

T O N V E R H I E L

THE SAXOPHONE MUSIC OF
GORDON JACOB



SAXOPHONE HISTORY SERIES NR. 2

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Dedicated to Margaret Jacob

PREFACE

It is always interesting for a saxophonist to explore the complete works for his instrument by one composer. For me, knowing one or two compositions that intrigued me, lead to an investigation of all the works by one composer. For that reason I studied the saxophone music of Belgian composer Marcel Poot, Swiss composer Will Eisenmann and several Dutch composers as Henk Badings, Jan van Dijk, Lex van Delden and Gerard Sars.

All these stories appeared as articles in German and American saxophone magazines. The article on Will Eisenmann grew and grew and finally was turned into a booklet on his works with and for saxophone. It appeared as no. 1 in a new series on saxophone history "Sax Stories".

An article on Gordon Jacob's saxophone music has now turned into the booklet in your hands, no. 2 in my series "Saxophone Histories".

For all information and contributions I have to thank Geoff Ogram, Mrs. Margaret Jacob, Paul Harvey and June and Rachel Emerson who provided me with a lot of interesting facts and details on Gordon Jacob's saxophone music.

I hope this booklet will give a little contribution to the popularity of the saxophone music of Gordon Jacob.

2nd version, October 2019

Ton Verhiel

INTRODUCTION

The music of Gordon Jacob is strong involved in the traditions of the British Isles and although many of his works are well known outside the UK, I think, that his compositions for saxophone could have some more international recognition.

The interest in the music of Gordon Jacob started as I was still very young and was playing in a local band. We did the *Suite in B-flat* and I was impressed with the second movement. Listening to a lot of wind-band music in those days I listened to his *William Byrd Suite* and the *An Original Suite*. Later, as a saxophone student I learned to know the *Variations on a Dorian theme*. This piece triggered me and I did perform it a few times. It led me to the *Duo*, which I performed in the last decade of the 20th century, and from there to the other saxophone compositions by Jacob being the two *saxophone quartets*, the *Miscellanies* for alto saxophone and band or piano and last but not least his 1948 *Rhapsody* for English Horn and strings which can also be played as a work for alto saxophone and strings and which was in fact Jacob's first composition for the saxophone.

LIFE¹



Gordon Jacob was born on the 5th of July 1895 in the south of London. His full name was Gordon Percival Septimus Jacob as being the seventh and youngest boy (therefore the “Septimus” in his name) in a total of 10 children. His father died in India when he was three years old and he was brought up by his mother and his elder brothers and sisters. Being a musical family, Gordon’s talents were encouraged but when he decided to devote his life to music, the family was not really enthusiastic.

¹ Sources: An article on life and work of Gordon Jacob written by Geoff Ogram, “Basically British” by Brett Dean and Gordon Jacob’s website.

Already during his years in public school Jacob was composing and some of his works were performed by the school orchestra, sometimes conducted by Gordon Jacob himself.

For his further life there were two disadvantages to overcome. A cleft palate made the study of a wind instrument impossible and, caused by an accident when he was twelve, he had problems with a tendon in his left hand which never healed properly. This limited his pianistic possibilities.

World War I brought the Jacob’s the loss of son and brother Anstey. Gordon himself was taken prisoner in Arras. In one of the camps he stayed, Bad Colburg, he organised a little orchestra. Four strings, three winds and piano were the basis for some compositions and arrangements.

After the war he finally started to study at the Royal College of Music. He took lessons in composition, piano and conducting and was instructed by such men as Charles Villiers Stanford, Herbert Howells, Ralph Vaughan Williams and Adrian Boult, the famous conductor.

During his study several compositions were performed in concerts at the College and still during his studies he was awarded the Arthur Sullivan Composition Prize. The arrangement for orchestra of pieces for virginal by William Byrd, the so called *William Byrd-*

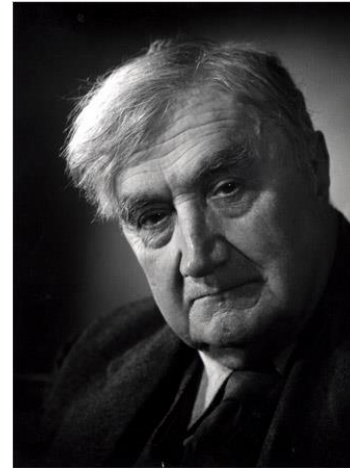
Suite, became very famous, especially in the later version for wind-band.



Bad Colberg²

In 1924 Gordon Jacob married Sidney Gray. The marriage had no children. In the same year he started his own teaching career at the institute he had studied himself, the Royal College of Music. He was sought after as teacher for orchestration and already in 1931 he wrote the first version of his famous book on that subject: *Orchestral Technique, a manual for students*. During his life Gordon Jacob wrote several books that were happily used by his

students. Most popular were: “How to read a score”, “The Elements of Orchestration” and “The composer and his art”. Another source of income was his work for the Penguin scores. Gordon Jacob wrote introductions and analyses to a lot of this study-scores.

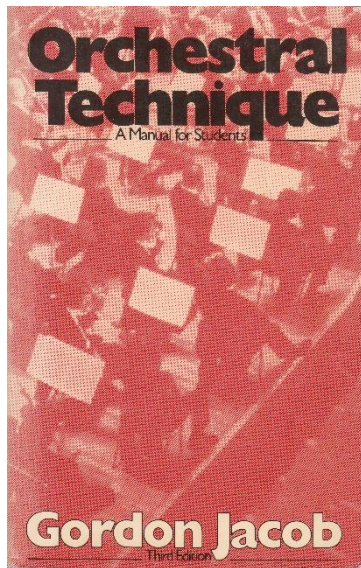


Two of Gordon Jacob's teachers: composer Ralph Vaughan Williams (left) and conductor Adrian Boult

During those years his works were frequently performed and broadcasted. This popularity brought him the John Collard Fellowship (1943) as well as the fellowships of the Royal College of Music and the Royal Academy of Music. During the Second World War he arranged music for a comedy radio programme and started to compose music for films.

² From: www.gordonjacob.net

In 1958 his wife Sidney, who always was his devoted companion during those many years, died. Jacob stopped composing and it took the help and stimulants from family and friends to have him starting to write music again. Only one year later Jacob found a new companion. In 1959 he marries a second time. Margaret Gray is a niece of his first partner. There was some publicity around this marriage, then Margaret was just 21 and Gordon Jacob was already 63! Margaret and Gordon got two children, a daughter Ruth (*1960) and son David (*1961). After living for many years in Brockenhurst, Margaret and Gordon moved to Saffron Walden. Also in 1959 the BBC filmed a documentary on composer Gordon Jacob. In this film he clearly gave an argument for his composing:



*Gordon Jacob's famous book on
Orchestration*

"I write music first to please myself, if it also pleases others, then that is all to the good"

Although Jacob retired in 1966 from the Royal College of Music, he still had to make a living for his family. His music was less frequently broadcasted and so he turned to chamber music (mostly commissions) and works for wind bands. A lot of these pieces were what can be called "practical music".

Gordon Jacob composed for nearly every instrument and had a particular interest in lesser known instruments. He wrote pieces for Larry Adler's harmonica, a *Concerto for accordion*, a very often performed *Trombone Concerto* and works for the famous Michaela Petri and her recorders.

Gordon Jacob stayed composing into his late eighties and at that time he once said:

"I'm still note-spinning despite advancing years, deafness and blindness!"

His last work was a *Mini Concerto* for orchestra. Jacob did not hear this piece performed, as he died on the 8th of June 1984, a month before the premiere and his 89th birthday leaving a heritage of about 700 compositions, books and arrangements.



Gordon Jacob composed a *Divertimento* for Larry Adler and several pieces for the recorders of Michaela Petri

COMPOSING STYLE

It is almost impossible to catch the music of Gordon Jacob in one or a few words. Maybe transparency and efficiency do come the nearest. Transparency because of the clearness in structure and harmony in his works and efficiency is seen in the development of themes and in the shortness of a lot of pieces. An interviewer once called Jacob's composing "economical and never over-sentimental". Jacob replied that he hates sentiment in music, because *"it is so different from genuine feeling"*.³

His composing lies in the British tradition. Grown up with the music of the late 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, Jacob lived in two musical worlds. On one side the older, more traditional

musical world of Haydn Wood, Percy Grainger and Gustav Holst, on the other side the new developments as shown in the music of Ralph Vaughan Williams, Benjamin Britten and the modern tendencies in Europe. Important in his music was the influence of Jean Sibelius and Igor Strawinsky (particularly the *Rite of Spring*), as he stated himself.

