

William Albright's Sonata for Alto Saxophone and Piano:

A Study in Stylistic Contrast

by

Kirk O'Riordan

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# William Albright's Sonata for Alto Saxophone and Piano: A Study in Stylistic Contrast

## Introduction

William Albright's Sonata for Alto Saxophone and Piano, composed in 1984, has become one of the most frequently performed pieces in the saxophone repertoire. It is a work which is equally comfortable with diverse compositional styles such as minimalism, set constructions, free atonality, and be-bop; it is capable of both elegiac lyricism and brutal force; and it is capable of shifting back and forth between these styles instantaneously, much like the instruments for which it is composed.

The work was composed for a consortium of three saxophone and piano duos: Donald Sinta and Ellen Weckler; Laura Hunter and Brian Connelly; and Joseph Wytko and Walter Cosand. There were two other pieces composed for this consortium: David Diamond's Sonata for Alto Saxophone and Piano, and William Bolcoln's *Lilith*, also for Alto Saxophone and Piano. Funding for the commission was provided by a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts. Albright's work is in four movements, and at over twenty minutes in length, it is one of the largest pieces in the saxophone's repertoire.

William Albright was born on October 10, 1944 in Gary, Indiana. At the age of 15 he began studies at the Julliard Preparatory Institute, and continued his studies with Ross Lee Finney and Leslie Bassett at the University of Michigan. In 1968 he studied with Olivier Messiaen at the Paris Conservatory. Two years later he accepted a professorship at his alma mater, where he taught composition and was associate director of the school's electronic music studio until his death on September 17, 1998.

Albright gained international recognition as a pianist, organist, and as a composer. During his career he commissioned many works for organ, increasing the repertoire for that instrument tremendously. His own works for organ are also frequently performed. As a pianist, he is known primarily for his revival of ragtime in association with William Bolcolm, his colleague at the University of Michigan. Albright recorded Joplin's complete works, and composed many pieces in that style.

His works are notable for an eclecticism of stylistic influence, from the aforementioned ragtime to the avante garde. His early organ works show a distinct Messiaen influence, and his later works rely "on the premise of the supremacy of intuition, imagination, and beauty of sound, often with an exuberant humor and improvisatory spirit."<sup>1</sup> These later works combine complex rhythmic and atonal constructions with elements of jazz, ragtime, minimalism, and non-Western musics.<sup>2</sup>

## Synopsis

The Sonata is in four movements. The first, titled "Two-Part Invention," alternates between a strictly-controlled quasi-atonal Bachian invention, improvisatory cadenzas, and minimalistic passages. The second, "La follia nuova: a lament for George Cacioppo," is based on a chaconne which is reminiscent of the minimalistic passages in the first movement. The third movement, "Scherzo 'Will o' the wisp," is through-composed. The opening motive serves as the basis for the movement: a fast, highly

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<sup>1</sup> Gillespie, Don. C. "William Albright". *The New Groves Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed.vol. 1. Ed. By Stanley Sadie.

<sup>2</sup> For more information, see the articles on Albright in the *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, and the *Baker's Biographical Dictionary of Musicians*, 8th ed.

chromatic and very quiet (the entire movement--with the exception of a few beats--is marked *pianissimo*) three-beat phrase which is expanded in length and in pitch range over the course of the movement. The fourth, "Recitative and Dance," begins with a long cadenza for the saxophone. The Dance begins with a repeated minor-third motive in a very aggressive style, which alternates with a be-bop (composed) improvisation. The end of the movement is announced by a restatement of the large arpeggios which end the Recitative.

The Sonata for Alto Saxophone and Piano is a monumental work in a repertoire which, though continually growing, is still seen by many critics as needing more substantive works. It is standard fare for graduate-level saxophonists, and the top undergraduate players are beginning to approach the work. Its length, technical requirements, and interpretive issues provide continued challenges for multiple performances and its variety of styles and virtuosic displays reach audiences: it has become a successful work on many levels.

## Analysis

### I. Two-Part Invention

The first two movements of this sonata allude to baroque forms. The opening movement, Two-Part Invention, makes reference to J.S. Bach's Inventions; however, though the movement is contrapuntal in nature, the form, contrapuntal devices, and language bear only modest resemblance to J.S. Bach's works.

A typical Bach Invention might be structured in the following manner: A well-defined subject, paired with a countersubject presented in both tonic and dominant keys.

