

Saxophone Journal Masterclass CD By James Romain

HOWL

For Alto Saxophone And Sound Modules William P. Dougherty, Composer

*I saw the best minds of my generation destroyed by madness,
starving hysterical naked, dragging themselves through the
negro streets at dawn looking for an angry fix, angel-headed
hipsters burning for the ancient heavenly connection to the
starry dynamo in the machinery of night...*

Hello and welcome to this *Saxophone Journal* masterclass and accompanying CD. I'm Jim Romain, Assistant Professor of Saxophone at Drake University in Des Moines, Iowa, and I'm pleased to be here to discuss a wonderful work by composer Bill Dougherty, titled *Howl for alto saxophone and sound modules*. On this CD you'll have the opportunity to hear my complete performance of the work, a conversation between Bill Dougherty and me, and some detailed suggestions that I hope will be useful to you in preparing the work for performance.

For close to 25 years, I've had an interest in the literature of the Beat Generation (Jack Kerouac, William S. Burroughs, Allen Ginsberg) and I've always found *Howl* to be especially provocative. I'm also drawn to the connections between Ginsberg in particular and one of my favorite 19th century poets, Walt Whitman. *Howl* strikes me as a 20th century update of Whitman's *Song of Myself* from *Leaves of Grass*, a repudiation of societal constraints and a celebration of the uniqueness of the individual. Finally, the connections between beat poetry and the bop movement in jazz are especially interesting to me, given my own work as a jazz performer and sometime jazz historian.

Besides my interest in the poem itself, I also developed an interest in Bill Dougherty's previous saxophone music, including *Seven Bagatelles*, written for saxophonist Michael Cox in



1990. The 2006 National Biennial conference of the North American Saxophone Alliance provided an opportunity to present a new work, and so I approached Bill about composing a work for saxophone and pre-recorded digital sounds that would in some way reflect on and connect with the poem *Howl*. The composition, the result of an ongoing performer composer collaboration over several months' time, was premiered that spring at the 2006 NASA conference, and also received its European premiere at the World Saxophone Congress held in Ljubljana, Slovenia, in July of 2006.

In writing for me, Bill was able to reference Charlie Parker, use circular breathing, altissimo, growl technique, etc., and had my specific sound in his head as he approached the composition. My reference to the poem provided Bill with a literary context. However, *Howl* is not a programmatic work. Rather than dealing with structure or specific images, it became

about capturing the energy of the poem, especially from the Part I (what Bill would call "Canto")—static ostinati—with the Parker tune *Segment* chosen as a bop reference, and also as a fit to the tonality of the piece (repetition within the poem and the piece seems to be about filling it out, but without an underlying structure).

BACKGROUND HISTORY OF THE POEM

The first edition of *Howl* appeared in the fall of 1956, published by Lawrence Ferlinghetti's City Lights Books. It was the 2nd printing, published in Britain in 1957, and subsequently seized by San Francisco police, that led to a very famous obscenity trial. Poets, critics, university professors, and editors testified on behalf of Ginsberg, Ferlinghetti, and the poem, and the eventual ruling decided in favor of *Howl*.

The opening dedicatory quote is taken from Walt Whitman: "*Unscrew the locks from the doors!*

Unscrew the doors themselves from their jambs!"

The complete text of *Howl* may be accessed here:

<http://www.frostyland.com/ginsberg.html>

or at <http://www.wussu.com/poems/agh.htm>

Given the fact that poetry is intended to be performed and heard, it would be beneficial to hear the poem read aloud, preferably by Ginsberg. The Naropa Poetics Audio Archives, found here:

http://www.archive.org/details/naropa_anne_waldman_and_alen_ginsberg, includes streaming audio of a 1975 *Howl* reading by the author. *Howl* begins at 41:25 and ends at 1:07:32. This complete reading also includes *Footnote to Howl*.

