

Suite Detroit: Sounds of an American City

For Flute, Alto Saxophone, and Piano

CATHERINE ROLLIN

Commissioned by Music Teachers National Association
for the 2018 National Conference in Orlando, Florida

When given the instrumentation for this trio, I immediately thought of my musical roots from my hometown of Detroit, Michigan. Detroit is a city that exemplifies the American spirit of innovation and invention. In the 20th century, wealth was generated in the city, primarily through the auto industry. These newly found resources led to major investments in the arts, including the Detroit Institute of Arts and the Detroit Symphony Orchestra.

I was fortunate to study with concert pianist Mischa Kottler, who came to Detroit in the 1930s and later became the principal pianist with the Detroit Symphony Orchestra. In addition to the classical piano background from lessons with Mr. Kottler, I was also influenced by other musical styles that surrounded me in the city. I heard Motown songs on the radio before they became national hits. Since Detroit was a mecca for jazz, I heard great jazz pianists such as Chick Corea, McCoy Tyner, and Oscar Peterson. While still in high school, I had the unforgettable experience of hearing Bill Evans perform his musical magic at the famous Baker's Keyboard Lounge.

In the first and third movements of this trio, I incorporated jazz influences such as syncopation and swung eighth notes. The three movements are related by key. In the jazz spirit, the flute and alto saxophone players are encouraged to explore alternate articulations in the third movement if desired. The outer movements are in D minor, and the middle movement is in F major, the relative major. All three movements briefly move into the key of D major, which functions as a ray of musical sunshine. This D major musical color reflects my hope for the continuing resurgence of Detroit and other large inner cities across America.

I am grateful to the Music Teachers National Association (MTNA) for providing me with the opportunity to write and present this trio. I am especially honored since MTNA has been a vital part of my work as a teacher, composer, and pianist for my entire professional life. I also want to thank Dr. Ann Rivers Witherspoon, National Chair for the MTNA Composer Commissioning Program, for her dedication to bringing new accessible chamber music to developing musicians. I hope this trio will provide a rewarding musical experience.

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