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Connor Davis

Kate Knox

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Performer(s)

Joseph Rulli, S. Michael Shuman, Connor Davis, Kate Knox, Grant Davis, and Mark Kerby

Winner of the Pulitzer Prize for composition in 1969, Czech Karel Husa once said, "In my case and in my thinking, music has mirrored the life we live in...I think my music also mirrors what is happening today." For Husa that life has consisted of studying in Paris during World War II, expatriatism to the United States, and seeing his homeland of Czechoslovakia invaded by the Soviet Union. The spiritual power of music to represent such things - events of turmoil, upheaval, and disaster - is clearly evident in Husa's *Elegie et Rondeau*. The title itself contains a spiritual reference with the word, "elegie," a lament for the deceased. Very similar to Husa's celebrated work for wind band, *Music for Prague 1968*, in thematic intensity and rhythmic complexity, *Elegie et Rondeau* was initially going to be written for solo piano, before Husa reconceived the piece to feature the saxophone virtuosity of Sigurd Rascher.

No discussion of the spiritual nature of saxophone music would be complete without reference to John Coltrane. The jazz icon from North Carolina once said that "My music is the spiritual expression of what I am - my faith, my knowledge, my being." And, it was shortly after the realization of this musical conception that Trane wrote the composition, "Naima," recorded on the 1960 album, *Giant Steps*. It was in the late 1950s that Coltrane finally kicked his addictions to heroin and alcohol, thanks in large part to his first wife, Juanita Naima Grubb. It was during this painful process of recovery, with Naima by his side, that Coltrane allegedly made a deal with God, promising to devote his talent to Him, if he was able to get through his current torment. A lovely ballad, "Naima," is serene and meditative, a perfect portrait of the saxophonist, Coltrane.

Tonight's final selection is Nat Adderley's "Work Song," from his 1960 album of the same title. While Adderley himself was a trumpet player, "Work Song" became a signature piece performed by his brother, hard bop alto saxophonist, Cannonball Adderley. The inspiration for "Work Song" was African American call-and-response field hollers, a key component of the African American spiritual tradition. Listen carefully for the accented downbeats played by the rhythm section during the statement of the tune, which is meant to musically evoke the sound of a pickaxe striking the ground in rhythm, an answer to the saxophone's call.

Joseph Rulli is a student of Stanley Morris and Dr. Richard Salonen. Tonight's recital is presented in partial fulfillment of the Bachelor of Music Performance degree, as well as in partial fulfillment of thesis requirements for the Fulbright College of Arts and Sciences Honors Program.

The University of Arkansas Department of Music
presents

Joseph Rulli
Saxophone

"Spirituality of the Saxophone"

S. Michael Shuman, Piano
Connor Davis, Piano
Kate Knox, Bass
Grant Davis, Drums
Mark Kerby, Reciter

Stella Boyle Smith Concert Hall
April 6, 2013
8 PM

Program

Concerto pour		
Alto Saxophone et Orchestre (1949)		Henri Tomasi (1901-1971)
I. Andante et Allegro		
II. Giration-Final: Allegro		
Concerto for		
Alto Saxophone and Wind Ensemble (1999)		David Maslanka (b. 1943)
II. Interlude: Bright Window, Your Night is Full of Stars		
S. Michael Shuman, piano		
Phoenix (Fushicho) (1988)		
		Ryo Noda (b. 1948)
Mark Kerby, Reciter		
INTERMISSION		
Elegie et Rondeau (1960)		
		Karel Husa (b. 1921)
S. Michael Shuman, piano		
Naima (1959)		John Coltrane (1926-1967)
Work Song (1960)		Nat Adderley (1931-2000)
Connor Davis, piano		
Kate Knox, bass		
Grant Davis, drums		

Notes

Rich with controversy and allure, the history of the saxophone has established a reputation for the instrument as a troublemaker and symbol of sexuality. The sound of the instrument has long filled dance halls, honky tonks, and jazz clubs since the early 20th century, earning prohibitions on its use and declarations against its "carnal" sound from American censors in the 1950s, the Vatican, the Third Reich, and communist Russia. Today, the saxophone maintains much of the same stigma, as the oft-used instrument by film composers to introduce a beautiful woman, or to lead

into an erotic scene. Tonight, I hope to introduce a new image for the saxophone, as an instrument of spiritual depth. Each piece performed maintains a spiritual connection to the saxophone in origin, conception or composition.

Henri Tomasi's *Concerto pour Alto Saxophone et Orchestre* was composed in 1949 for the French saxophone virtuoso, Marcel Mule. Filled with moments of technical intensity and solemn introspection, the piece reflects, like much of Tomasi's music, a fundamental question of existence: does God exist? After living through two World Wars, Tomasi became disillusioned with his faith in God, and used his music as a vehicle to ask the above question. For instance, Tomasi uses planned parallel fifths in multiple guises throughout the work, creating accompaniment sounds altogether hollow and wandering. Also, frequent employment of the tritone interval in the concerto is effectively questioning, such as in the A theme (heard in the first measure of the piano part), as it aurally "hangs" in the air, never resolving. Use of the tritone is also effectively ironic, as that interval was banned from use in the early Catholic Church. Altogether, Tomasi's *Concerto* asks musically again and again this fundamental question, searching for an answer.

American David Maslanka's compositions for saxophone are indicative for their inclusion of spiritual and religious themes, chorales, and motives. *Hell's Gate* for three saxophones and symphonic wind ensemble, *Recitation Book* for saxophone quartet, and *Concerto for Alto Saxophone and Wind Ensemble*, are three of his finest examples of this practice. Featured tonight is the second movement of his *Concerto*, entitled "Interlude: Bright Window, Your Night is Full of Stars." For this movement, Maslanka transcribed the soprano song from his *Mass* for alto saxophone. Maslanka writes in the score, "The words of the original song reach out in prayer to the Holy Mother and ask for a personal connection with all that is." With such an explicit reference towards Christian faith, this piece fits perfectly with tonight's theme.

Saxophonist and composer Ryo Noda is notorious for writing some of the most contemporary music in the modern classical saxophone canon. Originally from Japan, Noda studied saxophone in France with Jean-Marie Londeix and the U.S. with Fred L. Hemke, and won a SACEM composition prize in 1973. *Phoenix*, for solo unaccompanied saxophone, calls to mind themes of birth, death, resurrection and ascension, all ideas associated with the mythological bird, able to be cyclically reborn from the ashes of its predecessor. Use of three extended techniques for saxophone help to communicate these ideas in this piece: altissimo, pitch bending, and false fingerings. Prior to the performance of this work, Noda asks for a poem to be read in Japanese, which speaks to the spiritual nature of the bird, as well as the piece. Translated into English, the poem reads, "The travels of the Phoenix are never ending/Space and time meets new life in the work/Supposing that one could see the love of eternity/After five hundred years, it would seem that it would see creation/The travels of the Phoenix are never ending, still without resting it continues to fly."