

SUITABLE FOR DANCING:
WORKS FOR HORN AND PIANO BY ALEC WILDER

by

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ABSTRACT

Alec Wilder's works for horn and piano provide numerous opportunities for horn players to explore a variety of musical styles. Wilder's compositional style can be described as a mixture of classical, jazz and popular music. Many of his works for horn were strongly influenced by the technical and musical capabilities of his dear friend John Barrows, a horn player for whom he wrote many pieces. Wilder often composed music that deliberately deviated from what listeners would traditionally expect. When studying Wilder's compositions for horn and piano, one finds that there are many nuances that are characteristic of Wilder's compositional style.

This project is a CD recording of Alec Wilder's Suite for Horn and Piano (1960), Sonata No. 1 for Horn and Piano (1958) and Sonata No. 3 for Horn and Piano (1970). The recording is accompanied by a manuscript that highlights the stylistic similarities among these works and emphasizes the importance of these works in the horn repertoire. Because the history of Alec Wilder is well documented, this manuscript focuses on specific musical elements found in these works. I support my statements by providing examples from all three works.

DEDICATION

To Skip Snead, for your wisdom and guidance over the years. To Dr. Andrew Pettus, for holding me to the highest of standards as a young musician. Finally, to my family and friends for your unconditional love and support. I hope to make you all proud with this work.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would first like to acknowledge my graduate committee for their counsel throughout the process of writing this document. I would like to acknowledge Dr. Edisher Savitski for collaborating with me on the CD that accompanies this document. I would like to thank Tom Wolfe for assisting with the production of the CD that accompanies this document. Last, I would like to acknowledge all of my colleagues and mentors during my time at the University of Alabama. I will forever be thankful for my experiences there.

CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	ii
DEDICATION.....	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	iv
LIST OF MUSICAL EXAMPLES.....	vi
CHAPTER 1 – INTRODUCTION.....	1
CHAPTER 2 - STYLISTIC SIMILARITIES.....	4
CHAPTER 3 – IMPORTANCE.....	20
CHAPTER 4 – CONCLUSION.....	22
CHAPTER 5 – COMPOSER AND PERFORMER BIOGRAPHIES.....	23
REFERENCES.....	27
APPENDIX A: CD FRONT AND BACK MATTER.....	29
APPENDIX B: CD CONTENTS.....	30

LIST OF MUSICAL EXAMPLES

1. Suite for Horn and Piano, V; mm. 38-42.....	5
2. Sonata No. 1 for Horn and Piano, I; mm. 38-41.....	6
3. Sonata No. 3 for Horn and Piano, IV; mm. 4-7.....	7
4. Suite for Horn and Piano, I; m. 50.....	9
5. Sonata No. 1 for Horn and Piano, II; mm. 22-23.....	10
6. Sonata No. 3 for Horn and Piano, III; mm. 75-79.....	11
7. Suite for Horn and Piano, I; mm. 9-10.....	13
8. Sonata No. 1 for Horn and Piano, I; mm. 16-17.....	13
9. Sonata No. 3 for Horn and Piano, II; m. 13.....	14
10. Suite for Horn and Piano, III; mm. 34-36.....	15
11. Sonata No.1 for Horn and Piano, III; mm. 74-78.....	17
12. Sonata No. 3 for Horn and Piano, I; m. 75-80.....	18

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

I was introduced to Alec Wilder's music at the 2012 Southeast Horn Workshop. Upon hearing a performance of his Suite for Horn and Piano, I developed a great interest in Wilder's compositions for horn. The Suite for Horn and Piano was remarkably different than any other work for the horn I had heard. I found the style to be quite intriguing. There were many elements of jazz, but there were also elements of classical and popular music. My experience hearing Wilder's Suite for Horn and Piano urged me to conduct research and develop a better understanding of Wilder and his works for horn and piano.

Wilder composed for a variety of other instruments and was an accomplished songwriter. His compositional style was one that almost deliberately avoided typical stylistic labels. He would often alter traditional phrase lengths to deviate from what listeners would typically expect.¹ Wilder's compositions were regarded as "too jazzy" for some classical music enthusiasts and "too classical" or "too pop" for some jazz enthusiasts during his lifetime. This fusion of styles is known as third stream music, a term coined by composer and hornist Gunther Schuller. Schuller defines third stream as music located about halfway between classical and jazz

¹ Schuller, Gunther. "Wilder, Alec." *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online.* (accessed July 2020)

music. Schuller declared that third stream be considered a separate genre in order to appease mainstream enthusiasts who opposed the melding of styles.