This exposition would be followed by an episode of motivic-based material, one or more returns to the subject in related keys, eventually moving toward the dominant key, and finally a restatement of the subject and countersubject in the tonic key. The two “parts” are easily distinguished as right and left hand on the keyboard. With this Sonata, however, Albright blurs these characteristics, particularly with regard to differentiation of the two parts. How he treats the separation of the parts becomes the basis of form: subject, episode, or free material. Albright does this by creating degrees of unity between the voices: either the voices are very closely unified (Subject/Countersubject), completely unified (Episode), or they are wildly separate (Free Material). These sections are summarized in the chart below:

	Section	MM.#	Unity	Comments
A	S/CS  (Subject/ Counter- Subject)	1-44	Loose	In this and similar sections, the saxophone and piano parts align frequently, and there is a common sense of meter. The motivic gestures are developed, and often hocketed between the two parts. The result is a complex composite melody which does not easily allow the ear to separate one voice from another. This is observed most dramatically in the first 11 measures of the movement.
B	Free	45 (ca. 8-9 mm.s in length)	Not Unified	These sections are marked in the score as “Cadenza, ad lib.” Though imitative, the rhythmic unity that was evident in the main sections is not there: the saxophone and piano act independently, playing similar motives but against the ostinato in the bass. The bass voice acts as voice one, while the saxophone and the treble-clef line of the piano part act as the second voice. As the section is unmetred, it is counted as one measure. However, these sections occupy approximately the same amount of time as 8-9 measures.
A	S/CS	46-49	Loose	This return to subject material is climactic in nature, and provides a strong foil for the material that follows.
C	Episode	50-57	High	The widely disjunct leaps of the Subject material are contrasted by this very smooth quasi-minimalist style. Here, the saxophone and piano are perfectly aligned rhythmically and harmonically.
A	S/CS	58-65	Loose	This brief return to the subject reintroduces the melodic motives to be used in the following section.
B	Free	66 (ca. 5 mm.s)	Not Unified	Unlike the last cadenza, this section separates piano from saxophone: the saxophone voice uses the chromatic downward scale segment as its primary motive exclusively until the piano (right hand) joins at rehearsal <b>M</b> (one system after mm. 67).
A	Free Trans.	67-68	Loose	As in measures 46-69, this subject is used to contrast the following Episode material.
C	Episode	69-92	High	This second Episode is longer and more developed, but the two parts are precisely unified.
B	Free	93-end (ca. 10 mm.s)	Not Unified	This is the final climactic gesture of the movement. The downward scale material used in the Episodes is continued in this section in the bass. As before (earlier B sections), saxophone and piano do not coexist in the same meter. The subject motives in the saxophone line are expanded with regard to range: here are found the largest (and possibly the most expressive) melodic leaps in the piece.

There are three primary melodic motives in the movement which correspond to the three sections detailed above. The first of these is introduced at the opening of the movement. Marked “molto intesno, a la fanfara (bell-like),” this motive is comprised almost entirely of three pitches, A4, F-sharp 5, and C4.<sup>3</sup>

Opening, mm. 1-14



Additional pitches, such as the C4 and G5 shown above, are introduced as the motive progresses. The final composite of pitches used in the opening 44 measures is a chromatic scale segment spanning a tritone:



Neighbor tones added to the motive. The motive pitches are clear noteheads. The neighbor tones are shown in the order in which they are added: octave equivalentents are reduced.

The Bb (\*\*\*) listed above is found in the interruptions which foreshadow in measures 5, 12, and 18 the melodic material used in the cadenzas. This material is based on the descending chromatic scale segment first heard in its entirety in the cadenza at measure 45:

Cadenza, m. 45



but the third, and especially so in the second. This gesture is first hinted at in the initial interruption at measure six, and expanded in each subsequent interruption until the first cadenza (measure 45). The motive appears in several guises, but it is most dramatically elongated in the final cadenza (measure 94), where the bass descends chromatically from E2 to D-flat 1. At this point, the bass line continues in the same tempo as the previous Episode material, which, as will be demonstrated below, also has a descending chromatic component to its construction. Thus a sense of continuous downward motion begins in measure 70 and ends *in medias res*: the motion could continue indefinitely, descending ever further into oblivion. The end of the passage is unexpected and unnerving, and can be attributed (see Stolte) to the unexpected end of George Cacioppo's life.<sup>4</sup>

The third motive is the Episode material which first appears at measure 50. This material is, like the motive above, based on chromatic descent. However, one important difference distinguishes this motive from the former: the saxophone and piano here are one voice, completely rhythmically united, whereas before, the saxophone and piano are rhythmically independent but related by the use of common motivic material. The nature of the chromaticism found in the first Episode (measures 50-57) is given below:

Episode, mm. 50-57 (reduction)

The image shows a musical score for two instruments: Saxophone and Piano. The title is "Episode, mm. 50-57 (reduction)". The Saxophone part is written on a single staff in treble clef, showing a chromatic descent of a half note: G4, F#4, F4, E4, D4. The Piano part is written on a single staff in treble clef, showing a series of chords that follow the same chromatic descent: G major, F# major, F major, E major, D major. The piano part uses a block chord style with a consistent rhythmic pattern.