In his early works for band the style of Gustav Holst can be heard, but always with a personal touch. This personal touch more and more grows into the personal style, which is found in his latter works. This development is also clearly shown in the first and second symphony, highly dramatic works, but the first showing a young enthusiastic man and the second filled with the seriousness of a man who has seen the trouble in the world. Jacob himself stated, that there was a time, that all composers wanted to be "up to date", but *"as one becomes older that feeling diminishes and you simply write what comes."*⁴

Gordon Jacob had no affinity with the modern composing techniques; serial music was not his thing. (*"I don't really admire the extremists"*)⁵ For Jacob, melody was important and in harmony, he does not show any fear for dissonant and modern chords, but both are always serving the music and are not used just to be dissonant or modern.

³ 1982: interview with Kevin Thompson

⁴ Ibid

⁵ Ibid

Based on tradition, perhaps neo-classical, Jacob did develop an own style, that is built on craftsmanship. An overall conclusion is difficult, but perhaps one can say, that Jacob's music is serious, when it has to be serious, entertaining, when it has to be entertaining, but above all it is music that does right to the instruments and/or musicians it was written for.

MOST FAMOUS COMPOSITIONS

When a composer writes a great amount of pieces, there are always some that can be mentioned as most successful. Although it is in some distance of the subject of this booklet, the saxophone music by Jacob, it nevertheless is interesting to study or listen to a composer's other work. It gives insight in his composition style and you always can learn from the interpretation by other performers. The following list cannot be complete, but it wants to mention some of the most popular works by Gordon Jacob and some that are worth to be discovered.

One of the first "hits" is *An Original Suite* for wind-band. A three movement piece, which is still frequently played and recorded in our days. It was composed in 1928 and its style is in the line of the wind band compositions by Gustav Holst and Ralph Vaughan Williams. First titled as Suite for wind-band, the publisher added the "Original" as referring to the fact that in those days there were not

many original pieces for wind band. The most charming part in this piece is the folk-like beginning of the second movement, which is orchestrated as an alto saxophone solo. A little risk in the twenties, then the saxophone was not often seen in the instrumentation of the bands.

The Original Suite was not the last piece Jacob wrote for band. His whole life he showed an interest in writing for that medium. Also his *Flag of Stars* and *Old wine in new bottles* were quite successful.

The *Suite for recorder and string quartet* was written in 1957 on request of recorder virtuoso Carl Dolmetsch (1911-1997). It was premiered one year later (31 January 1958) in Wigmore Hall and another month later broadcasted by Dolmetsch and the Martin String quartet. It is also published with the flute as an alternative instrument.

This *Suite* is in seven movements and that gives it a little link to the *Miscellanies* for alto saxophone, which is also in seven movements.⁶ Remarkable is the fourth movement, a Burlesca alla Rumba, in which the recorder "tastes" from a popular dance-form. The final Tarantella is most virtuosic. The Suite can be performed with string quartet, string orchestra or piano.

⁶ Also there are the *Seven Bagatelles* for oboe-solo!



Carl Dolmetsch on one of his LP sleeves

In a review to the recording of this Suite by recorder virtuoso Michaeli Petri, there was said:

Particularly interesting is the inclusion of Gordon Jacob's neo-classical style composition *Suite for recorder and Strings*. Composed in 1957, it is heavily modelled formally on the French Baroque suite, but is coloured with 20th century lush harmonies and pizzicato strings. Think Gershwin meets Baroque! Most notably, '*Burlesca alla rumba*' reveals a flirty side to the instrument. Who knew the recorder could sound so exotic and seductive?⁷

Recently (2009) the Suite was recorded in its original form by English recorder artist Annabel Knight and the Maggini String Quartet.

One of the pieces Jacob himself loved very much and which was seen by him as one of his best chamber pieces is the *Oboe-quartet*. It is a piece from Jacob's early composing period, 1938, and it was premiered in Aeolian Hall in London in the same year by his dedicatee Leon Goossens in collaboration with the Philharmonic String Trio.

The Quartet is in four movements and lasts for about twenty minutes. The oboe part is only of moderate difficulty, but the strings find problems in a high tessitura, contrapuntal independence and the quick tempos of three of the four movements. The ensemble is set up with extra problems in the fourth movement, because of the polymetric and syncopation.⁸ Overall this piece shows melodic clearness and elegance.⁹ It would give a nice experiment to perform this piece as a soprano saxophone quartet.

Dennis Brain (1921–1957) was one of the most famous horn players of his time. In 1951 he asked Jacob to write a piece for him and the *Concerto for Horn and strings* came to paper. The work was premiered on 8 May 1951 in Wigmore Hall, London, with Brain

⁷ Wendy Lang – Review on “The art of the recorder” by Michela Petri.

⁸ Robert Pusey – Oboe and English Horn works of Gordon Jacob

⁹ Michael Struck-Schloen – CD Booklet Ensemble Piu – Gordon Jacob

as the soloist. One year later Brain performed the work again with the London Philharmonic Orchestra.

Brain gave the first performance of Gordon Jacob's Horn Concertos in 1951: almost a string serenade in dialogue with the solo horn. Jacob concentrates on the upper reaches of the instrument, where Brain's gleaming sound was so strong and flexible, the first movement ending with an exultant top C. The slow movement is gentle, wistful nocturne, before the explosive brilliance of the finale: rapid tonguing, then a broad horn melody over scampering strings. It's a genuinely catchy concerto.¹⁰



¹⁰ Andrew McGregor – BBC Music Review - 2007

¹¹ From Christian Lindberg's website.

From the concertos the *Trombone concerto*, written for Dennis Wick in 1955, must also be mentioned. A piece with “*beautiful moments of joy and glory, a very melodic second movement and ends with a lively finale and a cadenza going up to high F.*”¹¹ This “challenging piece, but one full of reward and pleasure”¹² was premiered by Dennis Wick in 1955 in Birmingham. The Trombone Concerto still is very popular and is recorded several times, even by in these days famous soloist Christian Lindberg.



Not only had these wind-concertos got famous. Also his *Music for a Festival*, which knows at least six recordings and the *Clarinet-quintet* are most popular works in Jacob's oeuvre.

For Gordon Jacob himself his *Concerto for band* and the *Flag of Stars* belong to his favourite compositions.

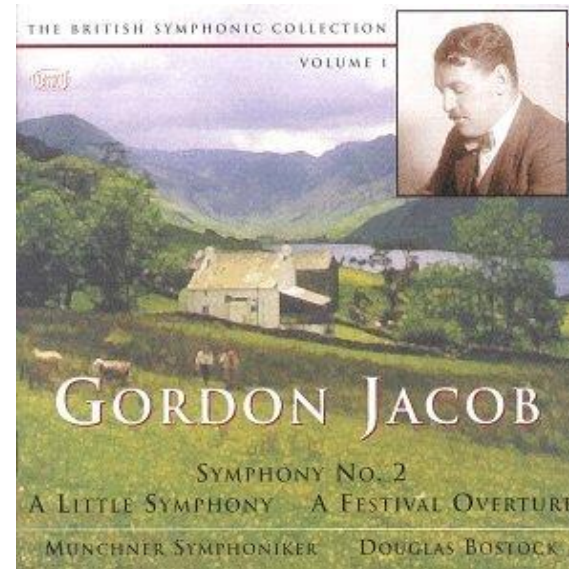
¹² www.musicroom.com

Lesser known, but perhaps even more impressive than the most popular pieces are the two symphonies. Not often performed, but intriguing, masterly shaped and very intensive works that should get more attention.



*Gordon Jacob and his brother Anstey*¹³

The *First Symphony*, written in memory of his brother Anstey, who was killed in World War One, was composed in 1929. In 1934 the slow movement was performed, conducted by Gordon Jacob himself. The work contains five movements, is for large orchestra and had to wait a very long time to be performed. The First Symphony has got a first recording in 2007.



The *Second Symphony* dates from 1945. Jacob called this Symphony “a meditation on war, suffering and victory”¹⁴, referring to his own experiences made in World War One. The work was premiered on radio in 1946 conducted by Sir Adrian Boult. In 1948 Jacob conducted a London performance himself. The *Second Symphony* has four movements and until now two recordings do exist. The first dates from 2000 and is played by the Munich Symphony Orchestra conducted by Douglas Bostock. The other one, recorded in 2007, is played by the London Philharmonic Orchestra led by Barry Wordsworth.