Third stream music was performed for the first time in 1957, just one year before Wilder composed sonata No. 1 for Horn and Piano.² Third stream music requires performers to be equally proficient in both jazz and classical music styles. Based on the musical elements found in Sonata No. 1, it is apparent that Wilder's compositional style was influenced by third stream music. Although there were few horn players who were proficient in both styles at the time, Wilder had a close relationship with John Barrows, a virtuoso hornist who was equally proficient in both jazz and classical music.³ In a letter to Barrows, Wilder expressed disdain for the writing of his first sonata for horn and piano, one of the works that can be found on the CD that accompanies this document. Wilder composed this piece for Barrows and had the following to say:

“And when I get to the French horn I'll write a second sonata for you and I'll do my damndest to make it better than the first.”

Despite this statement, Sonata No. 1 remains to be one of Wilder's most popular works for horn and piano. Barrows was also an active chamber musician in New York and has been credited with introducing Wilder to many of his colleagues. Wilder would often compose works for his friends, so his connection to Barrows certainly contributed to the volume of works he

² Schuller, Gunther “Third stream.” *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online.*

³ Balliett, Whitney. *Alec Wilder and His Friends.* Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1974.

composed for the horn. This also led to the development of chamber works for horn and other instruments, most notably music for horn, tuba, and piano.

In fact, Wilder's suites for horn, tuba, and piano are the first known works composed specifically for this instrumentation. The first trio for this sub-genre, Suite No. 1 for Horn, Tuba and Piano, was written for Barrows and tubist Harvey Phillips in 1963.⁴

In addition to solo and chamber music, Wilder composed large-scale works such as operas and musicals. Additionally, he wrote music for several notable singers throughout his career, including Frank Sinatra, Bing Crosby, and Ethel Waters. While I personally enjoy Wilder's compositions for horn and piano, they are not widely performed by horn players. The jazz and popular music elements found in Wilder's works for horn and piano provide great opportunities for performers to explore these styles that are less commonly found in the repertoire. Very few recordings of Wilder's sonatas and suites for horn and piano exist. For this reason, I hope that this document and the accompanying CD recording of Alec Wilder's Suite for Horn and Piano, Sonata No. 1 for Horn and Piano and Sonata No. 3 for Horn and Piano will shed additional light on these compositions and serve as a welcome addition to the few existing recordings of these works.

⁴Woodward, Kristin. "John Barrows and His Contributions to the Horn Literature." DMA diss., Florida State University, 2016.

CHAPTER 2

STYLISTIC SIMILARITIES

Wilder's Suite for Horn and Piano, Sonata No. 1 for Horn and Piano and Sonata No. 3 for Horn and Piano cannot easily be categorized into a particular genre. The harmonic language of these works is regarded as a mixture of French Impressionism and modal harmony, while the pieces themselves follow loosely related suite forms with varying subject matter among the movements.⁵ These works are widely viewed as anomalies among more traditional works. The technical challenges alone require many hours of practice, but the stylistic demands are what I believe cement them as important works in the horn repertoire.

Musical style should dictate a number of elements in a musical performance. Regarding these three pieces, I will highlight the unifying elements of style. This will be accomplished by highlighting the various stylistic elements, including the use of extended techniques that are characteristic of Wilder as a composer. Specifically, I will discuss the following stylistic similarities in this document: range, extended techniques and the various expressive markings

Range

When the horn was first developed as an orchestral instrument, hornists would often

⁵ Maher, James. *American Popular Song: The Great Innovators, 1900–1950*. New York: Oxford Press, 1972.

specialize in one particular register of the instrument. This practice is still continued today, with many hornists declaring themselves as “high” or “low” horn players.⁶ Although this specialization is still somewhat important for orchestral horn players today, the solo horn repertoire tends to ignore these distinctions, requiring players to be equally proficient in all registers of the instrument. This is clearly demonstrated by passages in Wilder’s pieces for horn and piano that utilize the wide pitch range of the horn, oftentimes over the span of a few beats or measures, as seen in an excerpt from the fifth movement of Wilder’s Suite for Horn and Piano.

