



Red Clay Saxophone Quartet

Susan Fancher, soprano saxophone; Laurent Estoppey, alto saxophone
Steven Stusek, tenor saxophone; Mark Engebretson, baritone saxophone

February 24, 2023

8pm

Baldwin Auditorium

Chamber Symphony (1983)

Andrew Stiller (b. 1946)

I. Allegro

II. Mayn Rue Plats

III. Menuetto, feroce

IV. Presto

Intermission

Dusk (2004)

Steven Bryant (b. 1972)

RCSQ joined by members of the UNCG Saxophone Ensemble

Crystal Lewis and Xin Ma, soprano saxophone

Kaisi Deng and Anthony Casamassima, alto saxophone

David Song, Kyle Phillips, and Liam Hollahan, tenor saxophone

Nathan Mothershed and Sam Urhlass, baritone saxophone

Grady Gonzalez, bass saxophone

Steven Stusek, director

Concerto (1995)

Philip Glass (b. 1937)

I.

II.

III.

IV.

Program Notes

Andrew Stiller (b. 1946, Washington, D.C.) studied with Lejaren Hiller and Morton Feldman at the State University of New York at Buffalo. In the 1970's, he was a member of Lukas Foss's Center of the Creative and Performing Arts, performing his own and other avant-garde works at Carnegie Hall, in Buffalo, and on tour. He also performed with the Decapod Wind Quintet, the Age of Reason Baroque Ensemble, the Buffalo New Music Ensemble, and Network for New Music. In 1991 he founded Kallisti Music Press, which published his own music as well as that of Hiller and the early American composer Anthony Philip Heinrich. Stiller is the author of a critically-acclaimed Handbook of Instrumentation, and his writings on musical topics have appeared in the Philadelphia Inquirer, Opus, Musical America, Musical Quarterly, and the New Grove Dictionary of Opera.

Andrew Stiller's **Chamber Symphony** for saxophone quartet was composed in 1983 for the Buffalo-based Amherst Saxophone Quartet. Their recording of it is include on their album "Lament on the Death of Music," released in 1998 on Innova Records.

The composition adheres strictly to forms common in Haydn's and Beethoven's day, but Stiller's *Chamber Symphony* displays many shades of humor. The first movement takes the form of a classical Sonata Allegro. In this form, the second theme is traditionally in the dominant key, the key five scale tones up from the key of the first theme. This shift in tonality, or modulation, was readily apparent to concert audiences two hundred years ago. Stiller chooses in this work to modulate up one quarter tone. Moreover, the modulation is accomplished one voice at a time. Hence three voices are sometimes in one key while the fourth voice is a quarter tone away. The effect this produces, which can sound like very questionable intonation, has caused intense reactions – of both annoyance and amusement – in listeners. But no one mistakes the arrival of the new key. The second movement is a haunting set of variations on *Mayn Rue Plats (My Resting Place)*, a Yiddish song written in 1911 in response to the Triangle Factory Fire. In the score, Stiller includes the text "Vu lebns velkn bay mashinen, Dorn iz mayn rue plats." (Where lives wither at the machines, There is my resting place.) The third movement is, as expected, a minuet, however rather than the elegant minuet of a classical symphony, the music here is humorously heavy, almost like it's being danced by elephants. The fourth movement is a lively rondo form. The words shouted in the last movement "Vancouver! Vancouver! This is it!" signal the final return of the rondo theme. The quote was reportedly the last radio transmission of a young geologist stationed atop Mt. St. Helens before it erupted.

Steven Bryant (b. 1972 in Little Rock, Arkansas) writes music chiseled in its structure and intent, fusing lyricism, dissonance, silence, technology, and humor into lean, skillfully-crafted works that enthrall listeners and performers alike. Winner of the ABA Ostwald award and three-time winner of the NBA Revelli Award, Steven Bryant's music for wind ensemble has reshaped the genre. A prolific composer, his substantial catalogue of music is regularly performed throughout the world. Recently, his *Ecstatic Waters* was premiered by the Minnesota Orchestra to unanimous, rapturous acclaim. The son of a professional trumpeter and music educator, he strongly values music education, and his creative output includes a number of works for young and developing musicians. Steven Bryant studied composition with John Corigliano at The Juilliard School, Cindy McTee at the University of North Texas, and Francis McBeth at Ouachita University. He resides in Durham, NC with his wife, conductor Verena Moesenbichler-Bryant.

Dusk is a simple, chorale-like work that captures the reflective calm of dusk, paradoxically illuminated by the fiery hues of sunset. Bryant writes, "I'm always struck by the dual nature of this experience, as if witnessing an event of epic proportions silently occurring in slow motion. *Dusk* is intended as a short, passionate evocation of this moment of dramatic stillness." *Dusk* was commissioned by the Langley High School Wind Symphony, Andrew Gekoskie, conductor, and was premiered in April 2004 at the MENC National Convention by the commissioning ensemble. In addition to this version for saxophone ensemble, there are several additional versions of *Dusk*, including symphony orchestra and British brass band.