Ginsberg says in "Notes Written on Finally Recording *Howl*", "I depended on the word 'who' to keep the beat, a base to keep measure, return to and take off from again onto another streak of invention". On one occasion, Ginsberg commented: "the line length..., you'll notice that they're all built on bop—you might think of them as a bop refrain, chorus after chorus after chorus—the ideal being, say, Lester Young in Kansas City in 1938, blowing 72 choruses of *The Man I Love* until everyone in the hall was out of his head..."

STRUCTURE OF HOWL

- Long lines based on breath length and organized by a fixed base
- Organized into three parts plus a Footnote:
 - Part I: A lament for the marginalized and unrepresented outcasts in American society
 - Part II: A diatribe of alienation and dissatisfaction against the horrors of industrialized civilization -"Moloch"
 - Part III: According to Ginsberg, "a litany of affirmation of the Lamb in its glory."

Footnote: Reiterates the ecstatic mantra, "Holy, Holy, Holy."

CONTENT

There are frank references to sexuality, homosexuality, and drugs. There are also many specific references to friends (Kerouac, Burroughs, Neal Cassady, Carl Solomon); and his influences (William Carlos Williams, Ezra Pound, etc.) The jazz allusions are utilized. Not coincidentally, bop sought to break some of the same kinds of musical conventions *Howl* violated in poetry.

Allen Ginsberg died in 1997 at the age of 70. He would have been 80 years old this spring (2008). "*Howl*" is now in its 53rd printing, with 965,000 copies in print.

HOWL PERFORMANCE GUIDELINES

Howl Masterclass CD Tracks

Track 1

- Complete performance of *Howl*, on alto saxophone, by Dr. James Romain.

Track 2

- Narrative introduction by Dr. Romain, including a brief history of the poem *Howl*, and a conversation with William P. Dougherty about his composition *Howl*.

Track 3

- A narrative analysis and detailed saxophone performance tips for *Howl*, by Dr. James Romain.

Section I (opening through bar 54)

In general, the performer will need to become aware of the particular kinds of sounds used in *Howl*—the "crash," various specific drum sounds, "doo" sound, etc. In this way, it is very similar to other saxophone and pre-recorded track pieces (tape, CD, computer, etc.) including, for example,

Mark Engebretson's *She Sings, She Screams*.

First Section: "free" within the beat, but an awareness of pulse is necessary to utilize the freedom effectively. Quarter=52 for the entire first section. First "crash" is heard on beat 3 of measure 2, and so occurs about 7 seconds into the track. Start track—wait 3 seconds (or- 3 beats @ quarter=52) to enter—while sustaining growled altissimo 'G,' the crash is heard. If the "crash" occurs slightly before or after beat 3, there's no problem, as the performer can readily make an adjustment going forward.

The performer can become accustomed to the placement of the sounds and gestures that he or she will be hearing on the track by creating a simple "click track." Turn on metronome, set to 52. Start track. When the first crash occurs, it should be on beat 3 of the 1st measure. If metronome is slightly ahead or behind, correct by turning up or down for a couple of beats until the click "lines up" with the beat placement. Once that is done, the performer can practice with the metronome "click track" until the sounds become second nature, at which point they can wean themselves off of the metronome.

The opening "howl" is an important effect in the piece, and perhaps the most personal one. Each performer should experiment with growling through the first phrase (pickup figure and m. 1-3). My own preference is begin the growl during the pickups, sustain it through the long altissimo G, and then play the remaining notes w/o the growl. It is also possible to growl through the entire phrase, though it makes response on the altissimo B rather unstable. Further, I like to change the sung pitch on the long G, creating a sense of motion and intensity even while the played note remains steady (demonstration here).

In the first section, through m. 54, some of the rhythms may be interpreted with some freedom. In particular, the quintuplets in bars 2, 4, and 6 (as well as later) need not be strict—I prefer to start them slowly and accelerate through the repetition of the pitch. I try to emulate the freedom of the drum figures, which are not strict.