Example 1. Suite for Horn and Piano, V, mm. 36-42



The passage shown in Example 1 is particularly important for a number of reasons. While it is not a literal repetition, this passage recalls the primary motive stated at the beginning of the movement. Regarding range, this passage covers nearly three-octaves. The highest pitch is a Bb5, just one whole step below the highest pitch in the practical range of the horn, C6. The lowest note in the example is the final pitch, C3. This passage can be quite difficult for hornists. While a descent to the lower register is not at all uncommon in orchestral and solo horn writing, these descents are typically scalar, are arpeggiations or involve pitches in the same harmonic series. In this case, the descent does not fit any of those descriptions. One should recall that this

⁶ Morley-Pegge, R. "The Evolution of the Modern French Horn from 1750 to the Present Day." *Proceedings of the Musical Association* 69 (1942): 35-55.

suite was composed for John Barrows, and the technical elements were likely determined with his skillset in mind. The primary concern with this passage is matching timbre between higher and lower pitches. The goal should be for the pitches in the lower register to be executed with the same clarity as the pitches in the upper register. One pitfall of performing on the horn in a large performance space is that lower pitches can be perceived as less clear to a listener, particularly one who is farther back in the performance hall. Typically, hornists perform with the bell of the instrument facing away from the audience, so this perceived lack of clarity can be exacerbated under these circumstances. In order to account for this, it is recommended that one plays the lower notes at a slightly louder dynamic and with a more open hand position. The result of this is a balanced sound, where pitches in every register sound with the same clarity for the listener.

Example 2. Sonata No.1 for Horn and Piano, I, mm. 38-41

The musical score for Example 2 consists of two staves of music in 4/4 time. The first staff, starting at measure 33, shows a melodic line that begins with a hairpin crescendo and is marked *f legg.* The second staff, starting at measure 41, shows a melodic line that begins with a hairpin crescendo and is marked *accel.* and **Tempo I**.

The passage shown in Example 2 rapidly spans more than a two-octave range. Specifically, the highest pitch is Bb5 and the lowest pitch is Ab3. As in Example 1, issues with matching timbre while descending into the lower register present challenges. One may find that playing this passage exclusively on the Bb side of the horn helps to alleviate this, as pitches are inherently similar in timbre when played on the same side of the horn. Again, as in Example 1, the lower pitches should be played at a slightly louder dynamic and with a more open hand position to account for the perceived lack of clarity as one descends into the lower register.

Example 3. Sonata No. 3 for Horn and Piano, IV, mm. 4-7

IV.



This passage in Example 3 descends from C5 to D3, with ascending perfect fifth leaps in between. This is the primary theme of the movement. A particularly difficult element is the octave slur from D4 to D3. The natural tendency for most hornists is to emphasize the D3 in m.7 rather than the accented D4 that precedes it. This is likely due to the wide aperture and the large volume of air required to successfully execute the D3. Adequate tone production in the lower register is a common issue for less advanced horn players. For this reason, many hornists will likely focus simply on executing the D3, rather than precisely adhering to the instructions preceding it. As Examples 1-3 make clear, Wilder's considerations for range in all three works were remarkably consistent.

Extended Techniques

Extended techniques can be expected in solo horn music composed in the 20th century. Extended techniques can be defined as methods of singing or playing instruments to produce unusual sounds or timbres. One of the most common techniques called for is stopped horn, where the performer seals the bell of the instrument with the right hand. The seal created by the right hand raises the fundamental harmonic of the sounding pitch by a semitone and creates a

particularly striking, nasal tone quality.⁷ Wilder occasionally calls for this technique in his solo and chamber compositions for the horn. However, there are two extended techniques that appear more frequently in these works. Hornists who have studied Alec Wilder's compositions for horn and piano can easily recognize his work at a glance due to the presence of these markings. The two extended techniques are "flares" and "bends." I will discuss these two techniques and will also provide examples of where they occur in all three of the works.

Flares

The first example of a flare occurs in the first movement of Wilder's Suite for Horn and Piano. As it pertains to horn playing, a flare can essentially be interpreted as a glissando or a rip. A glissando is a continuous ascent or descent between two pitches. These are executed in various ways depending on the instrument. Glissandi on piano do not contain all semitones between the first and last pitch because they often occur using only the white keys. Glissandi on the trombone contain every semitone between the starting and ending pitch. A glissando on the horn usually occurs between two pitches in the same harmonic series. For this reason, they contain a succession of all of the harmonics between the starting pitch and the ending pitch. Because most glissandi on the horn occur between two pitches in the same harmonic series, they can be performed without changing valve combinations between the notes.