¹³ www.gordonjacob.org

¹⁴ www.gordonjacob.org

It goes far beyond this booklet to name all the interesting works by Gordon Jacob, but finding out, that most of the famous English wind players in the 1950ties commissioned and played a significant work by Jacob, it is a pity, that neither Michael Krein, neither Walter Lear, the saxophone specialists in the UK at that time, did take the chance to have a piece written for the saxophone from a composer who was at his complete compositional maturity at that time.

THE SAXOPHONE IN ENGLAND

The most famous saxophone performers during the thirties and forties were jazz and dance band saxophonists. They were fine musicians, sometimes even with an almost classical sound. One of the greatest players in the United Kingdom was Freddy Gardner. He had a very smooth sound, which allowed him to play his incidental excursions into the light classical music in style and great musicality. Technically well developed, he even could manage harmonics up to high C.



In the classical scene, there were no saxophone soloists who devoted themselves completely to the instrument. We dare to state, that in 1948, the year Gordon Jacob allowed his alternative version for alto saxophone of its *Rhapsody* for English horn, the saxophone was not very much prominent as a solo instrument in classical

music. There were not many English composers who sought the saxophone as a vehicle for their musical expressions. Edward Elgar, Ralph Vaughn Williams nor Benjamin Britten¹⁵ wrote solo pieces for the instrument. There existed an early *Concerto* by Joseph Holbrooke, premiered in 1928 by Walter Lear and Arthur Stutely performed as a soloist with the Halle orchestra under John Barbirolli in Debussy's *Rhapsodie* as early as 1931. The *Rhapsody* by Eric Coates, premiered by Sigurd Rascher in 1936, was still growing in popularity and did know some performances by Michael Krein, but was also seen as light music not suited for the serious concert hall.

Another reason for the saxophone to stay backstage was the fact that none of the excellent performers as Walter Lear and Michael Krein were devoting themselves exclusively to the saxophone. Lear played all the orchestral solos and sometimes appeared as a soloist, but first of all played the bass-clarinete. Michael Krein, also clarinetist and violinist, had his duties in the orchestra, did some composing and, in the 1950s conducted the London Light Concert Orchestra and later his own Michael Krein Orchestra.

Jack Brymer, who took over the lead of the Michael Krein saxophone quartet performed incidentally as a saxophone soloist¹⁶, but was first of all clarinetist.

¹⁵ Vaughan Williams as well as Benjamin Britten did use the saxophone in several of their orchestral scores and Britten allowed his *Six Metamorphoses after Ovid* op. 49 for oboe-solo to be performed on soprano saxophone.

Nevertheless there was a small but intense saxophone life in England with two, already mentioned, exponents: Walter Lear and Michael Krein. Probably Lear, prominent bass-clarinettist, did the greater part in performing saxophone concertos. He played the Glazunov and the Ibert concertos and performed in the Coates *Rhapsody* as well as in the *Ballade* by Frank Martin. Michael Krein played the first performance of the Phyllis Tate *Concerto* for saxophone and strings in 1948 and premiered the Ronald Binge *Concerto* (1956). Krein was very active with his in 1941 founded Michael Krein Saxophone Quartet, which performed regularly in concert and which had numerous broadcasts.



Michael Krein¹⁷

Despite this pioneering, the saxophone in England really came to life in the 19-seventies as Paul Harvey started to promote the

¹⁶ Jack Brymer made a recording of the Eric Coates *Rhapsody* in 1969

¹⁷ found on: <http://www.turnipnet.com/mom/londonplayers.htm>

instrument. Although Paul Harvey also was a clarinet player, he did a lot more work to get the saxophone to prominence. Composing himself extensively for the instrument¹⁸ he particularly asked (British) composers to write for the London Saxophone Quartet and got several new compositions for that medium.

The London Saxophone Quartet was founded by Christopher Gradwell in 1969. Members were Paul Harvey on soprano saxophone, Christopher Gradwell on alto saxophone, Hale Hambleton (later Peter Ripper¹⁹) on tenor saxophone and David Lawrence on baritone saxophone. The ensemble concertized intensively in the United Kingdom and abroad. (USA, Asia, Africa and in most European countries.) In 1980 they were filmed in the television series *Music at Harewood*. The London Saxophone Quartet produced four LP's and stopped performing in 1985.

Nevertheless, the definite modern saxophone scene in England is built around saxophonist John Harle. He started to develop a real concert repertory for the instrument, by stimulating young composers to write for the instrument.

In the meantime a lot of young, talented saxophonists have followed his examples. To name a few: Simon Haram, Martin

Robertson, Gerald McChristal, Rob Buckland and, more recently, Jess Gillam.



The London Saxophone Quartet. From left to right: Donald Lawrence, Hale Hambleton, Christopher Gradwell and Paul Harvey.

¹⁸ The most important part of his saxophone compositions are the five Concertinos. One for each of the saxophone types and a Concertino Grosso for saxophone quartet.

¹⁹ Peter Ripper premiered some of the compositions of Colin Cowles, who also composed for the London Saxophone Quartet.

RHAPSODY – 1948

(published by Stainer & Bell Ltd)

Gordon Jacob used the saxophone frequently in his compositions for band. Starting from the early twenties with his *William Byrd-Suite*, he wrote several works for wind band including the saxophone. His *An Original Suite* with a smooth solo for the alto saxophone in the middle part is still frequently played. It is therefore a bit strange, that his first solo-work for saxophone was written only as early as 1948. This piece was even not originally thought and composed for the saxophone, but it was an alternative version to the *Rhapsody for English horn and strings*.

The *Rhapsody* was written in 1948 for Terence McDonagh (1908-1986), who was oboist in the BBC Symphony Orchestra and the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra and who teaches at the Royal College of Music. When the first performance took place is not very clear. The website of Gordon Jacob mentions June 1948 and that is a bit complicated for a piece that is written in October 1948! Given the information that premier performance took place in The Orangery, Hampton Court with the New London Orchestra conducted by Alec Sherman. Sherman conducted also some other premier performances of Jacob's work. On November 25 1948 the first broadcast performance was given. MacDonagh being the

soloist was accompanied with the Boyd Neel String Orchestra conducted by Trevor Harvey.



From Radio Times November 19, 1948

The *Rhapsody* was quite successful. Already in 1949 there were two other interesting performances. One by the famous principal oboist of the Concertgebouw Amsterdam Leo van der Lek in July 1949 with the famous Willem Mengelberg conducting and another on October 20 by Brenda Rees with the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra in the Town Hall in Birmingham. Gordon Jacob heard the performance by van der Lek on the radio and was quite fond of it, as he replies in a letter to the soloist.

July 3, 1949

Dear Mr. van der Lek,

I had the great pleasure of hearing you broadcast my cor anglais Rhapsody on Friday. You played it most beautifully, and the string orchestra was also very good. You fully realized my intentions, and I may say, it was a perfect performance. You are a great artist. Yours sincerely, Gordon Jacob.²⁰

All these performances took place before the official publication of the work. This was in 1950 by Joseph Williams (now: Stainer and Bell). They published the version for English horn and piano as made by John Addison and offered the opportunity to hire the orchestral material. The Western Daily Press and Bristol Mirror from August 9 1950 wrote a little article on the publishing and titled it "An unusual combination". The author writes, that the Rhapsody is "*more modern in style, yet again not unduly difficult technically*".

Gordon Jacob allowed a second version for the *Rhapsody*. The published edition also contains a part for the alto saxophone. Although it is not sure why Jacob allowed this alternate version, there are several reasons to think of as giving an argument for this decision.

²⁰ source: www.willemmengelberg.nl

²¹ Jules de Vries, Dutch-born, but a great part of his life living in Sweden, was active in promoting the saxophone as a classical medium during the 1940ties and the first years of the 1950ties. Several compositions (as by Lex van Delden, Günther Raphael and Friedrich Leinert) were dedicated to him.

The *Rhapsody* was composed in the year as the *Concerto for alto saxophone* by Phyllis Tate received its first performance by Michael Krein. Probably Gordon Jacob heard this premiere and, liking the saxophone already, thought the *Rhapsody* also as a good piece for the saxophone.

