

**James Houlik's Development of
Classical Tenor Saxophone Repertoire**

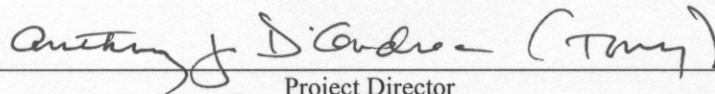
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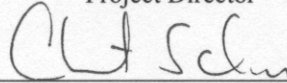
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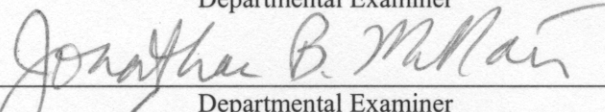
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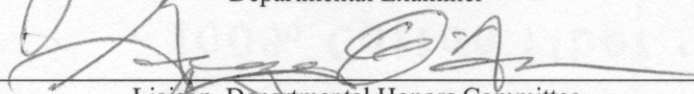
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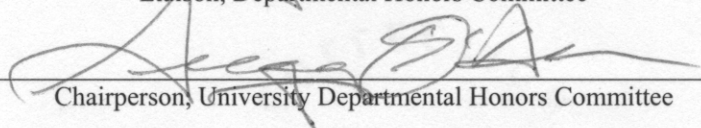
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Table of Contents:

Abstract..... 3

James Houlik: Student of Sigurd Rascher 4

Commissioning an Original Work for the Tenor Saxophone..... 9

Morton Gould’s *Diversions for Tenor Saxophone*.....13

Raising the Money..... 16

Raising the Money if your name is not “James Houlik”..... 20

The Tenor Saxophone is in the Game24

Works Cited..... 26

Abstract

James Houlik has been the predominant developer of the classical tenor saxophone repertoire, and throughout his career has personally been responsible for the commissioning of over eighty pieces. This paper traces the process that Mr. Houlik has utilized over the years to commission such pieces. The author was fortunate enough to spend a week at a saxophone retreat with Mr. Houlik and was thus able to personally interview him about this process. Many of Houlik's own personal insights are found in this paper. The description of the commissioning process, as presented in this paper, accompanies a one-hour recital that the author presented on tenor saxophone of three of the more famous works for which Mr. Houlik has been responsible: Walter S. Hartley's *Poem for Tenor Saxophone*, Robert Ward's *Concerto for Tenor Saxophone*, and Morton Gould's *Diversions for Tenor Saxophone*.

James Houlik: Student of Sigurd Rascher

James Houlik is one of the most famous classical tenor saxophonists ever to have lived- but then, it is only within his lifetime that a classical tenor saxophonist has existed. Houlik's reputation for promoting the instrument and building its repertoire is almost as impressive as his technical skills on it.

“James Houlik has nearly single-handedly developed the 20th Century concerti repertoire for the tenor saxophone. Among the numerous composers commissioned by James Houlik are Morton Gould, Robert Ward, David Ott, Eric Ewazen, and Russell Peck. He remains the only classical tenor saxophone soloist to have performed at Carnegie Hall, Avery Fisher Hall at Lincoln Center, London's Barbican Centre, and the East Room of The White House. His performances have literally taken him around the globe to over forty countries performing with nearly 100 orchestras--a feat unmatched by any other classical saxophonist.”¹

James Houlik was born in Bay Shore, New York on December 4, 1942.² He playfully claims that he originally began to play the saxophone because he thought that it might help him get girls,³ but his love for music matured and he began to consider becoming a high school band director so that he might help share this love with others. He attended the State University of New York at Fredonia, the University of Illinois, and eventually the Eastman School of Music, where he would study with the great alto saxophonist Sigurd Rascher. Houlik did become a teacher, but not a high school band director. He began his teaching career at East Carolina School of the Arts, went on to become the professor of Saxophone at the North

¹ David Wakef, “James Houlik: Biography,” <http://www.stantonmgt.com/Artists/jhoulik.htm> (2003), accessed 23 January 2003.