⁷ Ericson, John. "Understanding Stopped and Muted Horn and Right-Hand Position." http://www.public.asu.edu/~jqerics/ess_play.htm (accessed Dec. 15, 2018)

Example 4. Suite for Horn and Piano, I, m. 50



In the case shown in Example 4, Wilder does not indicate a starting pitch for the flare. When a starting pitch is not indicated for a flare, the performer should execute the flourish slightly before the downbeat. The effect of this flare is similar to that of a grace note flourish. Although a starting pitch is not indicated, the approach should remain the same. A solid technical approach is to begin the flare at least a perfect fifth below the top pitch, using the valve combination necessary to produce the top pitch. This will ensure that the notes of the flourish are all in the same harmonic series. Wilder’s choice to indicate flares in his compositions for horn was likely influenced by John Barrows. As previously stated, Wilder composed the three works discussed in this document for Barrows. While Barrows was an excellent classical musician, he was also well versed in jazz music, having spent many years as a freelancer and commercial musician. Because Wilder composed these pieces for Barrows, he likely did not consider that this terminology would be uncommon for classically trained hornists.⁸ As it pertains to these three works, flares are only indicated in the upper register. This musical gesture can be interpreted as a way of highlighting the highest pitch of the flare. In order to emphasize the importance of this compositional technique and to support how it is characteristic of Wilder

⁸ Woodward, Kristin. “*John Barrows and His Contributions to the Horn Literature.*”: 11-12

as a composer, it is important to note that Wilder indicates this technique in his compositions for other instruments as well, including the tuba. Another example of the flare can be found in the second movement of Wilder's Sonata No. 1 for Horn Piano.

Example 5. Sonata No. 1 for Horn and Piano, II, mm. 22-23



The flare in Example 5 is particularly interesting for a few reasons. First, Wilder specifies a starting pitch for the flare. Second, the flare is executed between F5 and C6. Wilder tends to only indicate flares at the peak of a musical phrase to create a more impactful arrival on the top pitch of the flare. The C6 is not only the high point of this phrase, it is the highest pitch in the entire sonata. Additionally, this flare pushes the performer to the top of the practical range of the instrument. This passage will require great endurance, as the performer will have played an entire movement before this flare occurs. Again, these works were all written for John Barrows, who certainly was capable of executing a C6 with ease. In a dedication to Barrows on the back of his LP titled *John Barrows and His French Horn*, Wilder had the following to say regarding Barrows' ability to play in the upper register of the horn:

“He [Barrows] is the bane of all French Horn players, not only because he plays so brilliantly, but because he seldom, if ever, practices. This, I recall, considerably startled me when, after a rather rocky night, he rose with the dawn, wandered up a side hill with (for some mysterious reason) his horn under his arm and let loose, for the first note of the

day, a high concert F. For those of you who aren't familiar with the instrument, this is the top note of the horn."⁹

This example was chosen because it highlights both Wilder's use of flares and Wilder's use of the horn's wide pitch range in his compositions.

Example 6. Sonata No. 3 for Horn and Piano, III, mm. 75-79



Example 6 shows two different uses of the flare that occur within five measures of each other. The first flare occurs between two written pitches, while the second flare does not. The flare in m.74 of Example 6 is similar to the flare shown in Example 4. The flare in m.79 of Example 6 is similar to the flare shown in Example 5. Example 6 provides evidence that Wilder intended for the two variations of the flare to produce two distinct sounds. Examples 4-6 highlight appearances of this technique in all three of the pieces discussed in this document. The appearance of this technique in all three works solidifies this technique as characteristic of Wilder's writing for the horn.

Bends

⁹ Barrows, John. *John Barrows and his French Horn*. Golden Crest Records, Recital Series RE 7002. LP.

The second extended technique that is commonly found in Wilder's Suite for Horn and Piano, Sonata No. 1 for Horn and Piano and Sonata No.3 for Horn and Piano is the bend. Bends are somewhat more common in modern works for the horn, but did not appear often in the solo horn music of the early to mid-20th century. In Wilder's works for horn and piano, bends can be performed one of two ways. First, a bend can be executed on the horn by cupping the palm of the right hand to cover the bell of the instrument and gradually returning the hand back to the open hand position over a specified duration of time. The bending of the pitch is a result of the fundamental harmonic of the written pitch being lowered by a semitone when the palm of the hand covers the bell of the horn. This also produces a more muffled sound on the lower pitch. This kind of bend is shown in examples 7 and 8 below. The result of this bend sounds similar to that of a trombone glissando. The second variation of the bend is used to create a more dramatic effect. The top pitch is played with an open hand position. During the duration of the top pitch, the performer will begin to gradually cover the bell with the right hand to completely seal the bell of the instrument. The arrival of the bottom pitch is highlighted by the nasal timbre created by playing stopped horn. As stated, stopped horn can be performed when the bell of the instrument is completely sealed by the right hand, raising the fundamental harmonic by a semitone and creating a nasal timbre.¹⁰ To correct for the pitch change, the player must transpose accordingly when playing stopped horn. John Barrows' affinity for jazz music has been noted, so it is likely that Wilder included bends in these works for him.

