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Graduate Recital: Bradley Burr, saxophones

Bradley Burr

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PROGRAM

Sonata for Soprano Saxophone (1988) Richard Rodney
Bennett
(b. 1936)

1. Poco allegro
2. Scherzando
3. Andante
4. Vivo

GRADUATE RECITAL

Bradley Burr, saxophones
Josh Oxford '07, piano

Phoenix - Fushicho (1988) Ryo Noda
(b. 1948)

Song Book (1998) David Maslanka
(b. 1943)

1. Song for Davy
4. Serious Music - In Memoriam Arthur Cohn
7. Evening Song

Hockett Family Recital Room
Tuesday, April 27, 2010
7:00 p.m.

Klonos (1993) Piet Swerts
(b. 1960)

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Program Notes

Sonata for soprano saxophone and piano (1988) - 17'

Sir Richard Rodney Bennett, CBE (1936-) is an English composer, known for his virtuosic concert works, creative film scores, and jazz performance ability. Easily one of Britain's most prolific and versatile composers, his works span a wide range of styles, from his early serial works derived from his study with Pierre Boulez and the Darmstadt school's classes to film scores for movies such as *The Tale of Sweeney Todd* and *Nicholas and Alexandra*, for which he was nominated for an Academy Award. This particular piece was commissioned by and dedicated to John Harle.

Despite these far-reaching stylistic considerations, his works are accessible and interesting to listen to even to the untrained ear - a testament to his work in pop and jazz. The *Sonata* is one of the larger pieces of absolute music for the soprano saxophone written in recent years, and throughout the piece it's clear that Bennett's serial background is combined with jazz influences to create a unique work. The first movement is somewhat schizophrenic, alternating between quiet, simple melodic playing and angular, chromatic runs based on the interval of a minor third. The second movement is a waltz in two, carrying over the intense chromaticism of the first movement and continuing to alternate between slow melodic passages and serial sixteenth-note passages. The third movement is subtitled *In Memory of Harold Arlen*, the famous jazz writer of the 1930s, and quotes several of Arlen's works that Bennett recorded during his career. Lastly, the fourth movement is a rondo, combining themes from the first three movements in a rousing finish to this excellent work.

Phoenix - Fushicho (1988) - 8'

*The travel of the Phoenix never ends,
beyond the sky of time there comes a new soul -
if you should find eternal love there,*

may the world witness your rebirth in the next millennium.

*The travel of the Phoenix never ends,
for she shall fly forever.*

-Ryo Noda (written for this piece)

Ryo Noda (1948-) is a modern composer of accompanied and unaccompanied works for the saxophone. After graduating from the Osaka College of Music as a saxophonist, he continued his studies at Northwestern University under Fred Hemke and Bordeaux Conservatory under Jean-Marie Londeix. His works often utilize avant-garde techniques such as the use of extreme altissimo, timbral trills, and pitch bending.

Noda based this piece on the story of the phoenix, a legendary bird of Egyptian, Arabic, Chinese, and Incan lore that would kill itself in a funeral pyre at the end of its life, only to rise again from the ashes. A clear allegory of death and resurrection, the phoenix surfaces in writings of all time periods as a symbol of the circle of life. Throughout the work, Noda uses bird-like technical passages to imitate the calls of the mythic bird, climaxing with extreme altissimo in the center of the piece as the phoenix dies in its flames. A death knell sounds, and soon after fluttering trills announce the phoenix's rebirth from the ashes of its old self.

Song Book for alto saxophone and marimba (1998) - 12'

David Maslanka (1943-) is one of the most prolific composers alive today, having published over one hundred pieces for orchestra, wind band, choir, chamber ensembles, and solo performers. He is known for integrating deeply spiritual musical themes into his writing, as noted in pieces such as *Give Us This Day*, *Variants on a Hymn Tune*, and several works based on liturgical texts.

Song Book is exactly that - a seven-movement collection of music inspired by folk melodies and classic hymns. The marimba accompaniment draws heavily on these same conceptual ideas, be it the imitation of a strummed guitar under the singing melodic line, expansive root position chords

recalling the church organist's hymnody, or a complex section of running eighth notes providing a running accompaniment *a la* classical harpsichord music. According to the composer, the first movement - *Song for Davy* - is a reworking of the chorale melody "Das alte Jahr vergangen ist" (The Old Year is Past), and represents himself at a young age, in a time of personal transition. The fourth movement, *In Memoriam Arthur Cohn*, was written in memory of a close friend at Maslanka's publishing company. The final movement, *Evening Song*, is an openly Romantic piece that was written in the style of Brahms' Op. 116 Intermezzos.

Klonos (1993) - 8'

Piet Swerts is a Belgian composer of orchestral, chamber, choral, and solo works. Swerts studied at the Lemmensinstituut in Leuven for fifteen years, during which he studied piano and composition. He has been highly acclaimed in his native country for his original compositions, and has received numerous awards as a composer, piano, and conductor.

The Greek word *klonos* represents, according to Swerts, "a cramp-like contraction of the muscles, associated with the heavy movements that some saxophonists make during the fire of playing...The work is...a bravura-like fantasy with a more subtle, yet intense middle section. *Klonos* finishes with a wild, even more virtuosic reprise." It was commissioned by the Foundation Dr Ir.Th. P. Tromp Muziek Concours for the Benelux at Eindhoven, and was specially written for the 1994 Tromp Muziek Concours.