

GREG MILLS

SAXOPHONE

FEATURING:
LIZ AMES, PIANO
JACK SCHWIMMER
THE PARADIGM SHIFT SAXOPHONE QUARTET

FEBRUARY 12, 2012
7:30 PM
KATZIN CONCERT HALL

Lessons of the Sky (1985)

Liz Ames, piano

Rodney Rogers
(b. 1953)

Knabenduett (1980)

Jack Schwimmer, soprano saxophone

Karlheinz Stockausen
(1928-2007)

Back Burner (1988)

The Paradigm Shift Saxophone Quartet
Greg Mills, soprano
David Foley, alto
Courtney Kuhn, tenor
Jack Schwimmer, baritone

Frank Ticheli
(b. 1958)

-Intermission-

Concerto, op. 14 (1932)

I. Allegro
II. Adagio
III. Allegro

Liz Ames, piano

Lars-Erik Larsson
(1908-1986)

The Seventh Healing Song of John Joseph (1983)

James DeMars
(b. 1952)

Audience members are reminded to silence alarm watches, pagers, and cellular phones before the performance. As a matter of courtesy and copyright law, no unauthorized recording or photographing is allowed in the hall. Please hold all applause till the end of the piece, especially if there are multiple movements.

Program Notes

Lessons of the Sky (1985)

Composed by Rodney Rogers

Rodney Rogers writes music for a variety of instrumental and vocal combinations, from orchestral music to works for solo performers. A recent CD of his compositions entitled *Complicated Optimism* (Albany Records) contains works for solo, instrumental and vocal groups. In addition, his music appears on solo albums by various concert artists in both the United States and England. *Air Mosaic* appears on four CDs produced by nationally recognized university wind ensembles. Rogers is the recipient of composition awards from BMI, ASCAP, and the Music Teachers National Association (MTNA). He has received commissions from the College Band Directors National Association (CBDNA, 50th Anniversary), the MTNA, the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA Consortium Commission), and numerous individual performers and chamber groups. Fellowships in composition include Tanglewood, the MacDowell Colony, and the Yaddo Artist Colony. His music is published by Hal Leonard and Carl Fischer and is also available through the composer. Rogers' received his PhD. from the University of Iowa, has taught composition at Louisiana State University and Lawrence University (Appleton, WI), and is currently on the composition faculty at Arizona State University.

The title *Lessons of the Sky* comes from the essay *The Star Thrower* by Loren Eiseley (found in a collection of essays under the same title). Here, the sky represents that which is open, alive and infinite. 'Lessons' suggests the knowledge gained through observation of the world around and above us - the endlessly varied designs that nature provides as building blocks for life. The music is based on short motives and chord progressions that are continually varied and juxtaposed. There are three sections in the composition, forming a fast/slow/fast structure. While sections one and three emphasize patterns that are fast and rhythmic - with no variation in speed - the rate at which chord changes occur varies widely. Early in the piece the harmonies move quickly underneath the many motives; but as the first section progresses, a single motive/pattern is periodically isolated and repeated over very slow chord changes. The surface rhythm of the pattern remains fast and constant during these harmonically stable sections, yet there is a general perception that the music is calmer. The interplay between the soprano saxophone and piano is another important aspect of the piece. The two instruments tend to share ideas, tossing motives back and forth in an improvised manner, but in the lyric slow section the soprano saxophone is featured and the piano takes on an accompanying role. Occasionally the piano makes an unexpected percussive sound when the pianist dampens a string with fingers of the left hand whilst playing the keyboard with the right hand. A single low piano note is dampened throughout the entire composition with a rubber wedge (which, when struck softly during the slow middle section, takes on a gong-like character). The piece closes with a return of the fast music, beginning with harmonically stable repeating figures and then moving into the short and quickly juxtaposed motives that began the piece. This loosely designed reverse order results in an arch-like shape for the whole composition.