¹⁰ Ericson, John. "Understanding Stopped and Muted Horn and Right-Hand Position."

Example 7. Suite for Horn and Piano, I, mm. 9-10

The first example of a bend occurs in the opening measures of Alec Wilder’s Suite for Horn and Piano. Of the two versions of bends discussed, Wilder only indicates one pitch for this bend. The performer should gradually cover the bell with the right hand to lower the pitch on beat four of m.9 and return to an open hand position by the downbeat of m.10.

Example 8. Sonata No. 1 for Horn and Piano, I, mm. 16-17

Example 8 appears in the first movement of Wilder’s Sonata No. 1 for Horn and Piano. Unlike the bend shown in Example 7, the bend in m.17 of Example 8 is not indicated with a tie. However, the C_b on beat 3 of m.16 is enharmonically equivalent to the B natural on the

downbeat of m.17. Although the notes are not tied, the effect of this bend is similar to the bend shown in example 7. This bend should be executed slightly before the downbeat of m.17, similar to the way one would approach a grace note. The final example of the bend that I will reference occurs in the second movement of Wilder's Sonata No. 3 for Horn and Piano.

Example 9. Sonata No. 3 for Horn and Piano, II, m. 13



Example 9 showcases the second variation of the bend previously mentioned in this document. Rather than returning to the first pitch, Wilder indicates a second pitch to be played stopped. As previously stated, this use of the bend creates a dramatic effect by highlighting the timbral change to stopped horn. It is interesting to note that with both flares and bends, Wilder uses both techniques in various ways.

Expressive Markings

Expression is an important element of musical performance. These works provide many opportunities for artistic freedom and musicality. Because John Barrows was the first to record them, many stylistic decisions made by horn players have been directly or indirectly influenced by Barrows. He had a close relationship with Wilder, which can certainly be an advantage when making considerations for phrasing. It has been well documented that Wilder was thoroughly impressed with Barrows' musicality. *John Barrows and His French Horn* is an LP that features Alec Wilder's Suite for Horn and Piano, Sonata No. 1 for Horn and Piano and Sonata No. 3 for

Horn and Piano. In a tribute that can be found on the back of the LP, Wilder stated the following about Barrows:

“I’ve admired John Barrows since the day I met him all those years ago in the Eastman School. Intelligent, intuitive, witty, warm and a marvelous musician. My praise may sound suspect considering that it’s my music he has played so superbly on this record. But I swear that, had he never played a single note of mine, my respect would be the same.”¹¹

Example 10. Suite for Horn and Piano, III, mm. 34-36

27

mp

31

rit.(poco)

36 a tempo

p

pp

Example 10 occurs in the third movement of Wilder’s Suite for Horn and Piano. This is an example of the various markings Wilder’s uses to indicate that the performer should take expressive liberties. In Example 10, Wilder uses a *ritardando poco* marking to indicate this. This particular passage is important for a few reasons. First, the *ritardando poco* begins between the two highest pitches of the movement. This emphasizes the high point of the phrase. The

¹¹ Barrows, John. *John Barrows and his French Horn*. Golden Crest Records, Recital Series RE 7002. LP.

ritardando should be gradually played until the downbeat of m. 36, where Wilder indicates *a tempo*. This return to the opening tempo is highlighted by an octave slur between F#5 to F#4 in mm. 35-36. This prepares for the large shift in register that occurs in the closing measures of the movement. Of the few recordings that exist of this work, there are many interesting and well-executed interpretations of this passage.

While John Barrows' rendition of this passage is considered by many to be the definitive approach, I found that Thomas Bacon's recording provides another effective interpretation and execution of this passage. When comparing Bacon's interpretation of this passage to other notable recordings of this work, Bacon slightly elongates the rhythm of the F#5 in m.35, further delaying the arrival of the F#4 in m.36. I mention this moment specifically because Bacon's interpretation of this passage directly influenced my approach to this passage on the CD recording that accompanies this manuscript.¹² It is strongly recommended that performers seek as many reference recordings as possible when preparing these works. Hearing multiple interpretations of these passages can potentially lead to the development of new and unique musical ideas.

