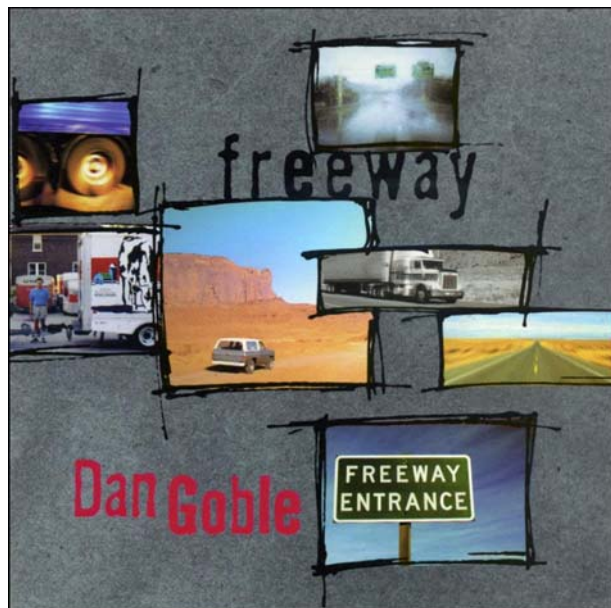


NWCR876

Dan Goble

Freeway



Charles Ruggiero

<i>Interplay</i> (1988)	(17:49)
1. I. Octaves	(6:29)
2. II. Night Song	(3:52)
3. III. Departures	(7:24)

Charles Wuorinen

<i>Divertimento</i> (1982)	(11:33)
4. I.	(4:52)
5. II.	(3:39)
6. III.	(3:02)

John Harbison

<i>San Antonio</i> (1994)	(11:50)
7. I. The Summons	(3:49)
8. II. Line Dance	(3:36)
9. III. Couples' Dance	(4:24)

Kevin Jay Isaacs

<i>4 Wheel Dr.</i> (1998)	(15:14)
10. I. Freeway	(3:26)
11. II. Avenue	(3:39)
12. III. Boulevard	(3:45)
13. IV. Alley	(4:10)

Miles Davis

14. <i>Blue in Green</i> (1959)	(4:31)
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Dan Goble, soprano, alto, tenor, and baritone saxophones; Jeff Hellmer, piano

Total playing time: 62:23

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Notes

While the saxophone has a history that extends back well over 150 years, it is still nevertheless one of the younger instruments in use in classical music. As such, it still has a long way to go in securing a widespread role in the concert hall, and truly exceptional repertoire for the instrument remains somewhat scarce. Jazz musicians, by contrast, so quickly adopted the instrument that it is almost impossible to imagine jazz without the sound of the pithy soprano, the lithe alto, the warm-toned tenor, and the robust baritone saxophones.

In selecting the compositions for *Freeway*, saxophonist Dan Goble sought to create a balanced collection of pieces that would accurately reflect his interests and those of his partner, pianist Jeff Hellmer. Both are noted performers and are active in the world of jazz as well as in classical new music. Goble selected works that make full use of skills honed in both classical and jazz performance situations.

The first four compositions, according to Goble, are among the very finest recent pieces written for saxophone and piano—he feels, in fact, that the Wuorinen piece is among the “five best works” composed for the saxophone to date—while the fifth is a standard from the world of jazz, though ironically one composed not by a saxophonist but by a trumpeter, the iconic Miles Davis.

For Goble, the Davis selection is the piece that holds the rest of the program together, uniting aspects of all four of the other pieces: “chordal structure, chance, improvisation, intensity, beauty.” But the converse also holds true: he sees the

sum total of the program as a sort of tribute to the challenges and sheer variety of styles found in Davis’s career.

Charles Ruggiero’s *Interplay* (1988) for soprano saxophone and piano was written for saxophonist Joseph Lulloff as part of a 1987–1989 NEA Consortium Commissioning project sponsored by Tulane University. Goble refers to the work as “a sort of ‘Trane meets Igor’ type of piece,” in that the work mixes stylistic aspects of Stravinsky’s neoclassical period with elements of modern jazz. Nothing is improvised, yet many passages give the illusion of being extemporaneous.

