

Master Lesson: *Sonata* by Lawson Lunde

by
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One of the most versatile pieces of repertoire is the *Sonata for Alto Saxophone and Piano* (1959) by Lawson Lunde. Like the *Sonata* by Paul Creston, this work has a decidedly American quality and is filled with energy, lovely melodies, and some jazz harmonies. Lunde's *Sonata* is a work of medium-difficulty, which can be played by performers ranging from high school student to professional, and which is well received by most audiences. Below are some suggestions and corrections that may help those who study this interesting work.

Movement I

The tempo of this movement, although marked quarter note = 144-152, works best if performed between 132-144, primarily due to the challenges in the piano part. This *Allegro* should be lively, but never hectic. The first few measures serve as a fanfare to present the movement, which begins in earnest in measure 4. Play the opening with an accented and separated style; much like a trumpeter might play it. Notice that rehearsal letter D is marked *legato*, which would indicate that the section from the beginning up to D should be more bouncy. Care must be taken to perform the quintuplet pattern in measure 2 correctly. Most people perform this figure as a group of eighth-note triplets on beats 1 and 2, with two additional eighth notes on beat 3, which is incorrect. I suggest that players conduct a 3/4 pattern while counting 1-2-3-4-5 evenly. Once this is mastered, use the syllable *Ta* to say the quintuple pattern and then eventually play it along with a metronome. This figure occurs again in measures 106 and 163, so it is important to learn it correctly.

Creative use of the articulated G# mechanism is required in measures 73 and 74. Refer to the Example #1 below for suggested fingerings. Similar alternates are suggested in Example #2 for the patterns at rehearsal letter K.

Throughout the *Sonata* Lunde makes use of the abbreviations *cresc.* and *dim.* to indicate dynamic changes. Many players miss these frequent changes, so I suggest that the dynamics be drawn in as a reminder. Measure 65, combining low notes and staccato articulations, is problematic. Be sure to keep the style bouncy and to perform the staccato quarter notes in measure 66 like long eighths, not short sixteenth notes. Notice the articulation of the eighth notes beginning at rehearsal letter G. The second eighth is marked staccato, indicating a slur to the second note, with an abrupt air release to create a lift. The lower note is not tongued, as many players perform it.

Measures 8, 14, and 98 should all be performed the same, regardless of differences in notation. Beat three should be slightly shortened to create a lifted effect to sustain the light and lively style. The *glissandi* in measure 152 are to be chromatic and played quickly, like grace-note pick-ups to the following beat. Remember to perform the *glissando* from beat four into measure 153, which is often ignored by many players. The exciting conclusion to the movement is most effective if the *subito p* is observed in measure 160 with no crescendo leading up to the *subito ff* in measure 161.

Movement II

I often describe Movement II as "Sacred Jazz." The opening theme, played by the pianist, has a decidedly church-like quality, yet contains some subtle jazz harmonies. The movement's mood is generally relaxed and peaceful, with more energy and anxiety added at the *agitato* section found at

letter C. The saxophonist plays this melody for the first time starting at measure 51, so be sure to impart the mood.

One of the first difficulties for the saxophonist is the opening notes of the movement. Beginning on the low D at a *pp* dynamic is challenging, so set the embouchure, air, tongue, and fingers properly, and perform the passage only as softly as you can confidently play it.

The second movement is filled with several intonation problems, especially passages that end quietly on a high A. To keep the pitch low, I suggest saxophonists add the second finger of the right hand (the F# key) to bring this pitch down. Of particular importance are the high A in measures 30-31, 46, 50, and 64. Use a palm key fingering (the palm Eb alone works well) for the last note of the movement. Experiment with variations on this fingerings (possibly adding the first or second finger of the left hand) to find the best sounding and best intonation fingering on your instrument. I suggest you begin the last note in measure 65 at *p* and fade to a *ppp* or else the piano part will cover the saxophone.

Movement III

Excitement is the mood established by the opening measures of Movement III. Be sure to observe the unique dynamic changes in the opening measures, which will greatly add to the sense of excitement and mystery. This movement is filled with many, quickly-changing dynamic extremes, so pay careful attention to perform them properly. I interpret the dotted slur-line in measure 3 (and in other places throughout the movement) to mean the performer can slur either two beats or one beat as he/she chooses.

The meter transition between measures 68 and 69 can be particularly tricky. Be sure to count eighth notes in measure 68 to make the shift to 6/8 work smoothly (the eighth-note pulse stays constant). Perform the duplet quarter notes in measures 71 and 72 like two eighth notes in 2/4 meter. It is critical that these are even and separated, so that they will allow the clever duplet versus triplet feel between the two voices. Make sure to observe the *subito p* dynamic at measure 71 and the following *crescendo molto* that leads to measure 73.

Although there are several articulation corrections listed for this movement, the pattern notated at rehearsal letter E is correct. The two sixteenth notes should be tongued to give an energetic, trumpet-like sound to the section. Pay attention to the dialogue between the saxophone and piano at rehearsal letter F. The original melody is now divided between the two voices, so balance the parts to make this sound like one, continuous voice.

The Corrections table below indicates the articulation errors found in the last two measures. I suggest the high F in measure 137 be played with the front fingering and articulated with an air attack. Play the last note *ff* and with an accent, as if it were the downbeat to a measure, rather than a weaker third beat.

Lawson Lunde's *Sonata* is a refreshing and varied-style composition, which is well worth investigating. Consider this work when looking for a piece with an American flavor to add to your next recital.

CORRECTIONS

Movement I

m. 20 & m. 122	Last two eighths should slur to dotted eighth in following measure
m. 31	The slur over beats 1 & 2 is faint; it should go across both beats
m. 39	The second and third notes should be separated; no slur
m. 55-60 & 150-151	The staccato marks should be on the first and <u>last</u> notes of the four eighth-note groups, not first and second
m. 89	The slur is missing over the last two eighth notes
m. 119	The slur on beats 2 & 3 is faint; it should go across both beats

Movement II

m. 23	The 7 th note is an A, not a G; the ledger line is missing
m. 26	A breath mark is missing from the piano part – this indicates a slight break needed to shape the sectional phrase
m. 60	Add a decrescendo to take the dynamic from <i>mp</i> to <i>pp</i> by m. 61

Movement II

m. 5	Add a crescendo on last two sixteenth notes to prepare <i>mf</i> in m. 6
m. 23	Add a half rest at the beginning of the measure (omitted)
m. 32-37, 43, 136-137	The two sixteenth notes should be consistently <u>slurred</u> to the following eighth note (m. 136-137, be sure to articulate the second eighth on beat 3)
m. 48	Add <i>dim. molto</i> to the saxophone part under beat 3
m. 82	The sixteenth rest in beat 3 should be an eighth rest
m. 84	Add a <i>poco crescendo</i> to better achieve the <i>ff</i> in m. 86

Example #1

(m. 73) LBb----- LC#-----

p fx fx *cresc.* fx

Example #2

(m. 146) (m. 148)

Reg. SC Reg. (*simile*) fx fx