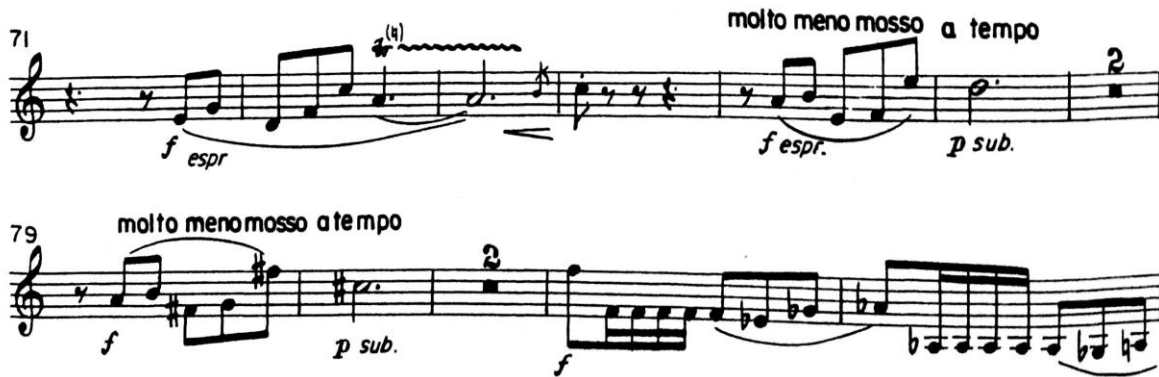
¹² Bacon, Thomas. *Nighthawks*. Summit Records, 1995, CD.

Example 11. Sonata No.1 for Horn and Piano, III, mm. 74-78

The image shows two staves of musical notation. The first staff, labeled with a boxed '72', begins with a first ending bracket over the first measure. The music is in 3/4 time and features a melodic line with various dynamics: *f ad lib.*, *p sub.*, and *cresc.*. The second staff, labeled with a boxed '76', continues the melodic line with markings for *accel.*, a tempo marking of a quarter note = 80, *rit.*, and *f*.

Example 11 occurs in the final movement of Wilder's Sonata No. 1 for Horn and Piano. The expressive marking used by Wilder in this passage is the *ad lib* marking found in m.74. This is another example of a passage where expressive liberties can be taken by the performer. It is important to note that this is the only section in the entire work where the horn plays for an extended period of time without the piano. For this reason, this is the sole moment where the horn functions as a solo instrument. This passage functions as a quasi cadenza. Many of the characteristics regarding range discussed previously in this manuscript are also present in this example. For example, the A#5 in m.78 is a whole step away from the highest pitch in the practical range of the horn. This passage can be executed several different ways. However, it is important that the performer adheres to the accelerando in m.77 to properly set up the tempo for the piano's entrance in m.78.

Example 12. Sonata No.3 for Horn and Piano, I, mm. 75-80



Example 12 occurs in the opening movement of Wilder’s Sonata No. 3. Wilder indicates several expressive markings in this example. In m.75, Wilder uses expressive markings to show changes in both tempo and dynamics, as indicated by the *molto meno mosso* indicated above the measure and the *espressivo* marking indicated below the measure. This is followed by the *a tempo* in mm.76-78, where the piano becomes the primary voice. M.79 is a repetition of the musical gesture presented in m.75. However, this repetition is not a literal one. Instead, this repetition is slightly modified and introduces a new high note. In many ways, m.79 serves as an extension of the previously stated motive in m.75. It is also important to note that both m.75 and m.79 are played solely by the horn, much like the quasi cadenza section shown in example 11. This is another opportunity for the performer to take liberties regarding tempo, rhythm and expression. Out of the few recordings of this passage that exist, I find David Jolley’s interpretation of this passage to be favorable. After John Barrows, Jolley’s recordings of Alec Wilder’s Sonata No. 1 for Horn and Piano, Sonata No. 3 for Horn and Piano and Suite for Horn and Piano are widely regarded as some of the most accurate and authentic. John Barrows’ LP of these works has not been reissued on CD. For this reason, one could argue that David Jolley’s recordings of these works are more accessible in modern times because they exist in CD format

and are also available through various streaming platforms.¹³ Examples 10-12 provide evidence that Wilder encouraged musical freedom in performances. Examples 10-12 also show that Wilder indicated this using various expressive markings. This allows performers to explore unique musical ideas and improve their musicality, which is one of the many reasons I believe these works are so important for horn players.

¹³ Jolley, David. *Alec Wilder: Music for Horn*. Arabesque Records, 2008, CD.

