic

Vague and Spacious ♩ = 90

Musical notation for Variation 1: Chromatic. The piece is in 4/4 time with a tempo of ♩ = 90. The notation consists of three staves. The first staff begins with a dynamic of *n* (pianissimo) and a hairpin crescendo leading to *ff* (fortissimo). The second staff features a triplet of eighth notes and a dynamic of *sub. p* (sub-piano). The third staff concludes with a dynamic of *pp* (pianissimo) and a hairpin crescendo leading to *p* (piano).

## Variation 2: Diatonic

Slightly Faster ♩ = 96

Rhythms can be approximate  
Strive to avoid a sense of pulse

Musical notation for Variation 2: Diatonic. The piece is in 4/4 time with a tempo of ♩ = 96. The notation consists of four staves. The first staff starts with a dynamic of *ff* (fortissimo) and a hairpin crescendo leading to *pp* (pianissimo). The second staff features a dynamic of *f* (forte) and a hairpin crescendo leading to *p* (piano). The third staff includes a dynamic of *ff* (fortissimo) and a hairpin crescendo leading to *p* (piano). The fourth staff concludes with a dynamic of *ff* (fortissimo) and a hairpin crescendo leading to *f* (forte).

### Variation 3: Pulsing

Percussive but sustained, marimba-esque ♩ = 120

Musical score for Variation 3: Pulsing, measures 1-12. The score is in 4/4 time with a tempo of ♩ = 120. It consists of four staves. The first two staves show a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes with dynamics *n* (piano) and *f* (forte) indicated by hairpins. The third staff continues the pattern with dynamics *n*, *f*, and *p* (piano), ending with a *cresc.* (crescendo) hairpin. The fourth staff features triplet eighth notes and concludes with a double bar line and a 3/8 time signature.

### Variation 4: Dance I

Playful and Energetic, ♩ = 90

Musical score for Variation 4: Dance I, measures 1-12. The score is in 3/8 time with a tempo of ♩ = 90. It consists of three staves. The first staff begins with a forte (*f*) dynamic and features eighth-note triplets with accents. The second staff includes the instruction "gentle and flowing, slightly rubato" and dynamics *p* (piano) and *mf p* (mezzo-forte piano). The third staff returns to a forte (*f*) dynamic with the instruction "Energetic again" and *sub. p* (subito piano). The piece concludes with a double bar line and a 4/4 time signature.

Variation 5: Set (0, 2, 5, 7)

Stately, regal (♩. = ♪, ♩ = 90)

The musical score consists of four staves of music in 4/4 time. The first staff begins with a *mf* dynamic and features a melodic line with slurs and accents. The second staff continues the melody with dynamics ranging from *f* to *p*. The third staff shows a dynamic shift from *pp* to *ff*. The fourth staff concludes the variation with a *mf* dynamic and ends with a double bar line. The score includes various musical notations such as slurs, accents, and dynamic markings.

Variation 6: Retrograde

Delicate ♩ = 100

Musical score for Variation 6: Retrograde, marked 'Delicate' with a tempo of ♩ = 100. The score is in 4/4 time and consists of four staves of music. The first staff begins with a *pp* dynamic and features a series of eighth-note chords. The second staff continues with a *p* dynamic and includes a triplet. The third staff features a *cresc.* marking and contains several triplet figures. The fourth staff concludes with a *ff* dynamic, a *sub. p* marking, and a final triplet figure. The piece ends at measure 16.

Variation 7: Pedal Point

Persistent ♩. = 110

Musical score for Variation 7: Pedal Point, marked 'Persistent' with a tempo of ♩. = 110. The score is in 12/16 time and consists of three staves of music. The first staff begins with a *fp* dynamic and features a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes. The second staff continues with a *p* dynamic and includes a *sfz* marking. The third staff concludes with a *f* dynamic, a *rit.* marking, and a final *f* dynamic. The piece ends at measure 4.

Variation 8: Set (0, 3, 5, 7, 8)

Tranquil ♩ = 90

*mp* *mp*

*p*

*pp* *mf* *p*

*f* *p*

Variation 9: Sheets of Sound

Aggressive, ♩ = 150 or as fast as possible

*ff* *pp*

*ff* *pp*

*cresc.*

*fff*



## Variation 10: Dance II

Playful and Energetic,  $\text{♩} = 90$ 

The musical score for Variation 10: Dance II is written in 3/8 time and consists of six staves of music. The piece is marked "Playful and Energetic" with a tempo of  $\text{♩} = 90$ . The dynamics range from *p* (piano) to *ff* (fortissimo). The music features a recurring triplet motif and various articulations such as accents and slurs.