² Robert Faub, “Saxophone History Timeline 1812-1995,” <http://www2.potsdam.edu/CRANE/mcallitp/timeline> (1996), accessed 2 April 2003.

³ James Houlik, interview by author, Wildacres, NC, 19 June 2002.

Carolina School of the Arts, and he currently is the professor of Saxophone and Chair of Woodwinds at Duquesne University in Pittsburgh. He also conducts numerous master classes and clinics, and has taught hundreds of people how to play the saxophone.⁴ But this is not his true legacy. Houlik simultaneously managed to develop a successful performance career while teaching throughout the years, and he also is credited as being responsible for the creation of most of the pieces in the classical tenor saxophone repertoire. But how exactly did Houlik “single-handedly” develop the repertoire for the tenor saxophone, and why would he have needed to do such a thing?

Due to the relative newness of the saxophone, in combination with its tradition steeped in the genre of jazz music, there has only recently been music composed specifically for the instrument in the classical setting. Early classical saxophonists were forced to make their livings by performing transcriptions of works that had been originally intended for other instruments, such as the cello or oboe. But this state of affairs has changed much in the last fifty years. James Houlik is personally due much credit for the development of the repertoire specifically for classical tenor saxophone. When he was working on his master’s degree, in the early sixties, there were only seven classical pieces in existence specifically written for tenor saxophone. Now, not including transcriptions, there are over seventy-five works for tenor saxophone and orchestra, fifteen works for tenor saxophone and band, three works for tenor saxophone and either band or orchestra, and 306 works for tenor

⁴ James Houlik, “James Houlik: Biography,” <http://jameshoulik.com/> (2003), accessed 2 April 2003.

saxophone and piano.⁵ One might simply attribute this development to the passage of time if it were not for the fact that more than eighty of these works were written because of either Mr. Houlik's personal efforts at having them commissioned or because his fame on the instrument enticed composers to personally dedicate works to him.⁶ Morton Gould was one of these pursued composers, and he too notes Houlik's personal role in the development of the tenor saxophone repertoire. "Incidentally, although there are a number a concert works for alto saxophone, the tenor saxophone has been relatively neglected. James Houlik's persistence made me pay attention!"⁷

The efforts of James Houlik at developing the tenor saxophone repertoire may have had their inspiration in his relationship with his teacher Sigurd Rascher. Rascher was in a somewhat similar situation during the beginnings of his career with the alto saxophone. Rascher explained that "...even at that time [he] played already Bach on the saxophone, but the original literature for [his] instrument was rather slim. To play Bach on the saxophone was then, even more so than today, an audacious attempt..."⁸ Rascher did not let the scarcity of original works deter his interest in the alto saxophone, and this determination certainly carried over to his students. Houlik says that, "the example was clear. Rascher had started with very little music really and created all of these works through his cooperative activities with composers."⁹

⁵ Jean-Marie Londeix, *150 Years of Music for Saxophone*, ed. by Bruce Ronkin,, (Cherry Hill: Roncorp Publications, 1994).

⁶ Liner Notes to James Houlik, *Tenor Tapestry* (2000), CD, Aerophon Recordings 01-2.

⁷ Liner Notes to James Houlik, *American Saxophone* (1996), CD, Koch International Classics 3-7390-2 H1.

⁸ Frederic Swift, "Sigurd Rascher: A personal biography of a 'saxophonist extraordinary,'" <http://www.classicsax.com/asi/smrbio.pdf> (1971), accessed 2 April 2003.

⁹ James Houlik, interview by author, Wildacres, NC, 19 June 2002.