Knabenduett (1980)

Composed by Karlheinz Stockhausen

Stockhausen (born Aug. 22, 1928, Mödrath, near Cologne, Ger.—died Dec. 5, 2007, Kürten) was a German composer. Orphaned during World War II, he supported himself with odd jobs (including jazz pianist) before entering Cologne's State Academy for Music in 1947. After hearing Olivier Messiaen's music at Darmstadt in 1951, he began studying with the composer and experimenting with serialism. His early works include *Piano Pieces I-IV* (1952) and *Counter-Points* (1952–53). He also became involved with *musique concrète*, a technique using recorded sounds as raw material; his remarkable *Song of the Youths* (1955–56) used a highly processed recording of a boy soprano mixed with electronic sounds. His extensions of serialism continued in pieces such as *Measures* (1955–56) and *Groups* (1955–57), and he became a leading avant-garde spokesman. His *Moments* (1962–69) influentially applied serialism to groups of sounds rather than single pitches, and he began incorporating aleatoric (chance) elements as well. From the late 1960s he conceived ever grander schemes, some incorporating literature, dance, and ritual, as in the *Light* series (1977–2003).

Licht (Light), subtitled "The Seven Days of the Week," is a cycle of seven operas composed by Karlheinz Stockhausen between 1977 and 2003. The composer described the work as an "eternal spiral" because Sunday sets up the action for Monday (with new life as its theme) so that "there is neither end nor beginning to the week." *Licht* consists of 29 hours of music. *Knabenduet* is an interlude taken from the opera entitled "Thursday" written for two soprano saxophones meant to mirror two boy sopranos singing to evoke the archangel Michael. The two players are intended to perform the work while standing far apart from one another, meaning to imitate Stockhausen's two sons as they played together. The intervals involved in *Knabenduet* create an artificial "third voice" as the harmonic structure between the two saxophones creates overtones that play with the human ear creating counterpoint with the other two voices.

Back Burner (1988)

Composed by Frank Ticheli

Frank Ticheli's (b. 1958) music has been described as being "optimistic and thoughtful" (Los Angeles Times), "lean and muscular" (New York Times), "brilliantly effective" (Miami Herald) and "powerful, deeply felt crafted with impressive flair and an ear for striking instrumental colors" (South Florida Sun-Sentinel). Ticheli (b. 1958) joined the faculty of the University of Southern California's Thornton School of Music in 1991, where he is Professor of Composition. From 1991 to 1998, Ticheli was Composer in Residence of the Pacific Symphony, and he still enjoys a close working relationship with that orchestra and their music director, Carl St. Clair.

Frank Ticheli is the winner of the 2006 NBA/William D. Revelli Memorial Band Composition Contest for his Symphony No. 2. Other awards for his music include the Charles Ives and the Goddard Lieberston Awards, both from the American Academy of Arts and Letters, the Walter Beeler Memorial Prize, and First Prize awards in the Texas Sesquicentennial Orchestral Composition Competition, Britten-on-the-Bay Choral Composition Contest, and Virginia CBDNA Symposium for New Band Music. He is a national honorary member of Kappa Kappa Psi and Phi Mu Alpha Sinfonia, and he was named by the American School Band Directors Association as the 2009 recipient of the A. Austin Harding Award, bestowed to individuals "who have made exceptional contributions to the school band movement in America."

Back Burner is one of Ticheli's few works for chamber ensemble. Although his medium is typically for wind ensembles and symphonic bands, this piece written in 1988 has been highly acclaimed and already has a strong history of recorded performances. Ticheli begins by presenting an idea in a melodic unison from all four saxophone voices and slowly begins to splinter out both harmonically and rhythmically until all four voices of the quartet are accounting for a composite rhythm. Ticheli utilizes traits of earlier saxophone quartet composers like Guy Lacour such as the use of 12-tone passages, and the hocketing of rhythms. The slow legato section adds voice by voice until all four saxophones come together to play eight chords prior to splintering off again into dissonant fragments of melody. In the final section of the piece, we see an alignment of the four horns as the work finishes with a strong statement in true Ticheli style.