A second possibility is, that saxophonist Jules de Vries²¹, hearing the van der Lek's performance in Amsterdam, contacted Jacob with the question if he would allow him to perform the *Rhapsody* on saxophone. De Vries was establishing himself as a classical saxophonist in those days. The copy of the score sent to Jules de Vries could obtain some dedication to the Vries, which was stated by Mrs E. De Vries in a letter to saxophonist Jean Marie Londeix in 1986²². None of the other known sources could verify this dedication. This all would have taken place between the birth of this composition and its publication.²³

A third possibility lies in the growing popularity of the saxophone. Sigurd Rascher was frequently touring England, but there also were some talented players (Walter Lear, Michael Krein) in the United Kingdom itself, who were demonstrating the possibilities of the saxophone and because the compass of the English horn and

²² mail from JM Londeix to Ton Verhiel, February 2011

²³ All contacts to Sweden, where Jules de Vries lived and worked since 1950 stayed without success.

the saxophone are very much alike, it was Gordon Jacob's own idea to give the *Rhapsody* an alternative version.

A last possibility is the idea to give the *Rhapsody* a broader musical life. The publisher, firstly Joseph Williams Limited, could have suggested this possibility. Evident is, that the alternative instrumentation dates from almost the beginnings of this composition.

Despite all these arguments I did not find any early performance of the *Rhapsody* in its saxophone version and nor England's most active saxophonist and composer Paul Harvey, nor Geoff Ogram, personal friend of Gordon Jacob, could remember a performance in the fifties and sixties of this work. It must be concluded that England's most famous saxophone players of that time, Michael Krein and Walter Lear, never performed this *Rhapsody* in its version with strings. There is also no evidence, if both saxophonists did take the *Rhapsody* in their repertoire or suggested it to their students. It's therefore quite strange that the sleeve notes on the recording of Jacob's first saxophone-quartet by Paul Brodie calls the *Rhapsody* "a favourite solo vehicle for the instrument".

In recent times, according to Stainer and Bell, the score was hired out about four times. At least one of those performances was with a

saxophone-soloist. During the 16th Festival of British Youth Orchestras in Glasgow in 2003 the Glasgow Schools String Orchestra conducted by Andrew Morris performed the piece. Soloist was a young saxophonist named David Kearney.



Saxophonist Paul Brodie made the only saxophone recording of the Rhapsody

With piano the *Rhapsody* is more often performed. Paul Harvey as well as Paul Brodie²⁴ played the piece several times. Brodie even made the only known recording of the saxophone version of the *Rhapsody* around 1974. He played it on one of the Music Minus One records, which contained a performance of the piece and, to

²⁴ letter from Paul Harvey (2006) and mail from Paul Brodie (2006)

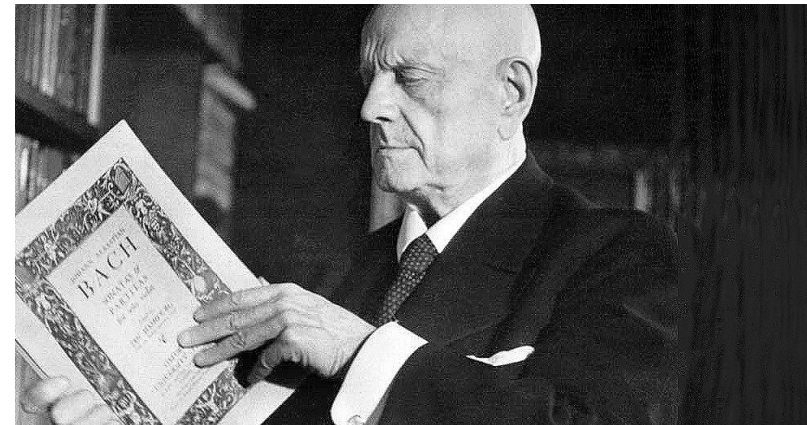
have a study possibility, only the accompaniment.²⁵ Recently this recording has been re-released on CD.



Some years before (1970) the *Rhapsody* was recorded in its version for cor anglais and piano.²⁶ Soloist was Patricia Stenberg on cor anglais and the pianist was Gary Wolff. Wolff described the work as: *"An English folksong quality prevails in the haunting and catchy melodies and mildly dissonant harmonic structures. Various moods and tempos are found throughout the work."*

²⁵ Paul Brodie did not perform the *Rhapsody* with string orchestra. (Mail from Paul Brodie, 2006)

As Jacob himself stated, the *Rhapsody* was influenced by the music of Jean Sibelius, who was seen by most British composers as the greatest living composer at that time. The first theme in the *Rhapsody* recalls the atmosphere of Sibelius's "Swan of Tuonola" from the Lemminkäinen Suite op. 22 and the second movement of Dvorak's 9th Symphony "From the New World".



Jean Sibelius

Based on an light syncopated ostinato figure turning around B-flat in the bass-line and chords build on fourths (pianissimo tremolos in viola and violin, which refer very strong to Sibelius "Swan") an easy, traditional sounding folksong-theme in a *poco adagio* tempo is played by the solo-instrument. After a repeat of the theme, it

²⁶ Golden Crest no. S7039

develops into a second melody which returns again to the main-theme, which is always accompanied in a different style.

The *Allegro vivace* opens with the same rhythmic figure as the beginning of the piece, but the repeat of the large intervals gives the Allegro a rather witty but also vigorous character. The constant playing with syncopated rhythms gives this part a very good motion.

A fugue-like, very chromatic theme in celli and bassi follows, but Gordon Jacob does not develop the fugue. He repeats the theme and gives the saxophone a pianissimo played lyrical line above it (MS 1).

The image shows a musical score for three instruments: English Horn, Violoncello, and Contrabass. The English Horn part is in the treble clef, while the Violoncello and Contrabass parts are in the bass clef. The key signature has one flat (B-flat), and the time signature is 2/4. The English Horn part begins with a *pp* (pianissimo) dynamic and features a melodic line with triplets. The Violoncello and Contrabass parts provide a rhythmic accompaniment with syncopated patterns. The score is divided into two systems, with the first system showing the initial entry of the instruments.

Rhapsodie: music sample 1 (Stainer and Bell)

Then the solo instrument takes the theme, but gives it back to the strings. The violins play this tune two times in a different harmonic setting with a changing figure in the bass. By decreasing the rhythmic flow and shifting it from the descant to the lower register the music leads into a short *meno mosso* in which we hear the opening rhythm in an enlarged form. After that the Allegro theme is repeated. In the last *meno mosso tranquillo* (crotchet = 44) the soloist plays the opening of the Allegro as a slow melody and in the last few bars the atmosphere is as in the beginning. The Rhapsody ends on a very soft played F-major chord.

In its original form with string-orchestra this *Rhapsody* is a very effective piece. The string-part provides the soloist a solid background and the inventive playing with the musical motives make it a strong and well-constructed composition, that deserves to be recorded in its saxophone-version. The saxophone is a more flexible instrument than the English horn, which could make this composition, especially in the faster movements, even more suitable for the saxophone than for its original solo instrument. The *Rhapsody* was published in 1950. This edition is in the handwriting of Gordon Jacob and bears in the title the alternative for saxophone. There is no dedication found on this score.

A nice detail is found on page 14 of the score: Jacob makes a little mistake and writes the solo part in the line of the first violin. He has blotted out these notes.



First page and title of the Rhapsody in Gordon Jacob's handwriting

The publication brought the work to attention of the critics. Several musical magazines gave a review of the piece. There is a Joseph Williams, who writes in the Musical Opinion (July 1950):

"A shapely, elegant work, finely conceived for the medium, and in which the composer contrives to show most of the expressive qualities of the solo instrument"

and in the Monthly Musical Record of September 1950 we can read:

"The work is extrovert and clumsy in texture, but abounds in delightful touches and moving poetry of sound."

There was also a critical note by P.A. Evans in Music Survey:

"The cor anglais, however, an orchestral soloist most effective in small doses, becomes a bore when brought to the front of the platform. Frequent changes of mood in a short work prevent this to some extent, but are accompanied here by stylistic inconsistency. The solo part is aptly written, as we should expect, yet the work adds nothing to the composer's stature"

Some performances of the Rhapsody (all with English horn):

- 1991 January 11 – Kansas City, Missouri
Carol Padgham Albrecht, English horn and John Fowler, piano
- 1992 November 1 – Braintree, Massachusetts
Tamara Field, English horn with Frank Corliss, piano
- 1998 July International Music Festival Killaloe, Ireland
Thomas Stacy, English horn with the Irish Chamber Orchestra
- 2001, September 14 First Mount Allison Recital
Belinda Code, English horn and Lynn Johnson, piano
- 2010 May 9 - Interlochen, Michigan
Christopher Newlun, English horn and Timothy Wallace, piano

In 2016 the American Jane Murray, English horn performer and solo English horn at the Rhode Island Symphony Orchestra publishes a very fine performance of the *Rhapsody* in its original version with strings on You Tube.²⁷



Gordon Jacob studied and worked at the Royal College of Music.

