

Jazz Improvisation

by H. Michael Sanders

The throaty growl of yellow saxophone bereavement,
merging with yelps of joy and excitement
in a brass cauldron of musical alchemy.

Speeding through modal changes, growling stops,
and flattened keys in sheets of sound—
bursting, shredding, flapping in the wind.

Conveying force and madness from the depths of the soul,
with complete wonderment at the
intense brevity of the simple act of living.

The sinuous twisting of the saxophone's profile,
undulating outward, downward, back and up—
launching vibrating molecules heavenward.

Dancing blindly toward the sun in the thicket of our fears,
mired in hopes and plans and failures—
leaving good sense and insanity behind us.

Reflections of light distort on the saxophone's surface,
glittering and pulsating as they pass
like the shadows of vibrating patterns of air.

The visual heartbeat of the Universe brought into focus
for a fraction of a second that masquerades
as eternity, removes its mask, and is eternity.

The tentacles of certainty unfurl riding the waves of
abstract truth and utter mystery to the ear—
and reveal themselves to be quite mistaken.

An artist squeezing and holding mechanical metal keys,
shaping air columns like a sculptor hammers stone
into recognizable shapes both real and symbolic.

Body humming, muscles relaxed, mind opened and emptied,
the mystical vibration of the saxophone resonates
and reverberates through the matrix of my cells.

My awareness is stirred to action by the heat of aural fire,
my eyes—two protrusions of my brain—observing
the colors and shapes of hot crystalline sound.

—June 28, 2010