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<sup>4</sup> For more information on this interpretation, see Stolte, Charles Bruce. *Genre and Context in William Albright's Sonata for Alto Saxophone and Piano and Christian Lauba's Hard*. D.Mus. Dissertation, Northwestern University, 2002.

Each voice is involved in a process of descent, and each voice descends at a different rate (the G-sharp 4 is missing from the saxophone part, but is present in the piano). This material is very similar to the chaconne progression found in the second movement, and is meant to serve as a foreshadowing of that material. In this way, the first two movements are linked together. The widespread usage of chromatic step-wise descent (measure 94, et al) solidifies the link between the two opening movements. Charles Stolte describes several other connections between these two movements. First, both movements are structured on Baroque forms: the Invention and the Chaconne respectively (and liberties are taken with both forms). Secondly, and perhaps more subject to interpretation, is the usage of bell effects in both movements. The opening of the first movement (marked “bell-like”) announces, according to Stolte, the opening of the struggle with death, and the bell chords at the end of the second movement represent the end of that struggle, the funeral.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Stolte, p. 128. To finish the metaphor, Stolte asserts that the third movement represents the spirit’s ascent, and the fourth represents a sort of coming to terms with time and immortality by reconciling the baroque forms with modern musical practice, specifically jazz. The descending chromatic scale segments so important to the structure of the first two movements are all but nonexistent in the final two movements.

## II. La follia nuova: a lament for George Cacioppo

In his program notes, Albright restricts his comments to this movement:

Of all of the movements, the second perhaps most deserves comment. This movement is dedicated to the memory of the composer George Cacioppo who died unexpectedly on April 8, 1984. Co-founder of the ONCE group and mentor to two generations of composers, Cacioppo and his music and personality rest at the foundation of my thinking. He would have very much appreciated the use of the traditional title “La follia” (the madness) in my reincarnation as “La follia nuova.” Like its Baroque antecedents, the movement is in a chaconne-variation form, although at one point the sections jumble together, or intersect. The fact that the key is F-sharp minor may be important, or it may not be.<sup>6</sup>

The second movement is the most traditionally organized of the four movements. It is, as Albright states in his notes, in Chaconne-Variation form: there are 24 statements of the four-measure chaconne theme which is identified by the meter signature pattern of 4/4, 3/4, 2/4, and 5/8. The “point the sections jumble together, or intersect” that Albright describes in the notes occurs in statements 15 and 16 (mm. 57-64). Here, statement 15 is divided in half: statement 16 (a complete statement) begins in mm. 59 and 15 is concluded beginning in mm. 63. This is a significant point in the movement in that it alternates between the two primary styles (free-atonal and quasi-Baroque) in the movement, and further emphasizes the differences between the two styles by interrupting the quasi-Baroque style for a brief return to atonality.

The 24 statements can be divided into four sections which form an A-B-A'-Coda structure. The A section (statements 1-11, ending in mm. 44) can further be divided into two sections A<sup>1</sup> (statements 1-4: mm. 1-16) and A<sup>2</sup> beginning with statement 5 (mm. 17-44). These two subsections are marked by the appearance in the saxophone of an upward

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<sup>6</sup> Albright, William. Notes to *Sonata for Alto Saxophone and Piano* (1984). New York: C.F. Peters, 1990.

scale motive which takes on more significance as the movement unfolds. The B section (statements 12-14: mm. 45-56) is characterized by a sudden shift into a free atonal style which retains little of the chaconne melody but its meter signature pattern. The chaconne melody returns to begin the A' section in the first half of statement 15 (mm. 57), and ends at the grand pause after statement 20 (the grand pause is measure 81). The coda follows, ending the piece with bell-like chords derived from the B section.

In general, form is determined by the presence or lack thereof of chaconne melodic material. The chaconne bass is the descending progression shown below:

Ex. 1: Chaconne Bass, statement 1 (mm. 1-4)

Other elements of the chaconne are an F-sharp pedal (first introduced in mm. 13 in the saxophone part), and the scale motives. The scale motives appear in ascending and descending forms: the descending form is evident in the lower voice of the chaconne bass shown above in example 1; the ascending form is first introduced in mm. 20 in the saxophone. The A sections and Coda have at least one of these elements active at any given time. The B section, as noted earlier, is labeled as such because of the lack of these elements, and the change from the tonal style to the atonal style.