Rascher is noted throughout the saxophone community for his role in the existence of many of the great standards in the alto saxophone repertoire. “Rascher’s influence as a player attracted American composers to write for his beloved instrument the saxophone. It was a continuation of activity that had its roots in Europe. Perhaps it should be noted that Mr. Rascher also actively sought out composers to write new repertoire for the saxophone.”¹⁰ In fact, Rascher was so persistent and cunning in some of these pursuits that some of his efforts almost seem fictitious. Houlik recounts one such incident:

“Rumor has it that [Sigurd Rascher] put himself in a waiter’s uniform in order to be at the “White Russian Club’ in Paris, in order to hear the Paris Saxophone Quartet premier the Glazunov *Saxophone Quartet*, and so that he might pursue the composer. That may be all we need to know. Not unlike myself, I’m sure that pieces came to him with no effort on his part, but by and large, it would seem that a dropped suggestion of a frontal proposal, or is it a proposition, most often gets things started.”¹¹

Rascher would go out of his way to meet composers with the hopes of persuading them to write something for the saxophone. Rascher recalled in a letter for Hindemith’s *Concertpiece for two Alto Saxophones* (1975) that he often met with resistance but would usually convince the composer that the saxophone would be a worthwhile instrument for which to compose.

“Since many composers either conducted their own works or were present at rehearsals, here was a marvelous chance for me to meet them- at the Philharmonic, at the opera, in chambermusic. None of them had ever thought of a solo work for saxophone, but many of them

¹⁰ David J. Gibson, “Sigurd M. Rascher,” *Saxophone Journal* Vol26 no5 (2002): 25.

¹¹ James Houlik, personal E-mail, 26 March 2003.

were easily persuaded through a short demonstration that here were worth-while new possibilities.”¹²

How did he persuade them exactly? It was not with money, since he never paid a single commission fee for a piece.¹³ It was rather his impressive technical abilities, and finesse with the instrument that won over so many composers: “After the rehearsal I asked [Edmund von Borck] whether he ever thought of the saxophone as a solo instrument, a thought he vigorously denied. But after I had played for him for a few minutes, he had second thoughts and asked for my address.”¹⁴

It is no surprise that Houlik would devote his life to doing the same thing for the tenor saxophone. According to Houlik:

“I knew [the problem of the lack of music] was fixable. It was a chicken or the egg kind of question. You shouldn’t study the tenor saxophone because there’s not music? Well then that just about seals the instrument’s fate because there’ll never be any music, so we’ll never study it. That’s pretty stupid.”¹⁵

¹² Paul Hindemith, *Concertpiece for two Alto Saxophones*, Ed. Sigurd Rascher. USA: McGinnin & Marx, 1980.

¹³ Kenneth Coon (Member of The Rascher Saxophone Quartet), personal E-mail, 27 March 2003.

¹⁴ Frederic Swift, “Sigurd Rascher: A personal biography of a ‘saxophonist extraordinary,’” <http://www.classicsax.com/asi/smrbio.pdf> (1971), accessed 2 April 2003.

¹⁵ James Houlik, interview by author, Wildacres, NC, 19 June 2002.

Commissioning an Original Work for the Tenor Saxophone

But why is it important for music to be specifically written with the tenor saxophone in mind? In Houlik's own words:

"The tenor is an instrument with *such* a personality. It really is masculine, flamboyant... it has a heroic character. If you're familiar with the *Upward Stream* by Russell Peck, there's a piece that really takes the tenor and maxes [it] out in terms of its potential to just be heroic and to gallop along. I think that the instrument has a personality of its own, in fact, rather a prominent personality. This is the *real* thing, there's no cello piece that would tax the tenor to the point of its real limits. I think that the music has to be written for the tenor so that we really maximize the use of a marvelous voice. And that's what I try to do in terms of the composers that I've commissioned and so forth, just trying to find someone else who will get a little deeper into it and make more of its real character known to us."¹⁶

It simply would be a shame for the potential of the tenor saxophone to go untapped. It truly is a unique and beautifully capable instrument, as are the better-established classical instruments such as the flute and clarinet. It seems obvious that the very personal nature of both the flute and the clarinet demand that they receive pieces composed with their particular voices in mind, but this is only because we are used to this idea. These instruments have long histories of being featured as solo instruments. The need for pieces to be composed for particular instruments, with particular characters in mind, is equally present for the tenor saxophone. Furthermore, Houlik claimed that he personally needed to devote his energies to aiding in the creation of pieces for tenor saxophone.

