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Senior Recital, Saxophone

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Owen Kilpatrick - Senior Recital Reflection

“Postcards”, my senior recital presenting a survey of the diverse influences on important saxophone repertoire, was a representative experience of where I was as a musician both in the program and performance of the music. I prepared for this recital with the goal of choosing repertoire from as many different composer nationalities as possible to show how diverse the saxophone repertoire is. What I found was that no one recital could capture this diversity, and the exploration served as a jumping point for how I strive to elevate diverse voices in the music that I perform. Ideologically, this concept influenced the current mission of the Kestrel Duo, a saxophone duo and commissioning body that I co founded that strives to elevate diverse voices in new music through commissioning and recording music from emerging composers. This is paired with a dedication to exposing our community to authentic and diverse repertoire in a way that can expand and challenge our listeners’ ears. “Postcards” was a stepping off point for this mission on a much smaller scale more or less contained within the academic silo of the school of music.

In terms of musical preparation for the recital, my year was structured in a way that allowed me to sequentially introduce the repertoire with certain benchmark performances leading up to the spring recital. In the summer of 2021, I prepared one of the movements of *Brilliance* for a lesson at the Great Plains Saxophone Workshop. In some ways, this piece ended up being the most difficult to tackle for the recital itself. Particularly regarding the technical aspects of the fourth and final movement, I would have had more success had I been comfortable approaching it a more micro level earlier on, but starting to live with the piece on a macro level earlier helped me understand larger scale interpretation and character considerations. At the end of the summer of 2021, I prepared *Mai* for a lesson and performed it for the first studio class of the semester.

Having performances with lower stakes leading up to the recital helped ease my performance anxiety. Later in the fall, competing at the Music Teachers National Association (MTNA) young artists performance competition, I took Ryo Noda's *Mai*, Robert Schumann's *Drei Romanzen*, and Pierre Sancan's *Lamento et Rondo*. This performance was in a high stress environment, and there was a mishap with my page turns while playing *Lamento et Rondo*, but having this experience under my belt made me more ready to deal with those mistakes for the spring recital. In the spring, I added Karel Husa's *Postcard from Home* and prepared the remaining movements of Ida Gotkovsky's *Brilliance*. *Postcard from Home* is not particularly technically demanding, but having spent enough time with the other repertoire allowed me to spend more time bringing out the characters in the Moravian folk songs found in this piece. Reflecting on the growth from my junior recital to my senior recital feels like night and day, especially in my confidence and the start of exploring a wider spectrum of musical expression through dynamics and intentional character changes. The growth since this recital has felt similarly exponential, and I am dedicated to continue pushing the limits of my musicianship, both in the depths of my performance and the intentionality behind the music that I play.