Certain statements of the chaconne melody are linked in groups of two or three, forming larger units and breaking up the monotony of repeated four-bar units: this happens in much the same way as in J.S. Bach's Passacaglia and Fugue in C Minor as

well as the fourth movement of Brahms's Fourth Symphony. Statements 9 and 10 are linked by descending scale (related to the chaconne bass and in free augmentation) which begins on F-sharp 1 (mm. 32) and ends on B0 (ending in mm. 40.) The A section statements are linked by a sense of four-measure phrases; however, in the B section this largely abandoned in favor of shorter gestures which are not restricted by the confines of the meter signature pattern established by the chaconne. The lyric melody (in the saxophone line) in statement 7 reaches its climax (the C-sharp 5 mentioned earlier) at the beginning of statement 8, and the next two statements are used to step downward by octave (C-sharp 4 in statement 9, C-sharp 3 in statement 10). In addition, several phrases are elided: in statement 6, the ascending scale motive begins in the last measure of statement 5. Thus, like Brahms, Albright achieves variety in phrase structure within the limitations of a strict four-measure structure.

Of the melodic motives used in the movement, the scale motives are perhaps most interesting. The first of these, the descending scale, is introduced as the bass line of the chaconne (see above). This motive appears in several forms. In measure 17, the chaconne bass is transposed an octave lower than its opening register: from F-sharp 4 to F-sharp 3. This happens again at measure 25, as the register drops to F-sharp 2, and by measure 30, F-sharp 1. The descent continues in scalar motion (there are no more F-sharp's on the keyboard) using a freely-augmented version of the chaconne bass: this process occurs over statements 8, 9, and 10, and ends on B0 in measure 40. This general descent, based on the tonic F-sharp, is echoed in statements 8-10 on the dominant pitch five-and-a-half octaves higher in the saxophone. The saxophone line leaps downward by octave over this

span, from C-sharp 6 to C-sharp 4 by measure 37. Each of these downward leaps is preceded by a whole-step echo of the chaconne bass, as in measure 32:



Thus, the descending scale motive completely saturates the movement. It is responsible, along with the implied (or expressly stated) minor dominant harmonies, for the overall mood and character of the movement: its lamenting qualities. Anywhere the chaconne bass is present, this motive is, and large-scale examples of it reinforce the perpetual sense of melodic descent brought on by the movement.

The descent is partially balanced by an ascending scale motive, which is first introduced in the saxophone line at measure 20. These scale fragments begin on F-sharp 4, and initiate a general ascent toward the C-sharp 6 which begins statement 8. The upward motion is constantly interrupted throughout statement 6: it is almost as if the large-scale descent that is occurring beneath this motive is preventing the ascent from taking place. Ultimately the saxophone reaches C-sharp 6 in measure 29 (via an ascending scale fragment), at this point is the largest span of register in the movement. During this ascent (statement 7) the piano echoes the saxophone's statement 6 scale fragments, though this time buried in a thicker texture. At measure 41, the ascending scale motive is presented in its most passionate form. The chaconne bass moves up three octaves to F-sharp 3, and above it the saxophone and piano (right hand) present the scale figure from statement 6 in constant 32<sup>nd</sup> notes. As before, the upward motion is interrupted, and the final three notes (and first of measure 45)--B, A, G-sharp, and F-

sharp -- restate, at the subdominant level, the chaconne bass. The ascending motive appears again as a last fading gesture in measures 73-80 (most prominently in mm. 77-80, where this is the only event occurring).

The general pervasiveness of the descending scale motive as well as its conflicts with the ascending scale motive has programmatic significance. That the movement is a lament for the death of Albright's close friend and colleague allows one to equate the general descent of pitch in the movement with life's general descent toward death and the lowering of one's body into the grave (this is of course very similar to Purcell's famous Lament from *Dido and Aeneas*). Despite one's aspirations toward spiritual enlightenment or the hope that one's soul will ascend toward Heaven (illustrated with the ascending scale motive), this process of ascension is continually interrupted, and proves subordinate to the descent into death.<sup>7</sup>

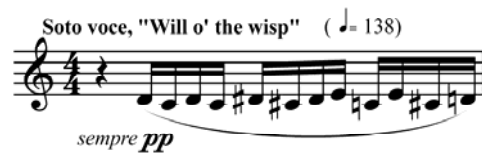
The contrasting material, beginning in statement 12 (mm. 45-56) retains little of the chaconne structure except the number of eighth-notes in each measure. The tonality of the chaconne is replaced here by a fully chromatic atonality, which features chromatic dyads ( [0,1] ) as the primary melodic units. Bell-like chords are present in statements 12, and 15a (the interrupted portion) which foreshadow the "funeral bells" at the end of the coda.