"I *needed* to make music. The truth of it is some of these pieces are just as the Ibert and the Glazunov in the earliest days were vehicles for

¹⁶ James Houlik, interview by author, Wildacres, NC, 19 June 2002.

Rascher. He played those pieces a great deal, that's how he made his living. And that's how he got the instrument in front of musical audiences so that there could be some hope of bringing the instrument to a point where it would be understood by the musical public, not by other musicians, but by the musical public. And so, in the meantime however those pieces were like mules, he could get on them and ride them to his income. I've played the Russell Peck *Upward Stream* fifty-five times. That's a lot of money for me, that's a lot of exposure for Peck, a lot of exposure for the tenor. And so there's a practical side to it. But when it's all done...let's assume that I top out at a hundred pieces... If I've left a hundred pieces behind, among which ten or fifteen are actually suitable pieces of music, that seems like a rather small product for a lifetime. But if I've moved the instrument ahead, left it in better shape, and left some music, that might be as good a thing as I've managed here outside of teaching hundreds of people how to play saxophone in general of course. But it's my work, it's my obligation to the instrument. It feeds me. I love it. I enjoy its sound immensely. And at the same time, it would almost be perverse to take profits and not bring something back. It's that simple. And let's not leave out the fact that it's so much fun."¹⁷

Houlik has been driven to create and perform tenor saxophone music for most of his life now. But the exact process of doing this is somewhat complicated and involved, or else many more people would have works commissioned for all sorts of occasions and we would have both an extremely high demand for composers as well as a surplus of music. There are of course numerous variations of the commissioning process that one can follow in order to have a work created, just as there are numerous variations in every sort of process in the highly subjective field of music. Sometimes, composers approach performers, or dedicate pieces to performers without even being asked, in the hopes that the famous performer might be flattered enough to publicly perform the piece. But often, Houlik must take it upon himself to convince the composers to write for him.

¹⁷ James Houlik, interview by author, Wildacres, NC, 19 June 2002.

Houlik initiates the endeavor by deciding to have a piece commissioned. This decision might begin with an idea that Houlik has for a piece, or a theme that he might have in mind for a potential work. Sometimes practical elements prompt the decision to approach a composer. He is currently working with a composer named Robert Palmer to have a piece ready for a premiere in Italy. In this instance, he was already making plans to give a concert in Italy and he needed something else to add to the program.

“I’ll identify a composer that I think might be good for a project. The one I mentioned in Milan, I got the orchestra date, oddly enough the conductor... wanted to do Copland. And the Copland calls for strings, woodwinds and piano... a small orchestra. So I have nothing in my repertoire that goes there. So I went to this composer and said, ‘would you be interested in writing this piece, and I’ll promise you a review in Italy, we’ll get a recording, three performances in Milan...’ And he was titillated. So the performance and the particular limitations of this performance drove that.”¹⁸

With this done, Houlik has pretty much done his part.

From Palmer’s personal perspective, this project is very agreeable:

“In a way, this was the best possible way for something like this to happen, because I have known Jim Houlik for a long time, and I have performed with him as a conductor and he as a soloist... I’ve known his playing for a long, long time. I’ve heard him play with orchestra. I’ve heard him play with band. I’ve heard him play solo, and I’m familiar with his recordings also.... Jim and I have a long history... We had a pretty easy time agreeing on it...”¹⁹

From their shared musical experiences, Palmer had a fairly adequate knowledge of Houlik’s style of playing, which is usually helpful but not necessary. Once he had agreed to the project, he simply began to write. The methods of composers certainly

¹⁸ James Houlik, interview by author, Wildacres, NC, 19 June 2002.