After the *Rhapsody* Gordon Jacob did not write anything for the saxophone until 1972. Jacob wrote most of his compositions on commission and apparently the British saxophone world did not come to the idea to have Jacob compose a piece for them. It may give an indication of the position of the classical played saxophone in those years in Great Britain.

The next piece for saxophone Gordon Jacob wrote, was composed some 24 years after the *Rhapsody*. It was a piece for alto saxophone and piano, called:

VARIATIONS ON A DORIAN THEME – 1972

(published by June Emerson Edition)

This fine, charming piece was written for bass clarinetist and saxophonist Stephen Trier (1930-2000), professor for clarinet and saxophone at the Guildhall School of Music. According to Paul Harvey, Trier never played the piece himself and probably it was written for his students at the Guildhall School.

The piece opens with a very slow played theme in F Dorian mode and in 3/2 meter (crotchet = 44) (MS 1). The theme is followed by some exciting variations, both rhythmically as well as lyrical.

The first variation is a rhythmic *Allegro* (crotchet = 116). It is an exciting, joyful little march, with a slight jazz-feeling caused by the rhythm and a single “blue-note” in the accompaniment (MS 2). A very charming *Tempo di Valse* (crotchet = 76), which should be played *grazioso* is followed by a strong *con moto e rubato* (crotchet = 88) in Bb major. The fourth Variation is a very soft *poco adagio* (crotchet = 52). Its final tone, a written low C, should be played *pianissimo*, which is not easy to do.

²⁷ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=syVlhGEEwQs>

The fifth variation is divided into three sections. The *con moto risoluto* (crotchet = 84) gives a kind of ragtime character (MS 3). A *lento espressivo* with some polyphonic writing between saxophone and the right hand of the piano leads into an *Allegro molto*, which final four measures could also very well be played an octave higher to have the soloist glance in the altissimo-register. In "The piano in chamber ensemble. An annotated Guide" by Maurice Hinson and Wesley Roberts the *Variations on a Dorian theme* were described as to be "grateful writing".

In September 1973 Paul Harvey wrote a review on this work by Gordon Jacob in the magazine *Crescendo*. He calls this work: "*extremely listenable, but not without exciting moments for the audience*". Harvey gives Gordon Jacob all compliments on this work and states that "*the composer is thinking in terms of the saxophone from the outset*".²⁸

In 1974 the piece was performed at Kneller Hall and the composer was present at this performance. Soloist was Patrick Dixon, who was professor of saxophone at Kneller Hall, the Royal Military School of Music, at that time.

I did perform this piece a few times and also found it on the repertoire of Australian clarinettist and saxophonist Jason

Xanthoudakis, the Italian performer Filiberto Palermini and German saxophonist Thomas Helmreich. On March 29, 2011 it was performed by Eva Ferguson in the Prairie View A&M University in Texas, USA and another performance was in 2018 during a recital in McGill, Schulich School of Music in Montréal, Canada. Saxophonist was Jackson Rigler with Luke Bell on the piano. It is about time that this piece gets a recording. It fits very well between some larger works in a recital. There were some incidental performances in the last years and there is also a student performance on You Tube²⁹.

Stephen Trier (1930-2000)

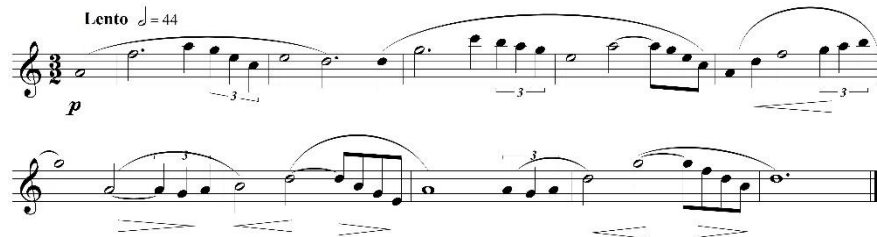
Trier was specialized on bass clarinet and basset horn. On those instruments he premiered the Basset Horn Concerto by David Gow and Crosstalk for two basset horns by Richard Rodney Bennett. As a clarinettist he played in the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra and later (until 1995) in the London Philharmonic Orchestra. In 1984 he is mentioned as being the saxophone player in Vaughan Williams Dance of the Comforters from Job (Vernon Handley as conductor)

Interested in the saxophone and stimulated by Michael Krein he started to study the instrument and from 1956 he recorded most of the major orchestral saxophone parts. Trier taught bass clarinet, basset horn and saxophone at the Guildhall School of Music and since 1970 at the Royal College of Music. Many of the younger generation saxophonists (and clarinettists) in Great Britain did study with Stephen Trier.

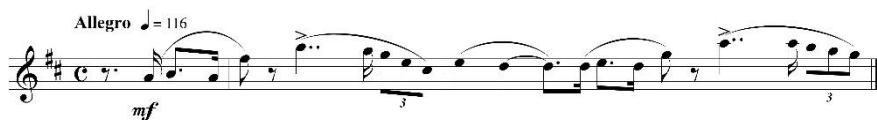
²⁸ *Crescendo Magazine*, September 1973, page 12

²⁹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CAEMI4Cpv5s>

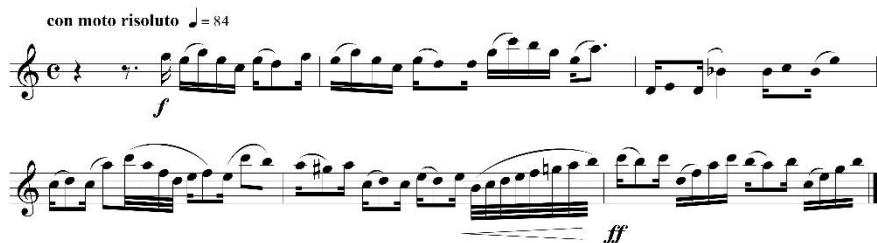
Composer Marc Anthony Turnage wrote “Trier. In memory of Stephen Trier” in 2000. It is number one of the “Two Memorials” Turnage wrote for soprano saxophone or clarinet.



Variations MS 1 theme (courtesy June Emerson Editions)



Variations MS 2 var 1 (courtesy June Emerson Editions)



Variations MS 3 var 5 (courtesy June Emerson Editions)

The most interesting part of Jacob’s compositions and the most successful of the saxophone compositions are the two saxophone quartets. Jacob wrote in his famous book on orchestration:

“As a chamber music group the saxophone quartet of soprano, alto, tenor and baritone has much to enjoy, and with sensitive artists at work can almost be compared with the string quartet in terms of balance, tonal variety and expression”.



Clarinetist, saxophonist and composer Paul Harvey (courtesy Paul Harvey)

Paul Harvey writes in his book on the saxophone:

“All English quartets should play the two Gordon Jacob quartets as much as possible, because they are the most important English contribution to the medium. Apart from being delightful and approachable works, which are always a great success with audiences.”

And Harvey can speak for himself, then both quartets were written as a commission from the London Saxophone Quartet, where he played the soprano saxophone.

FIRST SAXOPHONE QUARTET – 1973

(published by June Emerson Edition)

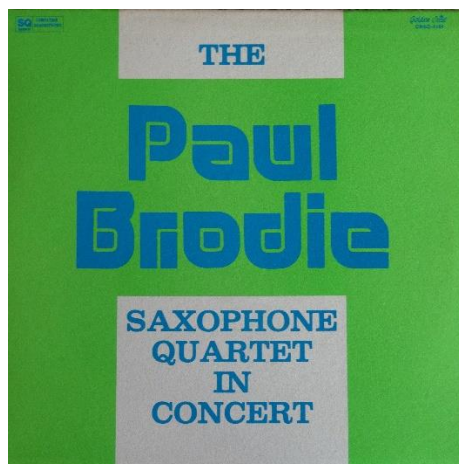
Gordon Jacob was very delighted about the success of his first saxophone quartet. It was written for the London Saxophone Quartet, who played it for the first time at the World Saxophone Congress in Bordeaux in 1974. A year later it was recorded by the same group with Paul Harvey on soprano, Hale Hambleton on alto, Christopher Gradwell on tenor and David Lawrence on baritone saxophone. Due to the performance in Bordeaux this saxophone quartet came on the repertory of many other quartets. One of them being the Canadian based Paul Brodie Saxophone Quartet. This group, with Paul Brodie on soprano, Marino Galluzzo on alto, John Salistian on tenor and John Price on baritone saxophone made the second recording of Jacob's work in 1977. The British Music Information Centre holds also a recording (after 1984) by the British Phoenix Saxophone Quartet in which James Rae, who nowadays is quite famous for his educative saxophone compositions, played the soprano saxophone.



