

# **Quartet**

**for flute, alto saxophone, bassoon and violoncello**

**Joe Wolfe, 1998**

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I have often regretted the lack of chamber music which included saxophone. There is an excellent repertoire of quartets for soprano, alto, tenor and baritone saxophone, but little for saxophone and other instruments. Hence this quartet. It was first performed by Isabelle Cossette (flute) Joe Wolfe (saxophone) Petrina Slaytor (bassoon) and Guy Curd (cello) at a concert in Sydney in October 1998.

The saxophone has a huge dynamic range: it has a *forte* to rival trumpets and a *piano* to rival flutes. I wonder if this is why composers are reluctant to write for it: do they wonder how saxophonists will interpret *piano* and *forte*?

This choice of instruments appealed for several reasons: flute and saxophone give a soprano and alto lines, while the bassoon and cello can be either tenor or bass voices and thus provide a bass line for each other's solos. The range of colours is interesting: I particularly like the dark timbre of the saxophone played very softly in its lower register, even though this requirement may annoy some saxophonists. In homophonic writing, the four instruments can be balanced if the flute is written in its high register, and if the saxophone player realises that 'forte' in this context is relative. In lower chords, the mid ranges of the saxophone, bassoon and cello blend together well, and the flute is used almost as a higher harmonic.

The first movement has a melody in broken time which starts the piece off with a jazzy feel. This is contrasted with a steady cello tune. The two themes are then combined in different ways. The second movement gives the players a chance to regain their breath. The third movement is minimalist. The fourth movement recycles a little waltz that I wrote a long time ago. The fifth movement is a jazzy tune (based on material from the second movement) and its aim is to send the audience out whistling.