Throughout the first section (beginning through m. 54), time, though perhaps nebulous, is a constant. "Crashes" occur in the following locations: m.2/beat 3, m.4/beat 3, m.7/beat 3, m.12/beat 3, m. 23/beat 3, m. 28/beat 2. These "crashes" can be used as reference points and to check that your pulse agrees with the movement within the pre-recorded track. Pulse is also established melodically, as there is a half-note melody that occurs in mm. 2-3 (concert pitches Bb-C-Db), mm. 5-6 (Bb-C-E), and mm. 8-9 (Bb-C-F#). This also serves to expose the concert Bb whole-half octatonic (diminished) scale that recurs repeatedly throughout the work, including complete versions in mm. 105, 136, and 178.

Measure 14 must be coordinated with the track, specifically

with the crashes heard on the upbeats of beats 3 and 4. This also sets up m. 15, in which the saxophone part must echo the flourish heard on the track on the “and” of beat 1. The 32nd notes at the end of bar should be heard at the end of the melodic 32nd run in the track, as they lead to hits on beats 1 and 3 of bar 16. Bar 17 has the first occurrence of the soft 8th note “doo-doo-doo-doo-doo” figure, which is easily overpowered if the saxophone part is played too loudly. Mm. 18 and 19, respectively, have hits on the upbeats of 2 and 1. In bar 20, the “doo” figure reappears, again beginning on beat 1. Bars 23 through 26 are just like the opening 4 bars of the work, except a whole-step lower in pitch.

The pickups to bar 27 lead into one of the more technically challenging passages—I’ve had success using bis Bb on the ascending lick (when found between A and Db), and using side Bb on the descending lick (between C and Cb). For the pickup figure to bar 28, high G can be fingered T/1/4/Ta, and then use front F/c5 for the F#, front E fingering, and then return to front F with c5 for the downbeat of m. 28 (demonstration). The “crunch G” can also be utilized, though is perhaps not as readily used between the Eb and F#.

A drum figure leads to the downbeat of m. 28, with a “crash” heard on beat 2.

Bar 32 (2:15) begins with another of the “doo-doo” 8th note figures, and begins the second (and more sparsely textured) half of the opening section.

During this section, the “doo-doo” figure appears in mm. 35 and 38, beginning on beat 1 on both cases, and is in important reference point.

The downbeat of bar 41 is a strong “crash,” followed up by a 2nd “crash” onto beat 2.

Bars 47 and 50 both have soft drum figures beginning on beat 1. Given the very sparse texture during this section, those subtle features will serve as important landmarks.

The final “doo-doo” figure, this time descending, occurs in the beginning of m. 53.

During this section, the performer should also key into the quick descending scalar flourishes, each of which fall to a specific beat: m. 33/beat 2, m. 34/beat 1, m. 35/beat 2, m. 36/beat 1, m. 37, beat 2, m. 38/beat 1, m. 29/beat 1, m. 40/beat 2, m. 41/ beats 1 and 2, m. 42/ beats 1 and 2, m. 43/ beats 1 and 2, m. 44, beat 1.

Many of these features may not be apparent on first hearing, but will become clear with careful study and preparation. The use of a metronome “click track” is useful, and the full version of the work, available for purchase, will include a score that will make the relationship between the saxophone part and the various sounds evident.

Section II (bar 55 through end)

Beginning in bar 55, any ambiguity with respect to pulse and rhythm disappears, as there is a pounding pulse from this point forward. Quarter=144 from this point on, with the exceptions of mm. 179-180, mm. 185-186, and mm. 191-192, where the freer, quarter=52, texture returns.

Bar 56 marks the entrance of driving melodic 8ths in the track. Downbeat of m. 66: 2 16ths-8th figure Mm. 88-95 includes the full quotation of the first 8 bars of Charlie Parker tune *Segment*. This can be interpreted rather freely. My own preference is to swing it, and apply typical bebop articulation, including “bop” accents at the top of the line and ghost (muffled) notes at the bottom. A liberty that I like to take is to play it somewhat

out of time, perhaps an allusion to a beat audience listening to bebop through a haze of alcohol and marijuana. The composer has even indicated the potential for improvisation during this section.