¹⁹ Robert Palmer, interview by author, Chattanooga, TN, 22 December 2002.

vary tremendously according to the individual, especially since this is such a subjective discipline. Palmer personally prefers to work within very concrete circumstances rather than function in the abstract, which was useful since this piece was in fact being written for specific instrumentation.²⁰ But this is related more to the compositional process itself, which is somewhat outside the realm of the commissioning process upon which this paper focuses. It is nevertheless important to realize that the two processes are so intertwined. Palmer's entire set of circumstances was presented to him by Houlik, and served as the springboard for his own creativity. This of course does not detract from Palmer's creativity by any means, but the point is rather that the foreground for Palmer's manifestation of talent was established by Houlik.

²⁰ Robert Palmer, interview by author, Chattanooga, TN, 22 December 2002.

Morton Gould's *Diversions for Tenor Saxophone*

One of the more famous pieces for which Houlik is responsible is Morton Gould's *Diversions for Tenor Saxophone*. So exactly what steps were taken to bring about this very popular piece of music?

Of course, the first step in commissioning a piece of music is to select a composer to craft the piece. "The first action that one should take is finding the right composer, one who will be both willing and interested in writing a work for saxophone. Some composers understand our instrument's capabilities and color extensively while others only possess limited understanding of what the saxophone is capable of."²¹ Houlik decided to ask Gould if he might be interested in working on the *Diversions* project for him. Houlik gives an interesting account of the conversations that the two had while trying to initiate the project:

"When [Gould] was in his late seventies, I approached him for this piece... Well, here's what happened. He said that he wouldn't do it so I sent him a CD. He called me back, what a nice man, and said, 'I called you to tell you that you are a great artist.' I said, 'so you'll write the piece?' He said, 'No, I just told you that you are a great artist.' And then he said, 'Who will play this piece?' I said, 'Can I work on it?'... So I called my manager and we got about eight orchestras to say that they would do the premiere and so I called him back... he said, 'Well that's fine, but this will be very expensive.' I said, 'That's the easy part.' Money is no problem. If I got to 'Yes,' then we'll work it out."²²

There must be certain incentives in place for the potential composer before he or she will provide that crucial "yes." Composers may have an insatiable love for

²¹ Greg Banaszak, "Career Management: Commissioning and Funding New Works," *Saxophone Journal* v19 n3 (1994), 32.

²² James Houlik, Master Class, Wildacres Saxophone Retreat, Wildacres, NC, 17 June 2002.

creating music, but there must be certain factors that distinguish this craft from a mere hobby. If a composer is to take a project seriously, then he or she must plan on investing a great amount of time and energy in the project. This is not a decision to take lightly, unless the composer in question is independently wealthy and can therefore afford to spend the bulk of his or her time and energies on hobbies. Most serious composers need to have certain incentives guaranteed before they can be persuaded to make such a commitment. This is even true for instances where composers attempt to initiate the creative process themselves rather than wait to be approached by other parties. The satisfaction derived from crafting a piece of music and exploring one's creativity is just not enough to make the dream come to fruition as a profession. "It's not enough just to be proud. In other words, it's good to have a performance that you feel good about, but that's just the beginning. It is the sale of the copies of this performance that completes the cycle."²³ Composers need to take other practical things into consideration before agreeing to work on a project.

According to Houlik, "composers will only write when there is some reasonable hope of performances happening."²⁴ This of course is largely an aesthetic question, but it seems to most people fairly apparent that one of the main reasons to even bother crafting a piece of music is for people to hear that music. If there is little hope of anyone ever really hearing a proposed piece of music, then it would logically be in the composer's best interests to refrain from committing the time and energy to

²³ Andrew N. White, "The Composition/ Performance Cycle," *Saxophone Journal* v19 n5 (1995), 38.

²⁴ James Houlik, interview by author, Wildacres, NC, 19 June 2002.

the project, especially if there is a chance that a set of better circumstances, more conducive to public performances, might be presented. But this incentive is still typically easier to provide than is the matter of the composer's fee.