CHAPTER 3

IMPORTANCE

I believe that Wilder's Suite for Horn and Piano, Sonata No.1 for Horn and Piano and Sonata No.3 for Horn and Piano are important fixtures in the horn repertoire for a number of reasons. First, these works provide opportunities for horn players to play in a number of different styles. They are a great example of the melding of classical and jazz styles that became prevalent in the 20th century. Many horn players struggle with playing jazz music due to the fact that an overwhelming majority of the horn repertoire does not require performers to play in that style. Being proficient in both classical and jazz styles will potentially lead to more performance opportunities for horn players. It also allows for more stylistic variety when programming a recital. The three works discussed in this document also present unique challenges for the performer. As previously stated, Wilder deliberately avoided stylistic labels for his compositions and would often deviate from traditional expectations. For example, the final movement of Wilder's Sonata No.3 for Horn and Piano is a waltz. However, the rhythmic emphasis is placed heavily on beat three. This creates a "weak-weak-strong," rather than the traditional "strong-weak-weak" construction of beats found in a typical waltz. This is an example of how preparing these works can provide opportunities for performers to challenge their musical instincts and step out of their comfort zones. This kind of challenge can be particularly important for advanced and professional players. Last, these works contribute to the development of fundamentals and musicianship. For example, all three of the pieces discussed in this document require that the

performer be proficient in all registers of the instrument, and there are several passages that create opportunities to play in the extremities of the register. There are also numerous passages in all three works that provide opportunities for musical expression, as evidenced by the examples shown in this manuscript.

CHAPTER 4

CONCLUSION

Alec Wilder's Suite for Horn and Piano, Sonata No.1 for Horn and Piano and Sonata 3 for Horn and Piano are true masterworks of the repertoire. Wilder's unique compositional style provides hornists with unique musical and technical opportunities to develop as performers. Wilder's history as a person and as a composer is well documented, and many notable scholarly documents have been written on the topic within the last decade. However, very few recordings of these works have been produced during this time. It is my hope that this doctoral project, particularly the CD that accompanies this manuscript, will shed additional light on Wilder's writing for the horn while also serving as a source of entertainment for listeners worldwide.

CHAPTER 5

COMPOSER AND PERFORMER BIOGRAPHIES

Alec Wilder (1907-1980) was born in Rochester New York. Although he was mostly self-taught, Wilder received additional instruction in composition at the Eastman School of Music. Wilder was an accomplished songwriter and wrote songs for several notable artists, including Frank Sinatra, Bing Crosby and Ethel Waters. Sinatra can be credited partially for the promotion of Wilder's music at the time. Around 1950, Wilder began composing solo and chamber works for instruments. Wilder composed over 300 works for instruments, varying in instrumentation. Wilder's harmonic language is widely regarded as a melding of French Impressionism and modal writing. Alec Wilder also had a preference of composing pieces in loosely linked suite forms. Heralded as an "American Original," Wilder's compositional style was authentic and unique. ¹⁴

Joshua Williams has rapidly established himself as a rising star in this generation of horn artists. In 2017, he was awarded the First-Prize in the professional division of the International Horn Competition of America. As the top prize winner in this premier international competition, Joshua has been recognized as one of the outstanding soloists of his generation. Prior to this achievement, Joshua has been a first prize winner in a variety of other competitions sponsored by

¹⁴ Balliett, Whitney. *Alec Wilder and His Friends*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1974.

the International Horn Society and its constituent regional units, including solo competitions, orchestral excerpt competitions (both high horn and low horn), and quartet competitions.

As a soloist, Williams maintains a high profile as a national and internationally recognized artist. He has been a featured artist at the Southeast Horn Workshop and the International Horn Symposium. He has performed as a soloist with a number of notable performing ensembles, including the Detroit Symphony Orchestra and The United States Army Field Band. He has also been a frequent guest artist at universities and schools throughout the United States.

Williams is also an active orchestral musician. He has performed with numerous orchestras throughout the United States, including the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra, the Meridian Symphony Orchestra and the Tuscaloosa Symphony Orchestra.

Joshua is a native of Tuscaloosa, Alabama and began horn studies with Charles (Skip) Snead at the University of Alabama when he was in high school. He has studied with Snead for over 10 years, having completed his BM, and MM degrees at the University of Alabama. He is currently a DMA candidate at the University of Alabama. Joshua performs exclusively on an instrument hand-crafted by Schmiedhäuser Orchestral Horns.