Phoenix Saxophone Quartet

Another recording was made by the Australian Saxophone Quartet in 1979 and three of the four movements were recorded in 1983 by the Wessex Saxophone Quartet on a demonstration tape.

Comparing the recordings of this quartet by the group of Paul Brodie and the London Saxophone Quartet, there is no difference in tempos. Both recordings take 11 minutes and about 40 seconds for the four movements. Overall, the London Saxophone Quartet gives more depth to the work and sounds more homogenous as the Canadian saxophonists are more transparent. Of course recording techniques of those days may influence this statement, but clear is, that Paul Brodie and his friends listened to the recording of the London Saxophone Quartet very well.



Front side of the LP of the Paul Brodie Saxophone Quartet³⁰

Paul Harvey was already suggesting Gordon Jacob to write a work for the quartet in 1973 as he did send the composer a copy of the review Harvey had written on the Variations. In a letter from 15th September Harvey writes:

*“Next summer we will again be playing a programme of all British music at the World Saxophone Congress in Bordeaux and I would love to have at least one new work by an established composer who understands woodwind instruments, such as yourself.”*³¹

³⁰ In 1992 this LP was reissued on CD on Dinant Records as “The Paul Brodie Saxophone Quartet, Volume 2”

³¹ Letter from Paul Harvey to Gordon Jacob - 15th September 1973

The premier in Bordeaux was a huge success. The recital of the London Saxophone Quartet “*was given an almost pop star ovation which verged on the embarrassing*”.³² Harvey predicts, that there will be lots of orders from USA for the quartet and in a review Harvey states, that this work “*is destined to become a classic of the Saxophone Quartet Repertoire*”.³³

Concerning this saxophone quartet by Gordon Jacob, Harvey had a good view. Many fine saxophone quartets all over the world took this fine piece in their repertoire. It was, among many others, performed by the Berlin Saxophone Quartet, the Vienna Saxophone Quartet, the Dutch Aurelia and Kohinoor Saxophone Quartets and the Amherst Sax4.

In the last years the saxophone quartets by Gordon Jacob are still regularly performed. To name a few: Sax-Appeal in 2013 performed it as “*a memorable close to a truly enjoyable evening.*”

- the Melbourne Saxophone Quartet,
- the Einsteinium Quartet (saxophone quartet no. 2),
- the British Absolution Saxophone Quartet (2011),

³² Letter from Paul Harvey to Gordon Jacob – 14th July 1974

³³ Text for a review of the Saxophone Quartet written by Paul Harvey

- the American Saxotopia Quartet and the German Nexus Saxophone Quartet.

Although all these performances show, that this music is still worth to play, it did not come to a new recording of the saxophone quartets by Gordon Jacob

Gordon Jacob's *First Saxophone Quartet* has four parts:

I. Allegro moderato (crotchet = 96)

Jacob makes a frequent use of a special rhythmic figure. This rhythm gives the music a jumping character. Together with the melodic material and a strong contrast with the 2nd more romantic theme this movement has a sense of sadness and nostalgic feelings.



SQ1 – MS1: First two measures of the soprano part of Gordon Jacob's first Saxophone Quartet (© June Emerson Edition)

II. Scherzo and Trio alla musette (crotchet = 120)

This movement has the character of a folkdance. It has strong dynamic contrasts and Gordon Jacob makes use of some of his favourites: parallel seconds which gives the piece a witty end. The middle part is named "alla Musette". This part sounds like a bagpipe. Tenor and baritone saxophones play in fifths and soprano and alto saxophones in fourths.

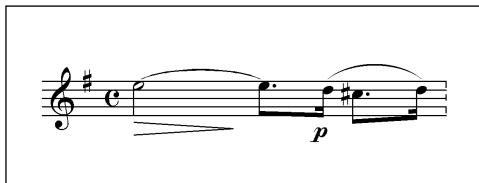
III. Adagio molto (crotchet = 42)

Long solo lines for soprano and baritone saxophones lead to a dramatic middle centre with the baritone playing in its high register. Shorter melodic lines in alto, then tenor and then soprano are flowing into a short choral with the tenor leading again. The movement ends in a very soft a minor chord.

IV. Alla marcia, con spirito

The indicated tempo is 120 for a crotchet. The "con spirito" gives better effect when the piece is, as the London Saxophone Quartet does in its recording, played some little bit faster. Jacob plays with contrasting rhythms. Jumping figures against triplets. The basic rhythmic

material in the first theme is turned around in the second, more melodious theme. On the sleeve of the recording of the Brodie Quartet Michael Schulman writes: “The Finale is, as marked, a spirited march, more than a little reminiscent of “We’re off to see the Wizard”, but in which Dorothy and her cronies sound a bit tipsy, with the yellow brick road a winding, meandering path indeed.



*SQ1 – MS2: Gordon Jacob turns the rhythmic figure to obtain another style
(© June Emerson Edition)*



The Australian Saxophone quartet recorded Gordon Jacob's First Saxophone Quartet

MISCELLANIES – 1976

(published by June Emerson Edition)

Saxophonist, clarinettist and composer Paul Harvey did a lot of work to make the classical saxophone more known in Great Britain. In 1976 he organised the World Saxophone Congress in London and for that occasion he asked Gordon Jacob, who was then one of the most popular composers of the older generation in England, to write a piece with band-accompaniment to be premiered at the Congress. The result was *Miscellanies*, a collection of seven pieces for alto saxophone and band. This seven short pieces are titled:

1) Scalic Prelude

- Allegro giocoso, crotchet = 120 to 126
- in 4/4 – B flat Major – 43 measures
- saxophone part from low E to high D



(Miscellanies MS 1, courtesy June Emerson Editions)

The orchestra opens this movement with a pizzicato played B flat triad by euphonium and basses followed by a descending B flat scale. On the repeat of this two measure motive the saxophone starts playing down and up the B flat scale. A second theme leads to a short B flat minor fragment which is followed by a new theme based on the material of the second theme and which is accompanied by augmented chords played by muted cornets (Miscellanies MS 1). Getting back to the B flat major scale this movement seems to end in a pianissimo played motive of chromatism by the clarinets, but a firm chord, fortissimo, keeps the audience awake.

2) Folk Song

- Moderato con moto, crotchet = 108
- in 4/4 – Eb Major (B flat mixo Lydian) – 39 measures
- saxophone part from low F to high A



(Miscellanies MS 2, courtesy June Emerson Editions)

The saxophone plays the eight measure theme unaccompanied (Miscellanies MS 2). The repeat, with just a little variation is accompanied by flute and clarinets playing parallel triads in a high register. The clarinets take over the theme and as the sax enters again the accompaniment is a little more polyphonic. Having the soloist playing the theme filled up with quavers, a solo clarinet answers in canon. Soft chords bring this movement to an end.

3) Moto Perpetuo

- Allegro molto, quasi presto, crotchet = 114 to 120
- in 2/4 – c minor – 84 measures
- saxophone part from low C to high E flat

Witty and spirited is the effect of long semi quaver lines in the saxophone part and a pizzicato-like accompaniment in the orchestra. The moto perpetuo is formed by the dialogue in semi quavers between the soloist and the orchestra, just two times interrupted by a two measure more rhythmic motive in the orchestra.



(Miscellanies MS 3, courtesy June Emerson Editions)

4) Interlude

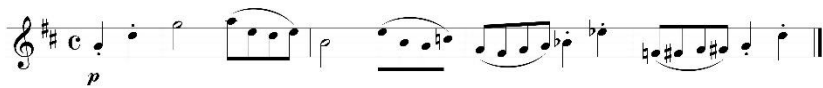
- Andante, crotchet = c. 63
- in 4/4 – F Major – 40 measures
- saxophone part from low B to high D

Although this movement starts in 4/4 time, the greater part is built on a 3/4 time. The five measure introduction is based on major seconds and minor sevenths, which gives it a bit dissonant character. Following the introduction, an Allegretto³⁴ with no other tempo indication has a light “Um-Pah” accompaniment in horns, trombone and tuba which takes care that the music gets a little movement, which is also reinforced by the semi quavers and semi quaver-triplets in the solo part. There is a constant polyphonic dialogue between the soloist and flute, oboe and clarinets. The pianissimo B natural that is to be played before the last note, is a small tricky point in this movement.