A crescendo can begin at m. 131, with a *molto* crescendo during m. 135, coinciding with that heard on the track.

Bars 154-176 should be played without break or breath.

Circular breathing is the best solution here, if at all possible. Specifically, as it can be more difficult to conceal a circular breath during articulated passages, I circular breathe during the ascending slurred 16ths in bar 163. It is possible to take one in m. 172 or 173, as the return of the driving melodic quarter notes tend to conceal an imperfect circular breath. In 176 or 177, the performer can take a quick standard breath after either (or both) of the dotted quarter notes.

In both mm. 179 and 185, a crash is heard on beat 3. This is a useful point of orientation, as downbeats of mm. 181 and 187 should ideally coordinate with the track.

The overall interpretation should be relentlessly driving forward and with great intensity of tone and perhaps of vibrato as well.

CONCLUSION

Thank you for joining composer William Dougherty and myself for this *Saxophone Journal* masterclass. I’ve performed *Howl* a number of times and always find it a rewarding work to play, and one that audiences respond very positively to. I hope that the background on the poem, my discussion with Bill, and the master class have provided you with the necessary tools to bring your own interpretation of *Howl* to life.

Currently the work may be purchased directly from Bill Dougherty at: William.dougherty@drake.edu

I also invite you to visit www.jimromainmusic.com for more on my professional activities.

JAMES ROMAIN’S BIOGRAPHY

Dr. James Romain serves as Assistant Professor of Saxophone and Assistant Director of Jazz Studies at Drake University in Des Moines, Iowa. He was the first saxophonist to be awarded the Doctorate of Musical Arts degree in Performance and Literature from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, where he was a student of Professor Debra Richtmeyer. While at UIUC, he was awarded the Cooke Fellowship, served as teaching assistant for the saxophone studio, and won the woodwind concerto competition. At UIUC, Dr. Romain co-founded the Red Onion Saxophone Quartet, an ensemble that has taken prizes in regional North American Saxophone Alliance competitions and was awarded the silver medal at the 2001 Fischhoff National Chamber Music Competition. He has performed with the Des Moines Symphony Orchestra, the Illinois Symphony Orchestra, the Champaign-Urbana and U of I Orchestras, and in numerous master classes.

In July of 2003, Dr. Romain premiered a new sonata by Chinese composer Jian-Jun He at the World Saxophone Congress, and recorded that work for a compact disc that was released in China. In 2006, at the 14th World Saxophone Congress in Ljubljana, Slovenia, he gave the world premiere of Mark Engebretson’s *SaxMax*, and the European premiere of Bill Dougherty’s *Howl*.

In May of 2007, James Romain joined his Drake colleagues in Mexico City as Artist in Residence at the *1a Academia de Música 2007*. They presented daily master classes at the *Es-*

cuela de Musica Vida Y Movimiento at the *Centro Cultural Ol-lin Yoliztli*, and participated in daily rehearsals at the *Instituto de Humanidades Y Ciencias (INHUMYC)*.

James Romain is an active chamber musician. He is currently the soprano saxophonist with the Inner Urge Saxophone Quartet, and the baritone saxophonist with the Oasis Saxophone Quartet, also featuring Dr. David Camwell from Simpson College, Prof. James Bunte from the University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music, and Prof. Nathan Nabb from Morehead State University.

Dr. Romain holds prior degrees from the University of North Texas, where he was a teaching fellow and a student of Professor James Riggs. As a jazz saxophonist, he has performed with Clark Terry, Ron Miles, Eric Gunnison, and at the Montreux Jazz Festival in Switzerland.

