Michael Gandolfi

Fantasia
for Alto Saxophone
and Orchestra
Instrumentation

2 Flutes  
2 Oboes  
2 Bb Clarinets  
2 Bassoons  
2 French Horns  
2 C Trumpets  
1 Bass Trombone  
Timpani (1 Player)  
Percussion (2 Players)  
  Xylophone  
  Vibraphone  
  Tubular Chimes  
  Medium Ride Cymbal  
  Large Suspended Cymbal  
  Crash Cymbals  
  Small Splash Cymbal  
  Medium Tom-Tom (c. 12")  
  Timbales  
  Tambourine  
  Cowbell  
  Mark Tree  
  Triangle  

Piano  
Harp  
Alto Saxophone solo  
Strings  

Performance Notes:  
This is a C Score. All instruments are written at concert pitch with the exception of the octave transposing instruments. Hence, the doublebass sounds 8va bassa and the xylophone sounds 8va sopr.

Approximate duration: 20 minutes  

Program Listing:  
  I. Rising Steps  
  II. Bolero, Scissors and Paste  
  III. Recitativo Surreale  
  IV. Minimal Security
Program Notes

_Fantasia for Alto Saxophone and Orchestra_ was written for Kenneth Radnofsky and is dedicated to him, Gil Rose and the Boston Modern Orchestra Project. It was funded by a grant from the Fromm Music Foundation.

In September of 2006 I began composing ideas that I thought would constitute the six (or more) brief movements of a twelve-minute piece. However, as I began composing in earnest in late October, I realized that I would settle on four of the ideas and, with the exception of the third movement, develop more lengthy movements resulting in a twenty minute work. Each movement is framed as a unique ‘panel,’ characterized by a singular and specific musical personality and orchestration, enabling the saxophone to reveal different facets of itself in the context of these myriad expressions.

The first movement, _Rising Steps_, is an obvious reference to the scalar construction of the primary material of the piece. However, it also refers to the long range design of the movement, which smoothly rises by one whole-step at its conclusion. I had in mind Bach’s canon #5 in _Musical Offering_, a spiral canon that is constructed to continually rise by step. _Rising Steps_ is similarly designed as a perpetually rising composition, albeit not canonic.

The second movement, _Bolero, Scissors and Paste_, is a ‘snake-charmer’ expose. The ‘bolero’ section is a jazz-infused variation-form in which successive statements of a chaconne feature a developing orchestration and increasing melodic activity that effectively produce one long crescendo. The ‘scissors and paste’ section that follows is characterized by highly chromatic music (in contrast with the modal ‘bolero’ section), reminiscent of mid-twentieth century modernism, whose ideas are literally snipped to varying lengths and juxtaposed against one another. An accompanied cadenza leads to a brief return of the ‘bolero’ followed by a similarly brief statement of the ‘scissors and paste’ music.

The third movement, _Recitativo Surreale_, joins the contemporary world with the Baroque era. A highly chromatic line, composed of motives derived from the primary material from _Rising Steps_, initiates the piece. It soon cadences unexpectedly on a dominant-seventh chord; reminiscent of a harmonic maneuver in a baroque recitative. After a few statements of this material, a full recitative from Henry Purcell’s _Dido and Aneas_ is heard amidst the chromatic swirls. At the midpoint of the movement the entire process is played in mirror image. Therefore what was low is now high, what went up now goes down, etc. When the Purcell quote reappears, the process of inversion produces a recitative that is technically no longer Purcell’s, due to the effects of the mirror-image process; (i.e., what was major is now minor.) However, it still sounds as if it were composed by Purcell. A coda combines both the original and inverted materials, excluding the Purcell quote, resulting in a rich and dark conclusion.

The finale, _Minimal Security_, is a minimalist-infused romp that juxtaposes two ideas; one chromatic, bright and raucous; the other diatonic, dark and wavelike. The sequential treatment of these ideas gradually yields to their existing ‘on top’ of each other and the piece is brought to a close.
I. Rising Steps
Fantasia for Alto Saxophone and Orchestra (J. Rising Steps)
II. Bolero, Scissors and Paste
Fantasia for Alto Saxophone and Orchestra (II. Bolero, Scissors and Paste)
Bolero, Scissors and Paste
III. Recitativo Surreale

\[ \text{\textit{Fantasia for Alto Saxophone and Orchestra (III. Recitativo Surreale)}} \]
III. Recitativo Surreale
Fantasia for Alto Saxophone and Orchestra (III. Recitativo Surreale)
IV. Minimal Security
Fantasia for Alto Saxophone and Orchestra (IF: Minimal Security)
Fantasia for Alto Saxophone and Orchestra (IF: Minimal Security)
Fantasia for Alto Saxophone and Orchestra (IF: Minimal Security)
Fantasia for Alto Saxophone and Orchestra (JF: Minimal Security)