Raising the Money

Composers compose music for their livelihood, and therefore often require substantial sums of money in order to afford to devote the time and energy to a piece. “It is difficult, although not impossible, to produce music of substance if one is forced to spend forty hours each week asking customers if they would like fries with their orders.”²⁵ Of course the amount of money that a composer would require would certainly depend tremendously upon the certain circumstances of the composer in question. Many composers have found professions, especially in academia, that are fairly accommodating with regard to available time for composing. But regardless of the fee needed for a piece, it is typically more than most individuals can produce on their own. For instance, the forty thousand dollars that Gould required for *Diversions* illustrates this point nicely.²⁶

So how is this money acquired? Certainly there are ways to compensate composers for their efforts, or the classical music repertoire in general would be much smaller than it is. “The benefactors of ‘yesterday’ (kings, princes, popes, and governments) are no longer leading the way in funding the creation of new art.”²⁷ Houlik may be famous now, and he may or may not be well off financially, but he surely was not during the formative years of his career. So how could he have afforded to personally pay the fees demanded by composers throughout the years? He in fact says that he rarely has ever paid composers with his own personal funds,

²⁵ Bruce Ronkin, “New Directions for Commissioning Saxophone Music,” *Saxophone Journal* v19 n6 (1995), 58.

²⁶ James Houlik, Master Class, Wildacres Saxophone Retreat, Wildacres, NC, 17 June 2002.

²⁷ Bruce Ronkin, “New Directions for Commissioning Saxophone Music,” *Saxophone Journal* v19 n6 (1995), 58.

but has rather depended a great deal upon various foundations and kind, wealthy individuals.²⁸ This is where Houlik's efforts and hard work really begin to become apparent. Houlik manages to solve two of the composer's needs with the same solution.

In the example of the Gould piece *Diversions*, Houlik spent a tremendous amount of time organizing various groups in order to spread the cost amongst multiple groups and thus make the financial aspect more manageable.

“A quarter of that commission came from Absolut Vodka for a concert that they sponsored in New York, where we gave the first of the performances. But that piece was also premiered in Winston Salem, Phoenix... I think Evansville Philharmonic in Indiana, so there were five or six orchestras that had contributed towards that as well as some foundation money and a pretty big hunk from Absolut Vodka.”²⁹

The financial burden must now be spread out amongst multiple parties since we no longer live in an age where the arts are as strongly endorsed by governments and royalty. But this takes an incredible amount of organization, and Houlik has thankfully been up to the challenge for many years now.

“Many times, I'll go to a composer, and he'll say 'Yes.' And then we'll determine what the cost is going to be. And then I begin by going to orchestras to try to stir up interest, because you don't give one premiere, you do it as a consortium... Russell Peck had one recently that had forty-five orchestras in the consortium, so they don't have to pay a great deal of money each, but each orchestra puts in an amount of money. And then the piece is written and played in these many places.”³⁰

²⁸ James Houlik, interview by author, Wildacres, NC, 19 June 2002.

²⁹ James Houlik, interview by author, Wildacres, NC, 19 June 2002.

³⁰ James Houlik, interview by author, Wildacres, NC, 19 June 2002.

Houlik has simultaneously solved two problems: he guaranteed at least a certain number of performances of a piece for a composer, and from these engagements, he found the sources of payment for the composer's work. Although this amount of organization certainly requires tremendous effort, it seems the perfect way to procure both the interest of the prospective composer and the funds necessary to maintain that interest.

Houlik is also trying to revitalize the interest of private individuals in live performances and in the commissioning process in general.