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<sup>7</sup> For more on this interpretation, please see Stolte, pp. 158-188.

### III. Scherzo: "Will o' the wisp"

If the second movement represents, as Stolte proposes, the descent into the grave, then the Scherzo represents the ascent into a spirit. The texture of this movement is extremely thin: one ghost-like breath of a gesture after another. Essentially through-composed, the movement is based on the opening motive:



Phrase

1. m. 1 5

2. m. 20 30 32

3. m. 33 37

4. m. 38 42 45 51 53 54

5. m. 59 61 63

In addition to the general ascent of the saxophone line, each phrase represents an increase in span from lowest pitch to highest. This is particularly evident in phrases 2-4: Phrase 2 spans an octave and a sixth; Phrase 3 just under two octaves; Phrase 4 spans almost three octaves. When taken together, Phrases 1 and 2 span almost two octaves.

This process is obscured by the piano. The piano line often surrounds the saxophone in terms of register: in measure 11, the piano is both three octaves higher and lower than the saxophone passage in measure 10. There are a few unison segments (mm. 33-35), but for most of the movement the registration of the piano masks the ascent of the saxophone. Just as in the second movement, there are small instances of motion contrary to the general trajectory, and in this way this ascent balances the general descent in the second movement.

## IV. Recitative and Dance

### A. Recitative

The Recitative, for saxophone alone, presents an entirely new melodic statement: melody which has not been heard, or, for that matter, hinted at anywhere in the preceding three movements. It is in seven<sup>9</sup> phrases, as shown in the graph below:

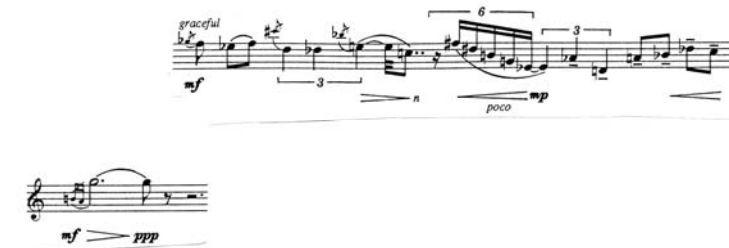
Phrase A Beginning to first eighth-rest



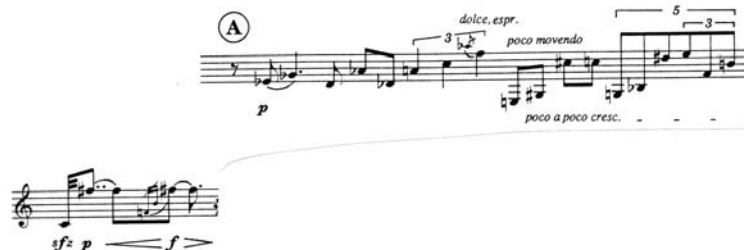
B Ends at second system, first eighth-rest



C Ends at the rests before rehearsal A



D Beginning at rehearsal A to fourth system, first sixteenth-rest

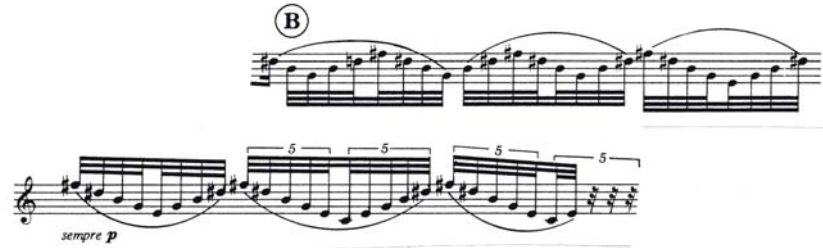


<sup>9</sup> This number is open to interpretation, but I will (with the exception of phrase F--which is identified by the rehearsal letter **B**) use significant rests as the boundaries between phrases.