Dr. Romain's artistic mission focuses on fostering the establishment of the saxophone as a medium of serious musical expression, and actively contributing to the establishment of a substantial body of serious music for the instrument, through individual commissioning of composers, consortium commission projects, and the presentation of these works to the public through recitals, concerto performances, and recording projects.

COMMISSIONS, PREMIERES, DEDICATIONS

- *The Rivers* for solo alto saxophone and wind ensemble by John Fitz Rogers (2007)
- *Concerto for Saxophone and Orchestra* by Lewis Spratlan (2007)
- *SaxMax* for soprano saxophone, computer, and computer operator by Dr. Mark Engebretson (2006)
- *Howl* for alto saxophone and tone generator by Dr. William Dougherty (2006)
- *Contact (Asx/Pno)* by James Matheson (2005)
- *Not Yet (Asx/Pno)* by Roscoe Mitchell (2004)
- *Sonata for Alto Saxophone and Piano* by Jianjun He (2003)

JAMES ROMAIN'S SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

- *Reminiscence: A Special Collection of Works by Jianjun He* (Chinese import)
- *In Friendship* (Centaur Records 2916-May 2008 Release)

James Romain is a Conn-Selmer Artist, and performs exclusively on Selmer saxophones and on Vandoren mouthpieces, ligatures, and reeds.

WILLIAM DOUGHERTY'S BIOGRAPHY

William P. Dougherty is the Ellis and Nelle Levitt Professor of Music Theory and Composition at Drake University in Des Moines, IA. Professor Dougherty teaches courses in music theory, composition, and MIDI techniques. His research is directed toward developing a viable semeiotic of music and he has published numerous articles on musical semeiotic, Beethoven, and music and text relationships in the art song. In addition, Dr. Dougherty has presented over twenty papers at national and international conferences. He is currently working on a book that details a semeiotic approach to the settings of songs from Goethe's *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*. He has twice been awarded National Endowment for the Humanities Summer Fellowships to pursue his research.

Also active as a composer, Dr. Dougherty has been commissioned to write compositions for the Brass Band of Columbus, the Fine Arts Trio, the Pioneer String Quartet, the Sheboygan Symphony Orchestra, the New Hampshire Music Festival Or-

chestra, the New England Symphony Orchestra, the New England Wind Ensemble, and several chamber groups and soloists. In 2002, he was commissioned by the Iowa Music Teacher's National Association, and the resulting composition placed second in the MTNA national competition. Dr. Dougherty's orchestral and band works are published by MMB Publishers, and much of his solo and chamber music is published by Heilman Music. He received his bachelor's degree in music education from Illinois Wesleyan University and his M.A. and Ph.D. in music theory from The Ohio State University. He has recently served as Associate Dean for the College of Arts and Sciences. §

Commissioned by and written for James Romain

Howl

for Alto Saxophone and Sound Modules

William P. Dougherty



CD Track 1
complete performance of *Howl*
by James Romain on alto saxophone

Alto Saxophone

Sound Cues

$\text{♩} = 52$

ff

growl

Percussive sounds throughout

4

8

12

14

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17

5

19

5 11

growl

22

7 5 7 5

ff

26

7 7 7 7 7 7

28

5 6 3 5

growl

32

mf 10

36

9

40

5 11

44

6 mp p

50

pp 5

♩ = 144

55

f 7 quarter notes on the beat until measure 106

60

67

74

81

(From Charlie Parker's Segment:
87 play freely [faster] with swing;
improvise, if needed, to fill.)

mp

92 in strict time

97

6

100

6

103

105

ff

111

mp legato

119

ff *p*

127

ff *p*

135

ff

140

ff

146

151

Circular breathe, if possible, until m. 176

mf

156

163

169

174

♩ = 60 growl

♩ = 144
(sax stays at ♩ = 60)

178

182

♩ = 60 growl

♩ = 144
(sax stays at ♩ = 60)

187 (in tempo)

♩ = 60

191

♩ = 144

192

fff

196

200