The brisk first section, *Octaves*, is marked by a bustling piano figure strongly reminiscent of the boogie-woogie piano style, and several other jazzy devices appear in the piano part early on. The section takes its name from recurring passages in which the players play identical material in separate octaves. Both are instructed in a middle passage to sustain the steady pulse while giving the impression of “bouncing” off one another, playing in an animated and reactive style. Later the pianist is instructed to play a “walking bass” line in the right hand, while the left hand supplies minimalist chord stabs reminiscent of Count Basie’s trademark style—though these are clearly far different chords than any Basie himself might have employed. Throughout the section, virtuosic demands are made of both players.

Night Song, the second section, is a dreamy ballad played with jazzy rubato style, in which the pianist is more clearly assigned the role of accompanist. The third section,

Departures, features the most overt references to specific jazz styles. The pianist begins with a whirlwind of arpeggiated figures, over which the saxophonist comments. This vibrant section suddenly gives way to a stretch of impressionistic chording from the pianist and a melancholy ballad from the saxophone. In a transition to the final bravura section, the saxophonist is instructed to play in the style of Lee Konitz, the post-bop altoist known for his cool, vibrato-less sound. Shortly thereafter, the pianist is given a lengthy passage of repeated eighth-note chords to be played “like a small bass drum,” while the saxophonist is freed to soar to the end. Ruggiero’s inspiration for this final section—the music of jazz saxophonists Charlie “Bird” Parker and Ornette Coleman—is revealed by a comment on the score: “Thank you Bird, Ornette.”

Charles Wuorinen’s *Divertimento for Alto Saxophone and Piano* (1982) is music for virtuoso players, as is everything penned by Wuorinen. Goble feels that the work is one of the greatest classical compositions for saxophone, alongside such works as Ibert’s *Concertino da Camera*, Ingolf Dahl’s *Concerto*, and Paul Creston’s *Sonata*. The work is seldom performed, he notes, because its parts are tremendously difficult to prepare and it makes exceptional demands upon the saxophonist’s agility in the high range of the instrument.

The piece opens with a strikingly lyrical saxophone passage, played over a relatively minimal piano accompaniment that employs both jazzy chords and dry plucks. This songfulness continues undeterred by the piece’s daunting rhythmic challenges—time signature changes occur almost every measure—as the piece accumulates momentum gradually but steadily over the course of several sections until its emphatic ending. The result is a composition as easily listenable as it is difficult to execute.

San Antonio (1994), John Harbison’s sonata for alto saxophone and piano, was written on commission for the World-Wide (Concurrent) Premieres and Commissioning Fund. The piece makes considerable technical demands, particularly at the high end of the player’s range, but clothes them in the seductive guise of a sensuous tango-like dance. Goble says that the piece “requires musicians to really ‘loosen up’ to get a good performance. Saxophonists who have never played a gig in a smoky club might have difficulty presenting the right feel and vibe on this one.”

The piece is intended to represent the memories of a visitor to San Antonio. The first section, *The Summons*, begins with a striking syncopated rhythm from the piano that recurs throughout. The rhythm is the heart of the entire section, as it is pushed, pulled, and fragmented by the two players. A climactic buildup to the conclusion is marked “unforgivably crude.”

Line Dance, the second section, features a lyrical saxophone line over a moderately paced dance rhythm of the composer’s own invention. The final section, *Couples’ Dance*, is perhaps more evocative of tango than anything normally heard in San Antonio, more urbane than folkloric—but after all, these are the reminiscences of a traveler, and memory can play funny tricks.

The composer has supplied the following program notes for *San Antonio*’s three movements:

I. *The Summons*

“The traveler has a free afternoon in San Antonio. It is August, 105 degrees. Expecting to start with the cool promenade along the river, he is instead lured by a sound. He follows it up a long stairway and finds himself in a little fiesta—a hot square, no shade, many people, a few dancing to a fast beat, the band playing and singing in Spanish.”

II. *Line Dance*

“The first dancers finish, exhausted. Then, as if on cue, practically the whole crowd gets into a line, all ages, nine to ninety. They all know the steps, which change with the phrases.”