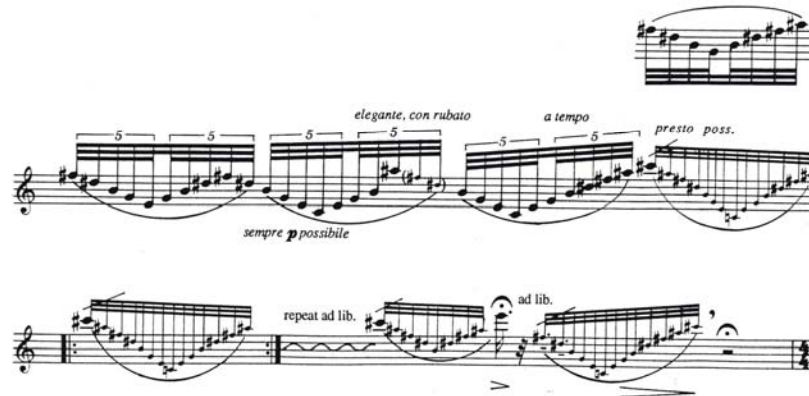
E Ends after the dotted-eighth F-sharp 5



F Ends at the three 32<sup>nd</sup>-rests (quintuplet)



G Ends at the half-rest with fermata (end of Recitative)



The full score for the Recitative is shown below:

Semplice ma con rubato (♩ = 56)

The musical score consists of several staves of music. The first staff is marked *mp*. The second staff is marked *mf* and includes the instruction *graceful*. The third staff is marked *p* and includes *dolce, espr.* and *poco movendo*. The fourth staff is marked *sfz p* and *f*. The fifth staff is marked *sempre p*. The sixth staff is marked *sempre p possibile* and includes *elegante, con rubato* and *a tempo*. The seventh staff is marked *presto poss.* and includes *repeat ad lib.* and *ad lib.*

The opening gesture, a simple ascending minor third, provides the basic unit of structure for the recitative. A pitch-set analysis of the first phrase shows an overlapping use of the cell [014] and its inversion [034], which features the half-step and the minor third in its construction. The resulting collection is a chromatic segment that spans a tritone. In this first phrase, each pair of pitches is separated by a minor third, and these pairs descend by half-step:

[034]

[014]

This Eb is the first pitch in the next phrase.

The following phrases (through phrase E) employ a slow (and freely implemented) expansion of the primary cell: [015]/[045]; to [016] --the quarter-note triplets of phrase C; [017] in phrase D (after the restatement of the opening gesture). The intervals which form the borders of these cells, the major third, perfect fourth, tritone, and perfect fifth, become important in the surface melodic structure as well:

Outlines of structural pitches

Phrase B                      Phrase C                      Phrase D

The expansion is most evident in phrase D, where the most erratic rhythmic figures in the recitative are found. Phrase E acts as a transition between the melodic material of the first four phrases, and the virtuoso flourish material of the last two. The flourishes are constructed entirely of major and minor thirds, derived from the opening gesture. Major thirds in this passage prevent the formation of fully diminished seventh-chords, but because of the use of the major third as a structural element beginning in phrase B, specifically with regard to the alternation between the two types of thirds in phrase B, its use in the flourish seems perfectly natural.

## B. Mad Dance

The Dance is in many ways a summary of the entire Sonata. It includes allusions to the previous three movements, and is similar in form to the opening movement.

The movement begins with a driving motive built on, as in the Recitative, a minor third:



E-flat and G-flat are, of course, the same two pitches that open the Recitative.<sup>10</sup> These pitches serve as a reference point throughout the final movement. The opening passage (mm. 1--with the anacrusis--to 12) uses only these pitches and their closest neighbors:



As the movement progresses, the type of third used in the dance motive is manipulated: just as in the Recitative, the major and minor thirds are alternated, and used simultaneously. Measures 20 and 22 illustrate this:

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<sup>10</sup>The G-flat is also a major structural pitch in the first two movements as well: in the first two movements, though, it is spelled as F-sharp. The relevance of this pitch has been discussed with regard to each of these movements.

m. 20, piano

m. 22, piano *energico*

Albright is manipulating the difference between major and minor, specifically with regard to the construction of the tonic triad. Alternating between the two makes the listener unsure of which mode is being used. Albright’s “tonic” in this movement is E-flat, and he is careful to use this pitch level consistently throughout the movement when the dance motive returns. Transpositions of this interval are limited to G-B/B-flat--the pitches (G and B-flat) that complete the E-flat triad. This transposition has the added effect of adding the lowered- and raised- sixth scale degrees to the pitch collection, increasing the ambiguity between major and minor. The other pitches involved in the dance motive are strictly neighbor tones, and do not imply any harmony themselves. The graph below illustrates this:

Measures 71-79 allow the neighbor tones to take on more melodic significance. This passage is cadential in nature and climaxes with a return to the E-flat/G-flat transposition of the dance motive.