“One of the things I have been doing more of lately is trying to find ways to make it exciting for the donors. If someone's going to give a couple thousand dollars toward a project, these are people who have that money to spare, and if they are people of some wealth, all they're looking to do is to have experiences that they can look upon as being unique, perhaps experiences that others aren't having. So they can follow the piece around the country.... Staying at nice [bed and breakfasts], eating very interesting food, attending the concert where they hear *their* music played in a proprietary way they feel quite good about having contributed to this living thing. And they meet with the performers, so they've turned it into a wonderful hobby. The more we do that kind of thing, involving people rather than just putting our hand out and telling them that they just have to help us commission this piece because it's important, well important to whom? If we involve them, and there's a sense of reciprocity, and there is some reason for them to feel involvement, that's really the future.”³¹

This of course serves the practical interests of Houlik as well as those of composers, since these individuals' assets are oftentimes largely responsible for funding commissions. Public interest in the arts is crucial to the future of funding. But Houlik has recognized the benefits of making these efforts towards involving the public for the good of the industry in general, where many may feel such incentives to

³¹ James Houlik, interview by author, Wildacres, NC, 19 June 2002.

be merely unnecessary luxuries for the wealthy. This is yet another example of the efforts Houlik has made at making it easier for all musicians to find support in commissioning works.

Raising the Money if your name is not “James Houlik”

It is fairly apparent that it can often be an expensive process to create a new piece, as well as to promote it. If the piece is not promoted well enough, then not many people will hear it, not many people will play it, and the composer will therefore be left with little revenue to show for his or her time and effort invested in the project. Promotion is expensive. It can cost ten thousand dollars just to capture a single piece on a recording.³² The personnel for such a recording do not play for free if they are of professional caliber (which is preferred, of course, in the interests of getting the best and most marketable recording possible), and then there are studio fees to be considered. Not many people can afford to pay for all of this with their own private assets. Of course, this point has been dealt with by individuals like Houlik. One simply raises the money from multiple sources in order to cover all of the costs. But this might not always work if your name is not “James Houlik.” If some less experienced, less famous performer were to contact an orchestra and attempt to negotiate a consortium of premiers in order to raise the money, the proposal would probably not be well received. Grant writing might also prove somewhat discouraging to performers, since there is now a tremendous amount of competition with which to contend.³³

Ken Radnofsky, director of the World-Wide (Concurrent) Premiers and Commissioning Fund Inc. (WWCPCF), notes that “the process is exhausting for one

³² James Houlik, interview by author, Wildacres, NC, 19 June 2002.

³³ Greg Banasak, “Career Management: Ken Radnofsky Executive Director, WWCPCF, Inc.,” *Saxophone Journal* v17 n5 (1993), 10.

person to be involved with the number of aspects that need to be dealt with. As far as grants are concerned, it takes an enormous amount of research just to find a grant that one can apply for. There are grants available, but each one has a number of difficult, and sometimes limiting, criteria that must be met.”³⁴ All of this adds to Houlik’s accomplishments, I believe, but it simultaneously seems quite discouraging to younger generations. “It seems the cost of creating new works in today’s world is often beyond the means of the very people who would benefit most from their creation.”³⁵ Hope is not lost, though. There is of course the option of building a reputation as an excellent performer using already-existing compositions in order someday to carry the kind of clout that Houlik and Rascher have, and then individual fund raising might seem more feasible. Composers might even be willing to craft a piece for free, solely for the exposure. There are, though, people who are trying to make it easier for less famous performers to commission new works.

The WWPCPF is one of these organizations. This organization essentially mimics the process that Houlik has been successfully using for many years now. Composers are contacted to gauge interest in writing a piece, and then the incentives are procured for the composer by this organization. Rather than promising a consortium of premiers by one very well-known performer like Houlik, this organization typically promises the consortium of premieres by multiple, lesser known performers. In this way, it is even possible for the organization to arrange for

³⁴ Greg Banasak, “Career Management: Ken Radnofsky Executive Director, WWPCPF, Inc.,” *Saxophone Journal* v17 n5 (1993), 10.

³⁵ Bruce Ronkin, “New Directions for Commissioning Saxophone Music,” *Saxophone Journal* v19 n6 (1995), 59.

the premiers to happen all on the same date, thus furthering the publicity and exposure, which is always attractive to the composer. Anywhere from five to 150 performers will agree to hold simultaneous performances on the same day all over the world as well as happily contribute a small portion of the total required fee for the composer (anywhere between one hundred and four hundred dollars on average).³⁶ In this way, essentially, the process of Houlik's is duplicated, except with many more performers. The work of organizing is all done by a third party, which makes it significantly easier for younger performers to help commission new pieces.