III. *Couples’ Dance*

“Then the music changes again, [becomes] still slower; they go on in couples. No one seems to feel the heat; the band hardly stops. Everyone, the traveler included, sinks into it. Towards the end, a young girl asks the traveler to dance. He declines. But a year later, when the tourist jots down the memory of the sounds—something about a saxophone, and a few rhythms—in his distorted memory, he accepts.”

Kevin Jay Isaacs’s *4 Wheel Dr.* (1998) was commissioned by and is dedicated to Dan Goble and Jeff Hellmer. Over the span of its four movements it employs all four of the most commonly used members of the saxophone family: soprano in the first section, alto in the second, tenor in the third, and baritone in the final movement. There is no doubt that the piece was written with performers fluent in jazz in mind, particularly the first and fourth movements, which require a great deal of improvisation.

The first movement, *Freeway*, requires the performers to “chase” one another using predetermined cells upon which the improvisations are based; the players imitate one another as if anticipating the other’s moves in a high-speed car chase. The “blue” notes in the piano part and the slurs in the saxophone lines further lend a jazzy feel to the score.

In both the second and third movements, the piano is clearly assigned the role of accompanist to the saxophone’s lead. *Avenue* is a languorous slow movement, positioning a lyrical saxophone line against a simple chordal backdrop. *Boulevard* makes use of the smoky timbral associations inherent in the tenor saxophone for a ruminative ballad marked “dreamily” by the composer. In the final movement, *Alley*, Isaacs supplies the first twenty-one bars of written material, then allows the performers to improvise at will on a supplied chord progression for the next bars. Much of the remainder of the movement gives the performers similar freedom, culminating in a climactic passage marked “Wild Jam!,” which continues until the movement’s three concluding bars.

The composer has supplied the following notes regarding the piece:

I. *Freeway*

“A road rage car chase on a major freeway at rush hour. The piano leads the way most of the time, with the poor saxophone player trying to catch up and keep up.”

II. *Avenue*

“A majestic stone church on a tree-lined avenue in a major city on a warm autumn afternoon. A chorale is heard from within the church and a haunting melody is heard from without.”

III. *Boulevard*

“[It is] midnight, and the smell of rum, cigars, and perfume is wafting down the boulevard to the sounds of laughter, whispers, and ... well, you know, music and love.”

IV. *Alley*

“The unusual combination of items in an urban alley comes to mind: stripped cars, trash, fire escapes, rotting food, and homeless jazz musicians living in refrigerator cartons, to name a few.”

Miles Davis’s “Blue in Green” first appeared on his 1959 album *Kind of Blue*, which has earned the distinction of being one of the most universally acclaimed and popular recordings in the history of acoustic jazz. The album’s tracks were not

structured like conventional jazz standards; a definitive example of modal jazz, *Kind of Blue* is made up of tunes and improvisations that are based on slowly shifting chord progressions—an approach employed, according to Davis, in order to “simplify” the music. An exceptional band, including saxophonists John Coltrane and Julian “Cannonball” Adderley and pianist Bill Evans, transformed Davis’s sketches into instantly memorable jazz standards.

According to Evans’s original notes for the recording, Davis conceived the music for *Kind of Blue* only hours before the recording session, arriving for the date with mere sketches in hand. “Blue in Green,” Evans states, is “a ten-measure circular form following a four-measure introduction, and played by soloists in various augmentation and diminution of time values.” Here, the piece affords Goble and Hellmer a chance to stretch out and flex their jazz muscles in relaxed, sympathetic improvisation.

—Steve Smith

Charles Ruggiero (b Bridgeport, CT, 19 June 1947) holds degrees from the New England Conservatory and Michigan State University, where he has taught music theory and composition since 1973. Although his compositional style is eclectic, much of Ruggiero’s music reflects his lifelong interest in jazz.

Charles Wuorinen (b New York City, 9 June 1938) has been a forceful presence on the American musical scene for more than four decades. In 1970, Wuorinen became the youngest composer to win the Pulitzer Prize in music for his electronic composition *Time’s Encomium*. In 1962 he cofounded the Group for Contemporary Music, one of America’s most prestigious ensembles dedicated to performance of new chamber music. He is presently professor of composition at Rutgers University.