The dance motive serves as the primary material for the movement. Form in the movement is created by interruptions in the dance material which happen suddenly and

seemingly without warning. These interruptive sections are based on material from previous movements; however, this older material is not quoted directly, but rather alluded to, sometimes in very subtle ways. Often, the transitions between interruption and dance motive last only a few measures (or in some cases, like mm. 35-36, a few beats!). The piano interruptions (m. 7 and 10) of the opening statement of the dance motive are micro-representations of the form of the movement: the first statement of the dance motive introduces not only the primary melodic material, but also the formal procedures that will be used in the movement.

Albright uses allusions to earlier material (as well as some new material which will be detailed below) to create these interruptions. In doing so, he creates a sense of unity throughout the four movements, and provides striking contrasts within the form of the fourth movement. The table below describes these allusions, their origins in earlier movements, and provides commentary upon them:

4 <sup>th</sup> movt. m.	Alludes to	Comments
32, 55 (58)	I: subject (mm. 6-7, saxo.) II:	The rhapsodic nature of this passage is the primary melodic characteristic of the first movement. This rhythmic figure appears again at rehearsal <b>I</b> in the piano's solo.
35-36	I: subject	The contrapuntal nature of these measures suggests the subject of movement I.
57-58 (piano)	I: subject	Another occurrence of the rhythmic gesture above, this time lengthened.
59 (piano)	I: m. 9	
m. 1 et al	I: repeated bass lines in the cadenzas, minimalistic sections as <b>J</b>	This kind of overt repetition is used in the piece only at these three places, and while the pitch material differs in all three (the opening to the dance and the repeated bass lines are perhaps the most similar), the use of minimalism itself provides the allusion.
50-51	II: downward motive	The use of the downward gesture is highly significant in this piece, particularly in movement II. In these measures, the gesture is used at a cadence, leading back into the dance motive.
106-108	II: downward gesture	The last three measures of the piece restate the descending scale motive, here as Eb-D. As a concluding gesture, it is a particularly powerful allusion to the second movement.
49	III: mm. 53-55, 27, 43	The rapid and drastic changes in register are like those found in the third movement.
63-69	III: opening	This is perhaps the most direct allusion to any of the previous material. The tempo, pitch material, and style are all very similar to the third movement.

The jazz material is in a bebop style, and first appears in m. 14 (rehearsal **C**). The appearance of a new style at this moment (immediately following the conclusion of the first statement of the dance material) gives the impression that it will have more importance in the form than it actually does: the bebop material is used in just 11 of 108 measures. But, as in all the interruptions, it makes its presence known and very quickly dissolves back into the dance motive. Its use, though, is not unexpected because of Albright's use of multiple stylistic influences throughout his later works.

The “coda” of the movement begins with a recapitulation of the large arpeggios which end the Recitative. This provides a melodic (rather than simply intervallic) link to the Recitative, and because it flows directly into the dance motive, restates the transition from Recitative to Dance and the major/minor third idea discussed above.

## Overall Form

Much of the surface contrast created in the piece is generated by switching from one style to another. This type of technique has become a primary characteristic of Albright’s compositional practice, particularly with regard to his later works. In the first movement of the Sonata, free atonality (the Subject and Free Material) is balanced by minimalism (Episode); in the second movement, the Chaconne is briefly interrupted by free atonality; the fourth movement begins with free atonality (Recitative) and proceeds with minimalism, jazz, and references to earlier material. Only the third movement, which is by far the shortest of the four, is consistent with regard to style. The chart below illustrates the overall stylistic form of the piece:

Movement	I.	II.	III.	IV. Recitative	IV. Dance
Mvt. Form	A <sup>1</sup> A <sup>2</sup> B <sup>1</sup> A <sup>1'</sup> A <sup>2'</sup> B <sup>1'</sup> A <sup>2''</sup>	C <sup>1</sup> A <sup>3</sup> C <sup>1'</sup>	A <sup>4</sup>	A <sup>5</sup>	B <sup>3</sup> D <sup>1</sup> B <sup>3</sup> (A <sup>1</sup> ) B <sup>3</sup> D <sup>1</sup> B <sup>3</sup> D <sup>1'</sup> A <sup>4'</sup> B <sup>3</sup> A <sup>5</sup> (end) B <sup>3</sup>
Description of Mvt. Form	Interruption Form	Chaconne	Through-composed	(Interruption of the Large Form)	Interruption Form
Tonality/Atonality in each movement	Mostly Atonal	Mostly Tonal	Atonal	Highly Chromatic, with a strong pitch center	Combination of Tonality and Atonality