Staff 1: *p* (piano). Features a triplet of eighth notes with an accent (^) and a slur. The first measure is followed by a quarter rest, then a dotted quarter note, and another triplet of eighth notes with an accent (^).

Staff 2: Continues the triplet motif with accents (^) and slurs. The first measure has a triplet of eighth notes with an accent (^), followed by a quarter note, another triplet of eighth notes with an accent (^), and a quarter note.

Staff 3: *mf* (mezzo-forte). Continues the triplet motif with accents (^) and slurs. The first measure has a triplet of eighth notes with an accent (^), followed by a quarter note, another triplet of eighth notes with an accent (^), and a quarter note.

Staff 4: *f* (forte) and *p* (piano). Features a quarter rest, a quarter note with an accent (^), a quarter rest, a quarter note with an accent (^), a quarter note with an accent (^), and a quarter note with an accent (^).

Staff 5: Continues the triplet motif with accents (^) and slurs. The first measure has a triplet of eighth notes with an accent (^), followed by a quarter note, another triplet of eighth notes with an accent (^), and a quarter note.

Staff 6: *f* (forte) and *ff* (fortissimo). Continues the triplet motif with accents (^) and slurs. The first measure has a triplet of eighth notes with an accent (^), followed by a quarter note, another triplet of eighth notes with an accent (^), and a quarter note. The piece concludes with a final triplet of eighth notes with an accent (^) and a fermata.

Variation 11: Dialogue/Argument

Wary, like walking on eggshells ♩ = 120

Variation 12: Bop

Up Swing ♩ = 200

### Variation 13: Hocket

Straight 8ths ♩ = 100 "x" noteheads indicate sung notes

Musical score for Variation 13: Hocket, measures 1-12. The score is written in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The tempo is marked as 'Straight 8ths ♩ = 100'. The time signature changes from 5/4 to 4/4. The dynamics are marked as *mp* (measures 1-2), *mf* (measures 3-6), and *sfz* (measures 7-12). The notation includes eighth notes, quarter notes, and half notes, with some notes marked with an accent (^) and 'x' noteheads indicating sung notes. An *accel.* marking is present above the final measure of the section.

### Variation 14: Set (0, 3, 5)

Nervous ♩ = 140

Musical score for Variation 14: Set (0, 3, 5), measures 1-12. The score is written in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The tempo is marked as 'Nervous ♩ = 140'. The dynamics are marked as *pp* (measures 1-2), *f* (measures 3-4), *p* (measure 5), *pp* (measures 6-7), *f* (measures 8-9), *p* (measure 10), and *pp* (measures 11-12). The notation includes eighth notes, quarter notes, and half notes, with some notes marked with an accent (^) and a triplet (3). An *accel.* marking is present above the final measure of the section, and a *cresc.* marking is present below the final measure. A tempo change to ♩ = 160 is indicated above the final measure, followed by a *rit.* marking.

### Variation 15: Abstract

Intensely Aggressive, Unstable ♩ = 90

*n*  $\curvearrowright$  *ff* *sub. p*  $\curvearrowleft$  *n*  $\curvearrowright$  *ff* *sub. p*  $\curvearrowleft$

*pp* *n*  $\curvearrowright$  *ff* *fp*  $\curvearrowleft$  *ppp*

*ff* *pp* *p* *n*  $\curvearrowright$  *ff*

*p*  $\curvearrowright$  *ff*  $\curvearrowleft$  *mf*

*ff*  $\curvearrowright$  *mf*  $\curvearrowleft$  *ff*  $\curvearrowright$  *ff*  $\curvearrowleft$

Go from bottom to very top of range  
(♩ = 130) as quickly as possible

*mf*  $\curvearrowright$  *ff* *pp*  $\curvearrowright$  *ff* *pp*  $\curvearrowright$  *ff*  $\curvearrowleft$

*pp*  $\curvearrowright$  *ff*  $\curvearrowleft$  *ppp*  $\curvearrowright$  *fff*

*molto rit.*

14

## Theme and Codetta

Majestic ♩ = 110

*f*

*p*

*f* *p*