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Imperfect Means

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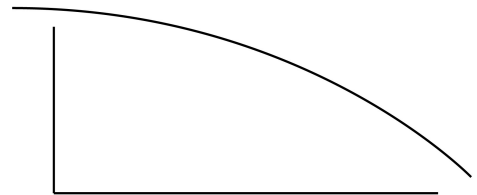
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Imperfect Means

for Alto Saxophone

Wilson Tanner Smith
March 2018



Note

This piece reflects back what you put into it;
Sincerity and presence, intention are paramount: within each moment (a moment can be quite long),
each sound (a sound can be quite rich), to find *all that* glowing.

This piece, at its best, is to cast an eye towards that Something Else, always close at hand.
Sincerity, lightness, presence, and allowing-to-be, in-itself.

This can be said in other words, other sounds
but aren't they all imperfect means, distilling

(remember it's the coming together)

The aim, always, is to make the experience of this piece as intimate as possible (within yourself,
for an audience)---draw *in* focus, close.

Hear it all(,) understood(,)
as peculiar perfections

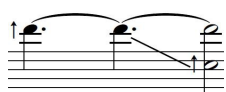
Imperfect Means is a study in the small and particular, and the much that lies in what seemed ordinary.
The beauty to be found within shadings of "imperfection" requires sensitive focus towards the small
embouchure manipulations of delicate multiphonic sounds, and the subtle timbral nuances discovered
in repeated, slow-moving intervallic-melodic material. It is slow, quiet, close music.

Written for Brandon Quarles and premiered 10 March 2018 at the North American Saxophone
Alliance Conference at University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music in Cincinnati, OH.

Performance Notes

- The bracketed section on page 1 of the piece should be played as an open field of the material on the left side of the slash mark (the main motivic material of the page). The two figures should not simply alternate one to the other, but should be played in a non-patterned manner. This section should be roughly 3' long.
- Material on the right side of the large slash should be interspersed into the "main" material at performer's wish, but should not be repeated more than is specified next to each staff.
- Performer should venture to find and bring out the many different iterations, inflections, and other small elements of the broader resulting sound. Alternate fingerings (and accompanying pitch variations) should be used sparingly, or at the very least remain in a close range to the original pitches---too much variation (for example, beginning to hear a melody/arc in microtonal inflections over course of piece) draws focus away from the much that is already vibrating in this seemingly simple material.
- The entirety of the piece is to be played without vibrato.
- Duration of piece should be roughly 8'-11'

Multiphonic sounds:



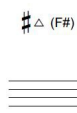
A solid line connecting a single high pitch to a lower one over the course of a given note signifies to enter on the given single note, and gradually fill in the lower note approximately over the course of the given rhythm.



Multiphonics with a small, normal-shaped note head on the lower end should be played with the top note sounding much more strongly than the bottom (think roughly 80% over 20%).



Multiphonics notated with a very small empty dotted notehead should be played with the bottom note just barely present (roughly 95% over 5%). It is expected that these balances are only estimates and fluctuations will occur, but try to play as smoothly as possible



Indeterminate extremely high pitch played with teeth on the reed. Parenthetical note is to be taken as a target, but needs not be precisely produced.

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Very slowly, flexible time (♩ ca. 60-63, but)
feel a bit of stickiness between pitches,
and some extra weight in 1st pitch

pp

pp

pp

*patiently, presently;
with no need;
finding much in little...*

written note values become rough approximations

sim.

*...continue shaping the figure
in this way...*

*...each thing its
needed
resonance and
weight
...*

ca. 3' ... more, or less

play in this for some time; patient and present
repeat leaping figures ad lib., not strictly alternating;
try not to make it a pattern, simply stay in the instant,
and change figures as you see fit.

*...grow roots out of feet,
not stiff or unbending.
bendableunbendable...*

raspy semi-pitched air sound (emb. leak)
play as if it's "revealed" through pitch dim.

*play as if the same music is
still going on, or as an equally earnest attempt at it is
no more than ca. 3 times in this piece*

ca. 3x

sticky; goopy fluidity between triplet

1x, towards end of section

betraying a familiarity with the floor, gravity

with impending change, but not an obvious one

p

p

*cresc./dim. like something
very large
and very dull-dim
breathing*

*sticky; pulling/pulled
downwards*

p
pp
thin, focused; small thing

p
very slightly fuller

pp
pp
thin (tension)

p(release)
p-pp full
...inevitably downwards

take time; very gradual cresc.
mf *pp*

teeth on reed as needed
imperfections in sound are welcome
(it's the trying and still sounding that defines it)

very small sound
to as small as possible

indeterminate high, indeterminate long
#Δ (F#)
dim. as if it's still going, we just can't hear it

(small as possible)