John Harbison (b Orange, NJ, 20 Dec 1938) received the Pulitzer Prize in 1987 for *The Flight into Egypt*. He has been composer-in-residence with the Los Angeles Philharmonic, Tanglewood, the Santa Fe Chamber Music Festival, and the American Academy in Rome. Harbison’s music has been performed by some of the leading ensembles in the world, and his works have been recorded on the Nonesuch, Northeastern, New World, and CRI labels.

Kevin Jay Isaacs (b 1959) is a professor of music at Western Connecticut State University, serving as director of choral studies and teaching composition. He holds degrees in theory and composition from Texas Christian University and a doctorate in composition and choral conducting from the University of Arizona. Isaacs’s *Agnus Dei* was a required work for the 1992 National Collegiate Choral Competition.

Miles Davis (b Alton, IL, 25 May 1926; d Santa Monica, CA, 28 Sept 1991) was one of the foremost figures in jazz of the twentieth century. Trumpeter Davis came to prominence during the bebop era of the 1940s, playing alongside saxophonist Charlie Parker. A restless innovator throughout a career that lasted over fifty years, Davis was at the heart of virtually every major innovation in jazz, from bebop to cool jazz, from hard bop to modal jazz, and was a prime architect of jazz-rock fusion.

Jeff Hellmer, pianist and educator, possesses a unique blend of abilities that allows him to be successful in the jazz, classical, and commercial musical genres. He has performed and taught in locations as diverse as Connecticut, Alaska, and Taiwan, and has worked with jazz artists Ernie Watts, Dick Oatts, Bill Watrous, and Marvin Stamm. Hellmer has appeared as a soloist with the Dallas Wind Symphony on multiple occasions, including a recent concert for which he served as conductor, arranger, and soloist. Other chamber music work includes appearances with the Louisiana Philharmonic Orchestra and performances with faculty at the University of Texas at Austin. His most recent jazz CD, *Peak Moments*, with saxophonist Rick Margitza, is receiving wide national airplay. Reviews of his earlier solo piano CD, *Windows*, praised Hellmer’s “mastery of the instrument.”

As director of jazz studies at the University of Texas at Austin, Hellmer conducts the acclaimed University of Texas Jazz Orchestra. He is in demand as a guest clinician and has appeared as a guest conductor with such groups as the Iowa All-State Jazz Ensemble and the National Band Association Honors Jazz Band.

Hellmer’s compositions for jazz ensemble are available through Concept Music, UNC Press, and C.L. Barnhouse. He is coauthor of the popular textbook *Jazz Theory and Practice*, published by Alfred.

Dan Goble has brought his eclectic approach to saxophone and musical education to audiences and students everywhere from his hometown of Casper, Wyoming, to such diverse places as Alaska, Los Angeles, Maine, New York City, Geneva, and Tokyo. His versatility as an educator and performer in many genres is due to the depth of his musical experience in contemporary classical music, jazz, rock, and musical theater. He is at ease performing the complex music of Charles Wuorinen, playing standards in a jazz club, or discussing the Beatles with his students.

Goble was the first-place prizewinner at the 1993 Louise D. McMahon International Competition in Lawton, Oklahoma, and has won or placed in numerous other competitions, including the Ima Hogg International Youth Artist Competition, the Concert Artist Guild International Competition, the Fischhoff Chamber Music Competition, and the annual Down Beat Magazine Student Recording Awards. Goble is in demand as an orchestral saxophonist throughout the New York City area, where his prominent performances have included appearances in the New York premiere of Thomas Adés’s opera *Powder Her Face* and in a concert version of John Adams’s *Nixon in China*, both with the Brooklyn Philharmonic Orchestra.

Dr. Goble is currently on the faculty of Western Connecticut State University in Danbury, Connecticut, where he teaches saxophone and is the director of jazz studies. His energetic and empowering style of teaching has led to many stints as a guest clinician throughout the Northeast, including his recent direction of the New York State School Music Association (NYSSMA) All State Jazz Ensemble and numerous regional jazz ensembles in Connecticut.

Production Notes

Publishing Credits:

Interplay: Dorn Publications (ASCAP).

Divertimento: C. F. Peters (BMI).

San Antonio: Associated Music Publishers (G. Schirmer) (BMI).

4 Wheel Dr.: composer.

“Blue in Green”: Jazz Horn Music Corp. and Sony/ATV Songs LLC (BMI).