Concerto (1932)

Composed by Lars-Erik Larsson

Lars-Erik Larsson (1908-86) was one of the leading figures in 20th-century Swedish music. His early studies were at the Stockholm Conservatory in the late 1920s, in Vienna with Alban Berg, and finally in Leipzig in 1930-31. His contribution to Sweden's musical life was enormous: he worked with the Royal Opera in Stockholm; as a music critic; as a producer, composer and conductor with Swedish Radio; and as a professor at the Stockholm Conservatory and the University of Uppsala. After the Second World War, Larsson was appointed inspector of a number of amateur orchestras that were receiving government grants. He noticed that there was little in their repertoire that could be described as modern, perhaps because of an aversion to 'modern' music, but more probably because the limited technique of the players made contemporary works too great a challenge. Consequently, in the mid-1950s he wrote a set of twelve short concertinos under the

same opus number - one for virtually every instrument of the orchestra - that paired a complex solo part with a fairly easy and accessible string orchestra accompaniment that could be easily handled by an amateur ensemble. The works are by no means uninspired or condescending, however, but well-crafted and charming miniatures that have continued to hold their popularity.

Written in 1932, Larsson's saxophone concerto was originally written for famed saxophonist Sigurd Rascher (1907-2001). It precedes Alexander Glazunov's (1865-1936) saxophone concerto which was premiered in 1934. However, the work has actually performed for the first time two days after the premiere of Glazunov's concerto on November 27th, 1934 in Norrköping, Sweden. The concerto is considered to be one of the first major saxophone pieces to utilize non-standard tonality.

The first movement is a modernized version of classic sonata form. The first major theme in this movement is more chromatic and angular, the second being a quasi-tango feel. This is followed by the development, and then a cadenza which is somewhat auto referential. It closes with a recap of the first theme. The second movement is a slow, very idiomatic chorale which is typical of the writing for Rascher featuring a pretty prominent use of the altissimo register. As the first theme rises and comes to a climax, the saxophone breaks out into an expressive flurry of arpeggios and triplet turns which is paired with the slow methodical theme delivered in the accompaniment. The final movement is a short punctuation that serves as an epilogue to the first two movements. The solo part ends with a final sol-do phrase taking us back to the tonic key of D-Minor, and ending where the concerto began.

The Seventh Healing Song of John Joseph (Blue) (1983) Composed by James Demars

James DeMars (b.1952) - Composer/conductor James DeMars belongs to a generation that is revealing a new integration of world music with the range, depth and stylistic variety of the classical tradition. His works include orchestral concertos for violin, piano, African drum ensemble, pow-wow singers, Native American flute, several cantatas, a requiem mass and an opera. DeMars has received commissions from the NEA, the Heard Museum, Flynn Foundation, Art Renaissance Foundation, the Phoenix Symphony, Canyon Records, the European-American Foundation, the Phoenix Boys Choir, I Solisti di Zagreb, and the Arizona Commission on the Arts.

As a conductor, DeMars' performances include the national premiere of his work, *An American Requiem*, at the Kennedy Center in Washington and nationally televised performances at Cathedral of St. John the Divine in New York. In 1998 he conducted the European premiere of the requiem in Paris at Église La Trinité with Choer et Orchestre Francais D'Oratorio and was inducted to the French Order of Arts and Letters. With Native American flutist R. Carlos Nakai he has created four CDs for Canyon Records. Two World Concerto received two Native American Music Awards and led to the 2008 release of DeMars' inter-cultural opera, *GUADALUPE*. In 2010 he received the Arizona Artist of the Year Governor's Award.

The Seventh Healing Song was one of the first pieces that DeMars wrote when he moved to Arizona at the request of the flute professor at Arizona State University at the time, Eric Hoover. The electronic accompaniment track was created using the slowed down harmonics of crystal glass with water in it. The low bass drone heard is a modified recording of Dr. DeMars's own voice. The native drum sound was created through the use of the low end of the piano with electronically altered pitches and compressed to create a more percussive sound. The electronics in *The Seventh Healing Song* were actually written first, and then layered with written parts for the instrumentalist. The flute on the track was added by Eric Hoover to virtually accompany himself. Although the work was originally written for flute and electronics instead of saxophone, DeMars quickly discovered that it worked well for the saxophone as the piece grew. As it currently stands, there are three different versions of the piece; flute, alto saxophone and soprano saxophone.

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