Thanks to organizations such as this, the efforts that Houlik has made over the last several years may now be furthered by a younger generation in what may be a potentially more efficient manner. Everything that Houlik did to commission pieces seems to have revolved around the idea of organizing funds together from different sources and setting up a need for the music in the first place, typically in the form of a guaranteed consortium of premieres. It is encouraging to see that this is beginning to happen in ways that take some of the responsibility off of a single individual. But there is still the possibility for individuals to fill the same role of individually commissioning pieces and building a repertoire nearly from scratch. Consider the performer who has chosen a voice that is still a rarity in the classical music industry. If a performer wishes to build up the repertoire for classical banjo, then he or she might not be so fortunate as to go to the WWPCF for help. If there are not enough classical banjo performers to contribute towards, and thus defray the composer's total

³⁶ Bruce Ronkin, "New Directions for Commissioning Saxophone Music," *Saxophone Journal* v19 n6 (1995), 59.

fee, then the individual will be forced to do things the way that Rascher and Houlik did. That example, of course, seems very far-fetched, but it is highly likely that in the not too distant past the same could have been said for the individual wishing to build the classical tenor saxophone repertoire.

The Tenor Saxophone is in the Game

The reputation of the tenor saxophone has been established now, it seems. In fact, it seems that the entire saxophone family is beginning to gain an unprecedented degree of respect. In November of 2001, a concert to honor the saxophone-friendly composer Walter Hartley was given. “These performances were historic in that they were the first time all seven members of the modern saxophone family (from sopranino to contrabass) were featured on a concert of music by a single composer.”³⁷ A concert like this simply would have been unlikely for the first half of the twentieth century, but now it is certainly more possible. James Houlik has played a very important role in that reality. The pieces that he has commissioned are among the most played members of the saxophone repertoire today. Hartley’s *Poem*, which was written for Houlik, is one of the most frequently performed pieces in the repertoire.³⁸ Tenor saxophonists today might still either be forced onto alto, or be sentenced to play only transcriptions for the duration of their careers if it were not for James Houlik.

Houlik sums his career efforts up very nicely with the following sentiment:

“If you put the combination together, the travel, the personalities you meet, it’s just very stimulating.. I’m a stimulus addict, so I’m required to live like this.... It’s fun to put it all together, and I’ve done it again and again. Tenacity is part of it. People will kind of hope that it will come to them, but I’m there making it happen on a daily basis, that’s a part of the deal. Always poking some project along... I can’t imagine just sitting around and waiting for it to be delivered, I just assume play some part in it.... I would do it one way or another, even if it doesn’t

33. ³⁷ Jay Easton, “A Saxophone Tribute to Walter Hartley,” *Saxophone Journal* v26 n5 (2002),

33. ³⁸ Jay Easton, “A Saxophone Tribute to Walter Hartley,” *Saxophone Journal* v26 n5 (2002),

go anywhere. But it's sort of inevitable that it's going to go somewhere, people will play the instrument. Music that has been written for me is now on the performance lists of universities and so forth. The tenor is in the game now for sure."³⁹

³⁹ James Houlik, interview by author, Wildacres, NC, 19 June 2002.

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Monday, February 3, 2003

7:00 PM

-This recital is in partial requirements for the degree Bachelor of Arts: Music. Mr. Hamrick is a student of Mr. Clint Schmitt.

Program Order:

Poem for Tenor Saxophone... (1967)

Walter S. Hartley 1927-

Concerto for Tenor Saxophone...(1984)

Robert Ward 1917-

Lento

Allegro

Rebecca Bunn, piano

Intermission

Diversions for Tenor Saxophone...(1990)

Morton Gould 1913-1996

Recitatives and Preludes

Serenades and Airs

Ballads and Lovenotes

Rags and Waltzes

Cyndi Bierne, piano