The Barber of Seville Overture  
Giachinno Rossini (1792-1868)

The opera “The Barber of Seville” was first produced in 1816. It is the most popular of Rossini’s opera and is often performed today. It is one of the best opera buffo (comic opera) and it is the definitive opera of the bel canto style, which features sung recitative, melissmatic lyrics, lyric tenor and coloratura soprano (the highest of the soprano voices). The title role is that of Figaro, the famous barber and factotem, who directs the plot whereby Count Almaviva wins the heroine Rosina away from her wicked guardian Dr. Bartolo.

The characters Figaro, Count Almaviva, and Rosina also appear in the 1786 Mozart opera “The Marriage of Figaro”.

The Overture from the opera “The Barber of Seville” was originally written for an earlier opera “Aureliano in Palmyra” and was also used as the overture to the opera “Elisabetta, regina d’Inghilterra.” Rossini (among many other composers of the period) often reused his more successful music, and the Overture was certainly one of his most popular compositions.

The Overture has been used in cartoons, notably Bugs Bunny in “Rabbit of Seville”. See http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vxixY0lHCrg

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About tempos:
The first movement was originally marked Andante maestoso, which should be slow. However, I have doubled all the note values in the first movement to make them easier to read, which makes it necessary to double the tempo to Moderato.

I have heard a recording of the Overture in which the Moderato tempo was 100, the Allegro vivo was 188, and the Piu mosso was 268. These tempos are very difficult for many saxophonists. Each quartet should set its own tempos to accommodate the abilities of its members. The music is beautiful at any tempo.

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In addition to opera, Rossini wrote religious and other forms of music. One of my favorites is his “Stabat Mater”.

Bruce Evans
22 April 2013
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Soprano Sax
Soprano Sax

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Soprano Sax

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Alto Sax
Alto Sax

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Tenor Sax
Tenor Sax

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Baritone Sax
Baritone Sax

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Bars 157-206