Philip Glass (b. 1937) grew up in Baltimore. He studied at the University of Chicago, the Juilliard School, and in Aspen with Darius Milhaud. Finding himself dissatisfied with much of what then passed for modern music, he moved to Europe, where he studied with the legendary pedagogue Nadia Boulanger and worked closely with the sitar virtuoso and composer Ravi Shankar. He returned to New York in 1967 and formed the Philip Glass Ensemble – seven musicians playing keyboards and a variety of woodwinds.

The new musical style that Glass was evolving was eventually dubbed “minimalism.” Glass himself never liked the term and preferred to speak of himself as a composer of “music with repetitive structures.” Much of his early work was based on the extended reiteration of brief, elegant melodic fragments that wove in and out of an aural tapestry. Or, to put it another way, it immersed a listener in a sort of sonic weather that twists, turns, surrounds, and develops.

Glass composed his **Concerto for Saxophone Quartet** in 1995 at the behest of the Rascher Saxophone Quartet. The group specifically requested a work that could be played either with or without an orchestra, and the composer responded accordingly, with two versions of the piece. Since the non-orchestrated version would be the more complicated of the pair (all of the musical layers would need to be carried by just four players), Glass wrote the piece first for quartet only. In the orchestral setting that followed, he distributed notes throughout the orchestral parts while retaining the most intricate lines for the four saxophone soloists.

Whether performed with or without the orchestra, each of the four movements of the Concerto highlights various members of the quartet. In the gently swaying first movement, the soprano saxophone spins a sinuous melody atop the repeated undulating motifs of the lower-pitched instruments. The jazzy second movement features a lively ascending figure, laid out by the baritone saxophone and later picked up by the other members of the quartet. The tenor instrument carries a relaxed and soulful solo in the graceful third movement, and in the finale, all four saxophones are whipped into a frenzy of continually shifting meters and motifs.

Performers

The **Red Clay Saxophone Quartet** was formed in 2003 when the fates conspired to bring four internationally recognized saxophonists together in Greensboro, North Carolina. The RCSQ takes its name from the area's luscious red soil. Red Clay presents a varied repertoire, featuring music by composers such as Chen Yi, Ben Johnston, James Paul Sain, György Ligeti, Guillermo Lago, Francis Poulenc, Alejandro Rutty, Steve Reich, Mark Engebretson, David Maslanka, Martin Bresnick, Burton Beerman, and Gavin Bryars.

Susan Fancher is an internationally recognized classical saxophonist known for her expressive tone and poetic musical interpretations. She has inspired and premiered over 100 new compositions and continues to collaborate with composers both young and more established to create new, vibrant repertoire for the saxophone. Audiences and critics praise her ability to fill even the most complex notation with life, a trademark of her work as a champion of new music. Born and raised in Albion, New York, Susan Fancher earned undergraduate degrees in both saxophone performance and mathematics, as well as her Doctor of Music, from Northwestern University, where she was a student of Dr. Frederick Hemke. She was awarded the Médaille d'Or (Gold Medal) from the conservatory in Bordeaux, France, where she studied with Monsieur Jean-Marie Londeix. Susan Fancher is on the faculty of Duke University, where she teaches saxophone, coaches chamber music, and, beginning in Fall 2023, will teach a new course in Music Entrepreneurship. She is an artist clinician for the Vandoren/DANSR and Selmer companies.

After studying saxophone at the Conservatory of Lausanne, Switzerland, where he received a concert license (master of arts soloist) in 1994, Swiss saxophonist **Laurent Estoppey**, relocated to Greensboro, NC in 2010, devoting himself mostly to contemporary music, but performing and teaching classic saxophone repertoire and transcriptions of baroque music. Numerous collaborations with composers have led him to premiere at least two hundred works. Now his musical activity is divided between written music and improvisation, and it occurs throughout Switzerland, many European countries, but also in Canada, USA, Argentina, Guatemala, and South Africa. He works with the following orchestras: Orchestre de la Suisse Romande Orchestra, Lausanne Chamber Orchestra, Basel Symphony, UBS Verbier Festival Orchestra, Timisoara, Orchestra of the State of Lithuania, Lausanne Sinfonietta, NEC - Chaux-de- Fonds-Contrechamps Geneva, and Staatskapelle Weimar.

Artist-professor of music at the University of North Carolina-Greensboro, **Steven Stusek** has built an international reputation with regular concerts and master classes throughout France, Holland, Germany, Canada, China, and the US. He regularly performs with the renowned Red Clay Saxophone Quartet, the Eastwind Ensemble (a reed quintet consisting of saxophone, oboe, clarinet, bass clarinet and bassoon) and as an orchestral soloist. In addition to being a clinician for Dansr/Vandoren and Yamaha, he is Past-President of the North American Saxophone Alliance.

Mark Engebretson is Professor of Composition and Electronic Music at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. As a saxophonist, he was a member of the Vienna Saxophone Quartet in the 1990's and has been a member of the Red Clay Quartet since 2003. He is baritone saxophonist, computer wizard, and keyboardist with the anti-meta band, The Difficulties. At UNCG, he recently spearheaded a push to establish an undergraduate degree in Popular Music and Technology. He studied saxophone at the University of Minnesota with Ruben Haugen, the Conservatoire de Bordeaux with Jean-Marie Londeix, and Northwestern University, with Frederick L. Hemke.