³⁴ N.B. the term Allegretto at measure 6 in the score for saxophone and band is not mentioned in edition for saxophone and piano.

5) Gavotte

- Tempo di Gavotta, crotchet = c. 132
- in 4/4 – F Major – 27 measures
- saxophone part from low D flat to high D



(Miscellanies MS4, courtesy June Emerson Editions)

Dance-like with some unexpected modulations, this movement has a slight “Prokofieff-flair” (Miscellanies MS 4). Jacob again works with some unusual chords and uses with dynamic contrasts to create tension. Interesting is the instrumentation which is very coloured and makes use of different instrument groups in the orchestra. So are the solo passages frequently accompanied by the clarinets and in the middle part open saxophone passages are in dialogue with several short brass interruptions in various combinations. Nice are the measures where piccolo, flute and clarinet play the theme and the soloist counters with a descending scale motive. The last measures are filled in with just clarinets, euphonium and tuba and have to be played without slowing down. This Gavotte is an overall light-hearted but also well-constructed movement.

6) Dirge

- Largo, crotchet = 40
- in 4/4 – g minor – 27 measures
- saxophone part from low E to high C



(Miscellanies MS 5, three rhythmic patrons in the dirge)

A Dirge is a slow, mournful composition as a funeral hymn or lament. It can be used during the Office of Death in Roman Catholic Church. This movement shows a repeated rhythmic motive of a quarter rest and three quarter notes in the bass line. This, including some light accents in the solo melody (Miscellanies MS 5) gives an idea of shifting the measure accent. The accompaniment is filled in by the brass instruments, whereas the saxophone mourns its melody only trombones, euphonium and tuba are playing. This gives a dark timbre to this movement.

7) Quick March

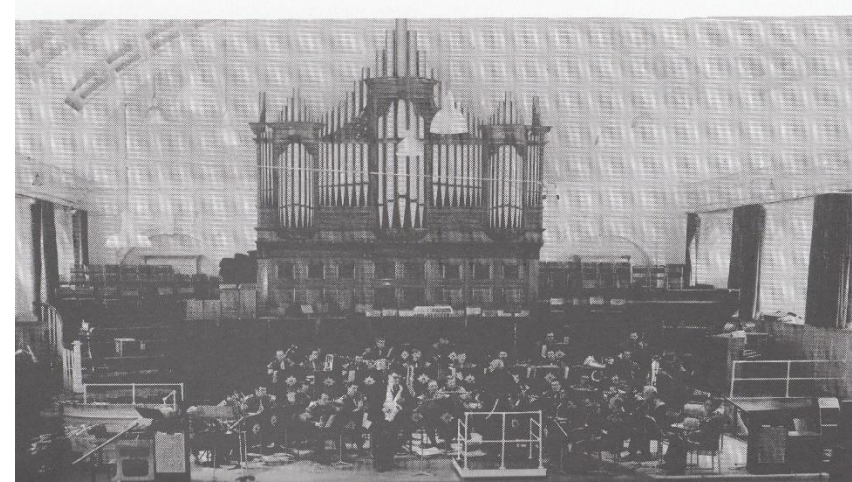
- Vivace alla Marcia, dotted crotchet = c. 120
- in 6/8 – B flat Major – 170 measures
- saxophone part from low C to high D

This Quick March longs for a good breath control, because of the length of the phrases. Although it needs some technical facility it is not a very difficult piece. Nevertheless played at a lively speed, perhaps a little bit faster than the tempo indicated by the composer, it gives a good effect. The last two measures could be played an octave higher, thus going up to harmonic G.

Miscellanies is not a very difficult piece of music and is well within the technical limits of a younger, talented player. Nevertheless it is a colourful work, which offers the soloist to demonstrate his technical skills as well as his musicality. Jacob's instrumentation of the piece for wind orchestra adds an interesting dimension to this work. It is amazing to see how he knows to combine the saxophone timbre with all the instrumental possibilities a wind band has to offer. The total time of the work is approximately 12 minutes and Harvey, who premiered the piece during the opening evening of the World Saxophone Congress in 1976 in London with the band of the Irish Guards, played it several times. Not only with band-accompaniment, but also in a version with clarinet-choir and in the version with piano.

One of this performances was mentioned in the Harrow Observer of March 3, 1978. Harvey performs the *Miscellanies* and his own *Concertino for soprano saxophone* during a youth concert at

Copland High school in Wembley. He is accompanied by the Brent youth Concert band conducted by John Mackenzie.



Paul Harvey performing Miscellanies with the Band of the Coldstream Guards (courtesy Paul Harvey)

The version for clarinet choir grew from an exercise Harvey gave his instrumentation students. All of them had to transcribe one of the movements. According to Paul Harvey the score and parts are lost.³⁵ Harvey also states, that Gordon Jacob did also make a version for alto saxophone and strings³⁶, but that he never performed the *Miscellanies* in that version. Probably this version has only be mentioned, or is lost or has even never come to paper,

³⁵ Letter from Paul Harvey to Ton Verhiel

³⁶ *ibid.*

then none of the persons I contacted could tell anything about this arrangement.³⁷ It would surely be an interesting addition.

The success of his quartet and the enthusiasm of Paul Harvey for his compositions were probably the reason for Gordon Jacob to compose a work for saxophone and band for the London World Saxophone Congress. Harvey returned from a first rehearsal on the work at Kneller Hall and wrote to Jacob: “*I have never enjoyed any work as much at the first play through*” and “*there is so much lovely music in it; every one of the pieces is a little gem*”.³⁸

Harvey tries to get some more performances, even before the Congress. In the same letter he predicts, that the *Miscellanies* “*will be a winner with all saxophonists who have access to a band (and in the USA, which one hasn’t)*”³⁹ Here the prediction of Harvey did not fully come out as he had hoped, then as far is known, *Miscellanies* was seldom (or even never)⁴⁰ performed outside Great Britain in its original version with wind orchestra.. Even in UK itself I could not trace another performance of the piece with band

³⁷ Also Philip L. Scowcroft mentions this transcription, but he probably got his information from Paul Harvey who was a contemporary of Scowcroft in Sheffield.

<http://www.musicweb-international.com/classrev/2001/July01/britsax.htm>

³⁸ Letter from Paul Harvey to Gordon Jacob – 16th February 1976

³⁹ *ibid.*

then the ones by Paul Harvey. Nevertheless I found it on the repertoire of the very active Australian saxophonist Jason Xanthoudakis⁴¹ and some movements were played in the period 1992 to 1995 the USA by students of the Henderson University. Recently some of the movements were performed by an Asian student saxophonist, who has placed his performance with piano accompaniment on the popular music site You Tube. *Miscellanies* is also listed on many saxophone examination lists. Not only in Great Britain, but I also found it on lists of music institutes in Canada and South Africa. So there is still interest in the educational hemisphere for this work.

In the period 2010 to now the work was sold six times, which could indicate that there were at least some performances in the last ten years.⁴²

⁴⁰ I did not find any performance of the *Miscellanies* (with band) outside the UK, nor could the publisher provide any information on such a performance.

⁴¹ A mail to Jason Xanthoudakis from summer 2011 on an eventual performance of the *Miscellanies* stayed unanswered. This saxophonist does also have the *Rhapsody* in his repertoire. In 2019 it was not possible to trace this information again.

⁴² Mail September 24, 2019 from Rachel Emerson to Ton Verhiel

SECOND SAXOPHONE QUARTET – 1979

(published by June Emerson Edition)

Jacob himself thought about his second saxophone quartet, that it was not as good as the first one. *“It is difficult to repeat these things”* he said. Nevertheless this second quartet is a significant piece for the quartet repertoire. It was, as the first quartet, written on behalf of the London Saxophone Quartet. They commissioned it for their 10 years anniversary concert. Jacob composed it in March 1979 and the London Saxophone Quartet premiered it on November 10 of the same year. In January 1980 it was broadcasted for the first time.

As the first Quartet this second one is also in four parts.

1) Moderato, poco pomposo (crotchet = 66) – Allegro (crotchet = 120)

The pomposo introduction (only six bars) is formed by two themes. Soprano and alto saxophones are playing an on augmented fifths and diminished fourths based melody, whereas tenor and baritone are playing a contrasting, chromatic descending theme. The Allegro starts with a happy sounding march theme that develops into several melodies in different styles: syncopation, pizzicato and a nice “poco meno mosso” in legato-style.