A=Free Atonality

<sup>1</sup> I: m. 1\*

<sup>2</sup> I: m. 44

<sup>3</sup> II: m. 45

<sup>4</sup> III: m. 1 (entire movement)

<sup>5</sup> IV: Recitative

B=Minimalism

<sup>1</sup> I: m. 49

<sup>2</sup> IV: m. 1

C= Chaconne

<sup>1</sup> II: m. 1

D=Bebop (Jazz)

<sup>1</sup> IV: m. 1

\*These are the measure numbers for the first appearances of the material listed in the table.

In this view of the piece, one can see that the free atonal style serves as a kind of base style, and the other styles are used as interruptions, creating striking contrast. The fourth movement is indeed a microcosm of the entire work from this perspective: its mid-phrase eruptions of contrasting styles interrupts, on a local level, the minimalist dance motive just as the new styles interrupt the free atonal style throughout the course of the piece. The minimalist sections (Episodes) of the first movement hint at this effect, laying

the ground work for this to be more fully explored in the fourth. That this happens in the outer movements is important in that it allows for the departure from and the subsequent return to this important structural idea. Thus a large-scale arch is constructed in the overall form of the work: the first and fourth movements using interruption form, with the middle two movements (including the Recitative) using a more consistent style.

## Melodic Unification

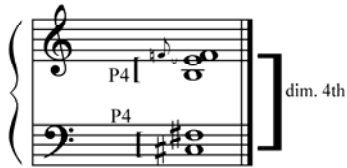
Another important feature of the work is its use of unified melodic gestures. The unification of melodic gestures reaches to the very construction of the motives themselves. There are two basic gestures that generate the motives in the piece: the descending scale (either chromatic or diatonic) and the ascending leap. The opening gesture of the Sonata introduces the ascending leap gesture immediately:



Examples of this leap abound in the first movement: measures 10, 18, 22, 27, 33 contain various versions. The climatic points in this movement are more dynamic: in measure 45 the sixth at the opening becomes an augmented eleventh, and at it becomes a leap of two octaves. More subtly, the sixth forms the boundary intervals for many of the chromatic glissandi that occur in the cadenzas, especially in measures 45 and 67. Additionally, this interval, inverted, becomes the primary motive in the Recitative. In the second movement, the opening leap is reduced to a perfect fifth. Much of the melodic motion in this movement is within the boundaries of the F-sharp to C-sharp perfect fifth as well: the first climactic moment after rehearsal **C** and, more poignantly, at rehearsal **J**. This

interval is further compressed to a perfect fourth in the bell chords at the end of the piece.

Here, the two perfect fourths of the chord are enclosed by a diminished fourth (the interval compressed yet again<sup>11</sup>)



Again, this further diminution of the leap can be seen as the continued descent into the grave.

The third movement is based on the gradual expansion from small intervals to large, and in that way it fills in the principal interval of the piece: from A and the F-sharp. The leap may also be represented by the distance between the hands of the first piano entrance: the saxophone appears in the middle, and the piano surrounds it, as far away as possible. The upward trajectories of the melodic figures here have been discussed, but they too fill in the steps from low note to high note (this is particularly true at rehearsal D). The leap reaches its apex in the fourth movement at the end of the Recitative (the arpeggios) and its recapitulation at the end of the Dance. This is the leap filled in with equal intervals, a much smoother leap than its disjunct predecessors.

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<sup>11</sup> This final compression assumes octave equivalence.

## Conclusions

Albright's quandary with regard to form is the balance of unification and contrast. Some items remain constant throughout the entire work: the descending scale and the interruptive constructions, for example. These items remain constant despite new material. Contrasts in the piece are generated by stylistic changes which occur abruptly (interruptions) or between movements (from movement II to III). In addition, a large scale interruption in the form occurs at the Recitative (the only moment in the piece where the saxophone is alone). The principal interval of the piece is compressed from a major sixth at the opening to a minor third (the inversion) by the fourth movement (this compression process is interrupted by the third movement, which deals with expansion).

Like James Joyce's stream of consciousness writing techniques, the Sonata moves from one thought to another almost instantly. But, also like Joyce's writing, there is the unity of person: all the events in the Sonata occur within the context of one persona, just as the seemingly random thoughts of Joyce's characters all occur within the mind of that character. It is in this way that Albright is able to blend divergent styles into a unified whole.

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