

There's always one

for sax quartet

J. Simon van der Walt

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Performance notes

Overview

The four players take the stage behind their stands, in instrument order. After a brief romantic phrase and a mysterious passage in trills, they kick into a syncopated jazz passage in four parallel parts. Suddenly the soprano player stops and goes to stand in front of the group, who continue to play the jazz passage as if nothing had happened. At the end of this passage the remaining players all take one step left, and start playing the passage again, evidently reading from the wrong music stand. Simultaneously with this the soprano player plays another mysterious trill, then falls silent again, still standing in front of the group.

Next the alto player, who had been playing from the soprano stand, decides to take leave of absence, and goes upstage; at the same moment the soprano player rejoins the group, but goes to the baritone stand. Again, as the jazz riff finishes and starts again, the three players take one step left, while the alto player, back to the audience, essays a trill.

This pantomime continues, with the alto player rejoining the group at the bari stand, while the tenor player comes down the front for a wee trill. By the time the baritone player sets off upstage, we know what to expect, however...

The baritone player (there's always one!) decides, instead of a trill, to launch into a wild avante garde improvisation; squeals, honks, wild flurries of notes, shouting, multiphonics, tongue slaps... The other three players come to the end of the passage as usual, but the bari player carries on for a while oblivious. After a time, it dawns that something is wrong; the solo peters out, and somewhat sheepishly the miscreant returns to home base.

Actually, having gone around in circles, all the players are back at their correct stands. Once again, we hear the mysterious trills and, following one last inscrutable theatrical gesture, the music closes by recapitulating the lush phrase with which it opened.

General notes

- No conventional 'score' exists for this work, in the sense of a two-dimensional musical representation of all the events in time. However the directions in the parts taken together with the diagrams and texts below are sufficient to reconstruct the piece
- Each copy contains all the parts, so that everyone can walk through the piece in the comfort of their own bedroom
- Whilst it is hardly full-on performance art, there are obviously dimensions to this piece which go beyond merely standing there and playing the notes. The baritone player in particular has to find a way to sell the gag; the other players will be fine if they play it absolutely straight and deadpan. One might want to enlist the directorial input of a willing thesp in developing the piece
- It would be much easier to perform standing, although hopping from chair to chair might not be out of the question. In which case, substitute a dramatic freeze for the step back in b56.

- If the baritone player really, really doesn't want the exposure, there are two possibilities. One is to swap the whole line around, so that the soprano takes the baritone's role; but keeping the music on the same stands. This will be ~~a~~ little very confusing, and may involve relabelling some of the instructions. Another way to go would be to swap instruments just for this piece, and let someone who feels up for it play bari, while the bari player deps elsewhere
- Don't expect to sight-read this piece! I would suggest walking it through several times first, perhaps even without instruments. There is no time to read the instructions during the performance; everyone must learn where they are to go and what they are to do. Fortunately, it is all very simple and logical
- Each player has a moment where they have to detect something going on behind them, without actually turning around and looking. I am convinced that, with a little practice, this will be simple. If it is a real problem knowing when to move, either work it out and count bars, or stand so that you can see a little out of the corner of your eye
- For the trills, each player picks their own notes at random. Keep this as varied as possible; try not to fall into the habit of playing the same thing every time. Under no circumstances must the players consult one another over what notes to play. If you want to expand the trills into wider intervals than semitones or tones (ie tremolos) that is fine as well
- For the 'air only' trills in bb 8 and 54, finger the trill vigorously whilst blowing as much air as is possible through the instrument without there being any danger of the reed speaking
- The most important thing about the baritone solo is that it must be completely over the top! It does not have to conform to any musical style or precept, whether jazz-based or otherwise, although, if you want to take the opportunity to express something musically valid of your own, so much the better. But keep it loud, and busy!
- The way the parts work is, start at the top of the page on the correct stand and follow the music through, looking out for alphabetical cues in the music which refer to your instrument. When you hit one, look for the corresponding instruction on the right hand page, and carry it out. Assuming I haven't made any mistakes, you should always find a letter with your name on it where you need it; the diagram below should also help in resolving any ambiguities
- Numbers in circles refer to the four music stands, not bar numbers
- The jazzy passage at P is identical in each part, but cunningly transposed in such a way that it 'works', after a fashion, even if you are playing from a part apparently in the wrong transposition. In other words, play as written; don't try to transpose your part to make it 'right'! Don't forget to take into account the change of key signature as you swap stands. Phrase this passage exactly as if you were reading a big band part; more Kenton than Ellington, though

Duration ~5 mins

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Start

[FOH]

① ② ③ ④
S A T B

A

S
① ② ③ ④
A T B

B

S
① ② ③ ④
A ← T ← B ←

C

① ② ③ ④
T B S
A

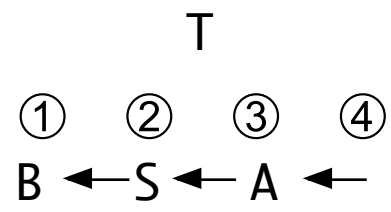
D

① ② ③ ④
T ← B ← S ←
V

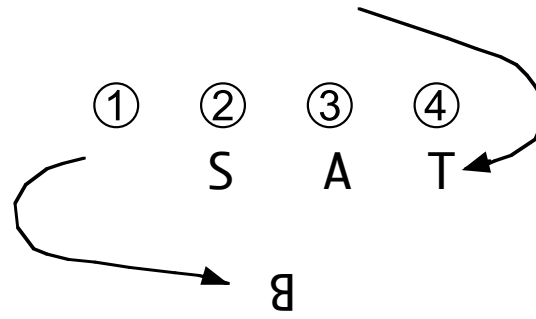
E

T
① ② ③ ④
B S A

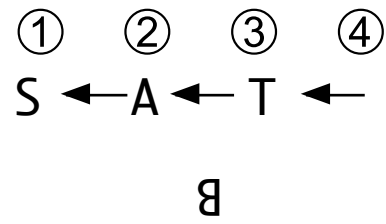
F



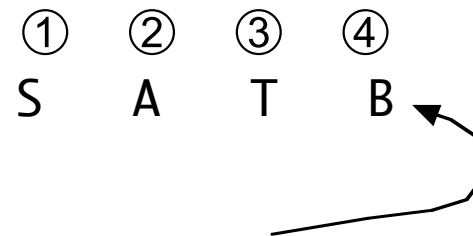
G



H



I



Stand ① (Soprano)