Dr. Edisher Savitski has enjoyed critical acclaim throughout his career: “As each of Savitski’s convulsive trills and ominous chords would hang in the air, it became clearer that indeed something special was happening. We will be lucky to hear Scriabin played anywhere near this powerfully any time soon” (Jack Walton, South Bend Tribune). “The piano of Edisher Savitski prays, laments and also makes joyful sounds; This amazing Georgian simply takes off to the sky!” (Hanuh Ron, Yediot Akhronot, Israel).

He has been appearing as a soloist with: Mariinsky Theatre Orchestra, Minnesota Orchestra, Utah Symphony, Pacific Symphony among many others, and has been performing at prestigious venues worldwide. To name a few: at Carnegie Zankel Hall and Carnegie Weill Hall, New York; Wigmore Hall, London; Great Hall of Mozarteum, Salzburg, Austria; Mariinsky Theater, St. Petersburg, Russia; Teatro alla Scala, Milan, Italy as well as in other venues in USA, Germany, Spain, Italy, Portugal, Switzerland, France, Russia, United Kingdom, Israel, Austria, Morocco, Japan and New Zealand.

Dr. Savitski has appeared at major music festivals such as Salzburg Festival, Austria; Gilmore Keyboard Festival, Ravinia Festival, USA; Ruhr Festival, Germany; Ravenna Festival, Stresa Festival, Maggio Musicale Festival in Florence, MITO Festival, Italy. His performances were also heard in Grande Auditorio at Temporada Gulbenkian de Musica in Lisbon, Portugal; at Teatro la Fenice, Venice; Stadt-Casino Musiksaal in Basel, Switzerland; Salle Cortot in Paris, France; at Dame Myra Hess series in Chicago; Rachmaninoff and Tchaikovsky festivals through Pittsburgh Symphony.

Edisher Savitski is the first prizewinner of the Third International Piano-E-Competition in 2006 and the Hilton Head International Piano Competition in 2001, and took top prizes at the First International Piano-E-Competition in Minneapolis and the William S. Byrd International Piano Competition in Michigan.

In November 2007, Dr. Savitski became first pianist who performed from his home in South Bend, Indiana on Yamaha Disklavier piano that was connected to another Disklavier piano in the Recital Hall of Yamaha Artist Services International in New York City, in an unprecedented live performance/press conference.

Dr. Edisher Savitski's performances have been frequently broadcasted on live TV and radio throughout Europe and USA. In 2007 Savitski's CD was released on Schubert Club's Ten Thousand Lakes label. He is a Yamaha Artist.

Born in Tbilisi, Georgia, Dr. Edisher Savitski studied in central music school with Maya Beridze and later in the Tbilisi Conservatory with professor Nana Khubutia. During this time he became a prizewinner of the international charity program "New Names", Russia, and won collaborative piano competition arranged at the Tbilisi State Conservatory. In 1998 he joined the renowned Alexander Toradze Piano Studio at Indiana University South Bend, where he earned Master's degree, Artist diploma, and has been awarded with the Performers Certificate. In Spring 2013 he earned a Doctor of Musical Arts degree in performance from Michigan State University.

Currently Dr. Savitski is an assistant professor at the University of Alabama School of Music.

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APPENDIX A: CD FRONT AND BACK MATTER

Suitable for Dancing



Music for Horn

Joshua Williams, Horn

Joshua Williams

Horn

Suite for Horn and Piano

Alec Wilder

- I. Danse Quixotic
- II. Slow and Sweet
- III. Song
- IV. Epilogue
- V. Suitable for Dancing

Sonata No.1 for Horn and Piano

Alec Wilder

- I. Allegro
- II. Andante (rock it sweetly)
- III. Allegro Giocoso

Sonata No. 3 for Horn and Piano

Alec Wilder

- I. Moderately fast
- II. Slowly
- III. With a solid beat and jazz feeling
- IV. Tempo di valse - Joyously



Recorded in the University of
Alabama Recording Studio.

Joshua Williams, Horn

Edisher Savitski, Piano

Tom Wolfe, Producer

APPENDIX B: CD CONTENTS

Alec Wilder.....Suite for Horn and Piano

- I. Danse Quixotic
- II. Slow and Sweet
- III. Song
- IV. Epilogue
- V. Suitable for Dancing

Alec Wilder.....Sonata No.1 for Horn and Piano

- I. Allegro
- II. Andante (rock it sweetly)
- III. Allegro Giocoso

Alec Wilder.....Sonata No.3 for Horn and Piano

- I. Moderately fast
- II. Slowly
- III. With a solid beat and jazz feeling
- IV. Tempo di Valse – Joyously