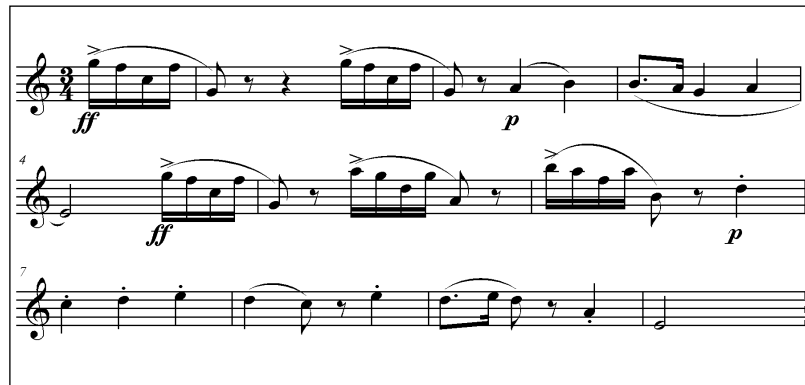
Flashes of themes form the bridge that leads to a repeat of the march-theme. After a short Andante without the soprano saxophone a two bars chromatic unison leads to the finale of part one.

2) Adagio (crotchet = 52)

The Adagio opens quite homophonic with just a contrasting line in the baritone saxophone. The nice dissonant played pianissimo give this movement an introvert character. After a polyphonic middle part, some fast runs lead into the tranquillo and the Adagio ends in very soft open fifth.

3) Allegro moderato (crotchet = 126)

This part has a style between a Scherzo and a Minuet. It opens with forceful played semi quavers that contrast with piano played melodic motives. In this third movement Jacob frequently uses the hemiole, as to suggest a 2/4 in a 3/4 time. The Trio has an outstanding melodic line for the baritone saxophone, which is taken over by the soprano.



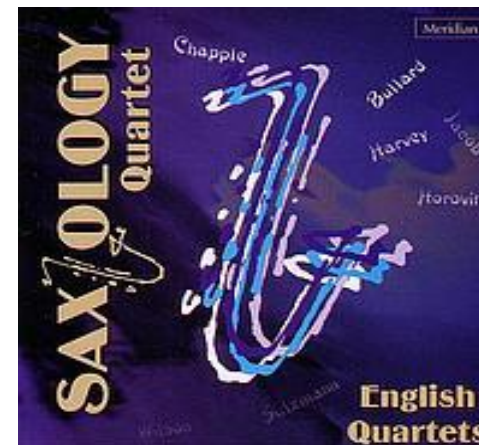
Beginning of part 3: soprano saxophone (© June Emerson Edition)

4) Larghetto – Allegro

The first six bars shows the same thematic material as the introduction in the first movement. Alto and baritone sax are a pair and soprano and tenor form a couple. In the pianissimo this introduction gives a totally different character. The following Allegro is in sounding B flat minor, which gives some tricky technical passages, especially when the tempo is taken somewhat faster than the indicated 120 crotchets per minute. After some short passages in E-minor and back to B flat minor Jacob modulates the piece to Bb major and a *piu vivo* with

thematic material from the third movement closes this fourth movement of his second saxophone quartet.

Although this quartet is in the repertoire of many quartets (with among others the Luxemburg Saxophone Quartet, which performed in 2008), it is not as popular as its sister. Nevertheless Gordon Jacob was quite fond of this composition. There is one recording by the Saxology Quartet (1999). The interpretation of this group does lack a great deal of spirit. It is well performed, nice in tune and tone, but misses the energy this quartet needs.



The CD "English Quartets" by the Saxology Saxophone Quartet contains Gordon Jacob's 2nd Saxophone Quartet

An interesting performance can be found on You Tube by the Reedy River saxophone Quartet from South Carolina, USA.⁴³

⁴³ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NMCMcfP1A5c>

DUO – 1981

(published by June Emerson Edition)

The last work that Gordon Jacob composed for the saxophone was again written on request of Paul Harvey. Looking for repertoire to play with his talented pupil Catherine Shrubshall, he stimulated Jacob to write a piece for soprano and alto saxophones. The *Duo* was the result. It is in three parts. The opening Allegro is fast and witty with lots of imitation, dialogue and chromatics in Bb major. The second part is an Adagio with a main-theme that is first played by the soprano and after a second theme with sixteenth notes taken over by the alto, leading to some dramatic sevenths and to the final, very soft G-Eb third.

Moderato

Soprano Sax. *mf*

Alto Sax. *mf*

Tema from Variations on an old Five-finger Exercise
(courtesy June Emerson Editions)

The last part is called “Variations on an old Five-finger Exercise”. Jacob states, that the theme is found in Smallwood’s Pianoforte Tutor, which is a piano-course that was often used in Victorian and early Edwardian days. (before 1900 to 1935: the period that Queen Victoria and her successor King Edward reigned Great Britain) It was the very first exercise he ever learned to play. This little eight-bar theme has eight variations that grow in complexity and virtuosity.

Variation 1 – same speed as the Tema, but melody in alto

saxophone and quavers in the soprano saxophone - B flat major

Variation 2 – 6/8 - Allegro (dotted crotchet = c. 132)

Variation 3 – 2/4 – Allegro molto (crotchet = c. 144) – E flat major

Variation 4 – 2/4 – Scherzando (l'istesso tempo) – A flat major

Variation 5 – 4/4 - Poco Adagio (crotchet = c. 52) – B flat minor

Variation 6 – 2/4 - Allegretto (crotchet = c. 76)

Variation 7 – 4/4 - Andante (crotchet = c. 76) – C major

Variation 8 – 2/4 - Allegro molto (crotchet = c. 132) – B flat major

I always enjoyed playing this piece and found out that there exists a recording (which is very hard to get) by the German Tandem-Duo on their CD “Conversations”. It is also regularly performed by another German Duo called “Duo Saxophone Pur”. This Duo, which are Bernd and Isabell Brückner, recorded this work in 2005 on their CD “Pas de Deux”. The Bredaas Saxophone Duo, founded in 2017 and which are Bert Haan and Laetitia Hage also took the piece in their repertoire. The Duo is rather frequently played all

over the world. In the original version as well in the combination with clarinet and alto saxophone. A very musical interpretation of the first movement was played by saxophonists Alastair Penman (UK) and Matthew Lombard (South Africa) as the Palm Duo in 2013 during a concert in the RNCM Concert hall in 2013.⁴⁴

Conclusion:

Gordon Jacob has contributed some very fine pieces to the saxophone repertoire and it is regrettable that he did not write a Concerto or Sonata or another large scaled work for the saxophone. I do not think that his solo-pieces will be performed more often in the future, but his quartets should be in the repertoire of every saxophone quartet in the world.

The first edition of this book dates from 2012. Since that time we must conclude, that the saxophone music by Gordon Jacob is vanishing from the musical saxophone scene. Miscellanies and the Rhapsody are not performed on saxophone anymore and the quartets and the Variations are only incidentally on the concert programmes. Just the Duo is quite popular.

This makes the wish to save an important part of the history of the English classical saxophone to collect all the saxophone compositions by Gordon Jacob on one CD most urgent. Who dares to take the challenge?

For those who are interested in Jacob's works I would like to mention the "Seven Bagatelles" for oboe-solo (Oxford University Press), which work very well on soprano but also on alto saxophone. Another interesting piece for soprano players is the

⁴⁴ <http://www.musicweb-international.com/classrev/2001/July01/britsax.htm>

1938 Oboe Quartet (Novello & Co), which Jacob thought to be one of his best chamber pieces. It would work quite well on soprano saxophone as is with the “Ten Little Pieces” for oboe and piano and the 1976 “Interludes” (Siciliano, Scherzetto, Pastoral, Air) for oboe and piano. Also it would give a nice try to perform the Two Pieces (1953) for two oboes and English horn as a trio of two soprano and one alto saxophone.

And last but not least: Martin Cooper writes on February 10, 1949 in the Daily Herald under the title “Concerto encore”:

“Archie Camden was soloist in Gordon Jacob’s Bassoon Concerto, a light-hearted work with passages that suggest saxophone rather than bassoon.”

I want to thank all persons who were so kind to provide me the information I asked for, but special thanks go to Mr. Geoff Ogram, Mrs. June Emerson and Mrs. Margaret Jacob for their correspondence and information. I also want to mention the fine contacts with Mr. Paul Harvey. His letters, information and the permission to use the photograph from his book “The saxophone” have been very worth full to the contents of this booklet. Thank you also to Rachel Emerson, who provided me with many information on the published music by Gordon Jacob.

Ton Verhiel

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