There's always one

J. Simon van der Walt

♩ = 80 Ravishing

♩ = 90 Trills; pick random pitches, always different

Freeze! (...but keep time exactly)

6 *tr* *mp* *air only* *f*

14 Swing

19

24

29

34 Sop A

39 Alto C Ten E Bari G

45

I

51 Wait for baritone solo to finish, and bari player to return to ④. Do not register or respond to bari player in any way.

J

♩ = 90 Trills come sopra

All take one step backwards, together, then continue;

52 *tr* *mp* *air only* 4 X

♩ = 80 Straight 8's come prima

Rall

57 *f* *mf warmly*

Sop A Stop here, move smartly to downstage centre, in front of ensemble, facing audience
When other players swap places & start P again (B), play soft trill on any pitch, about four bars long, then wait; remain d/s centre, facing audience
When alto stops and moves to back (C), move to ④, and follow instructions there

Alto C Stop here, move smartly to upstage centre, behind ensemble, back to audience
When other players swap places & start P again (D), play loud trill on any pitch, about four bars long, then wait; remain u/s centre, back to audience
When tenor stops and moves to front (E), move to ④, and follow instructions there

Ten E Stop here, move smartly to downstage centre, in front of ensemble, facing audience
When other players swap places & start P again (F), play soft trill on any pitch, about four bars long, then wait; remain d/s centre, facing audience
When bari stops and moves to front (G), move to ④, and follow instructions there

Bari G Stop here, move smartly to upstage centre, behind ensemble, back to audience
When other players swap places & start P again (H), commence wild, frenzied avant garde solo ad lib
Continue this after other players have finished P (now at I)
After a little while, you notice that other players have stopped
Start to wind down your solo, as if slightly embarrassed
Eventually, peter out completely, return to ④, and follow instructions (Bari I) there

Stand ② (Alto)

There's always one

J. Simon van der Walt

♩ = 80 Ravishing

f

Rall - - - - -

♩ = 90

Trills; pick random pitches, always different

Freeze! (...but keep time exactly)

2

mp *air only* *f*

14 Swing

Alto B, Ten D, Bari F, Sop H

I Wait for baritone solo to finish, and bari player to return to ④. Do not register or respond to bari player in any way.

J

♩ = 90 Trills come sopra

4 X

mp *air only*

All take one step backwards, together, then continue;

♩ = 80 Straight 8's come prima

f *mf warmly*

Rall - - - - -

Alto B Step left to ①, and play P again from that stand (*attacca*)
Follow instructions when you get to Alto C

Ten D Step left to ①, and play P again from that stand (*attacca*)
Follow instructions when you get to Ten E

Bari F Step left to ①, and play P again from that stand (*attacca*)
Follow instructions when you get to Bari G

Sop H Step left to ①, and play P again from that stand (*attacca*)
When you finish P, go straight on to I

Stand ③ (Tenor)

There's always one

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♩ = 80 Ravishing

f Rall - - - - -

♩ = 90

Trills; pick random pitches, always different

Freeze! (...but keep time exactly)

2

mp *air only* *f*

14 Swing

P

Ten B, Bari D, Sop F, Alto H

I Wait for baritone solo to finish, and bari player to return to ④. Do not register or respond to bari player in any way.

J ♩ = 90 Trills come sopra

All take one step backwards, together, then continue;

4 X

mp *air only* *f*

♩ = 80 Straight 8's come prima

f Rall - - - - - *mf warmly*

Ten B Step left to ②, and play P again from that stand (*attacca*)
Follow instructions when you get to Tenor D

Bari D Step left to ②, and play P again from that stand (*attacca*)
Follow instructions when you get to Bari F

Sop F Step left to ②, and play P again from that stand (*attacca*)
Follow instructions when you get to Sop H

Alto H Step left to ②, and play P again from that stand (*attacca*)
When you finish P, go straight on to I

Stand ④ (Baritone)

There's always one

J. Simon van der Walt

♩ = 80 Ravishing

♩ = 90 Trills; pick random pitches, always different

Freeze! (...but keep time exactly)

tr *tr* *tr*

mp *air only* *f*

2

14 Swing

Bari B

I

J

♩ = 90 Trills come sopra

tr *tr*

mp *air only*

4 X

All take one step backwards, together, then continue;

♩ = 80 Straight 8's come prima

mf warmly

Bari B Step left to ③, and play P again from that stand (*attacca*)
Follow instructions when you get to Bari D

Sop C When you arrive here, wait for alto & tenor to finish P
Then step left with them and play P from ③ (*attacca* - this is D)
Follow instructions when you get to Sop F

Alto E When you arrive here, wait for bari & soprano to finish P
Then step left with them and play P from ③ (*attacca* - this is F)
Follow instructions when you get to Alto H

Ten G When you arrive here, wait for soprano & alto to finish P
Then step left with them and play P from ③ (*attacca* - this is H)
When you finish P, go straight on to I

Bari I When you arrive here, glance apologetically at other players (who ignore you)
Then all play from trills (J) to end of piece