



FRIENDS OF CHAMBER MUSIC

in Cooperation with Pacific's Conservatory of Music present

Italian Saxophone Quartet

FEDERICO MONDELICI, soprano saxophone

MARCO GERBONI, alto saxophone

DAVIDE BARTELUCCI, tenor saxophone

MASSIMO MAZZONI, baritone saxophone

2:30 PM, Sunday, February 17, 2013
Faye Spanos Concert Hall
University of the Pacific

JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH PRELUDE AND FUGUE XVI IN G MINOR BWV 861
(1685–1750)

DOMENICO SCARLETTI THREE PIECES (ARR. GABRIEL PIERNÉ)
(1685–1757) Presto quanto sia possibile
Andante cantabile
Scherzo: Allegro assai

JEAN FRANÇAIX PETIT QUATUOR POUR SAXOPHONES
(1912–1997) Gaguenardise—Cantilène—Sérénade comique

SAMUEL BARBER ADAGIO
(1910–1981)

MICHAEL NYMAN SONGS FOR TONY
(b. 1944)

—INTERMISSION—

PEDRO ITURRALDE SUITE HELLÉNIQUE
(b. 1932) Kalamatianós—Valse—Kritis

SCOTT JOPLIN THE EASY WINNERS
(1867–1917)

GEORGE GERSHWIN BLUES
(1898–1937) (from *An American in Paris*)

PEPITO ROS CYCLES
(b. 1965) Meditativo—Vivo

ALFREDO PIXINGUINHA UM A ZERO ("ONE TO ZERO")
(1897–1973)

ASTOR PIAZZOLLA/ANÍBAL TROILO CONTRABAJEANDO
(1921–1992) (1914–1975)

PIAZZOLLA OBLIVIÓN

NINO ROTA LA PASSARELLA DI "OTTO E MEZZO"
(1911–1979) (from Fellini's film *8½*)

The Italian Saxophone Quartet (www.italiansaxophonequartet.com/English/Home.html)
appears by arrangement with Lisa Sapinkopf Artists (www.chambermuse.com)
9 Commodore Drive, Suite A-309, Emeryville, CA 94608
P: 800-923-1973, 510-428-1533 F: 510-428-9333 (lsapinkopf@aol.com)

ARTIST PROFILE



The Italian Saxophone Quartet was founded in 1982 by four saxophone soloists, close friends determined to join together to perform chamber music for saxophone at the very highest artistic level. Now having passed the thirty-year mark as a group, they have played to wide acclaim in more than 500 concerts in Italy (including the most important concert institutions), France, Germany, Spain, Greece, Japan, USA, Sweden, Lebanon, Bermuda and Russia. The quartet's concerts have been recorded and broadcast by the Italian RAI-Radio 1 and RAI-Radio 3 as well as by Swedish, German, Japanese and American national radios.

In 1985 and 1986 the quartet won a number of important chamber music competitions including the unanimous First Prize at the prestigious "Premio Ancona" (under the direction of Goffredo Petrassi), and in addition, were awarded a special prize for their performance of contemporary music.

Among their important projects, the quartet performed Luciano Berio's work "Outis" with the Symphony Orchestra of Milan's Teatro alla Scala. They recently appeared as soloists with the Malipiero Symphony Orchestra in works by Piazzolla and Dubois, and collaborated with the Fonè String Quartet on the creation of a new arrangement of the Art of the Fugue by J.S. Bach for string and saxophone quartets, which was premiered at the XXII International Chamber Music Festival in Asolo.

Since 2002 the ISQ's annual tours of the United States have brought them to New York City where they showcased at the annual Arts Presenters Conference and to prestigious series from Florida to Alaska.

Recent international activities include concerts at the Bermuda International Festival, the Alicante Festival (Spain), the Oleg Kagan Musikfest in Munich (Germany), the Palaces of St. Petersburg Chamber Music Festival (Russia), and the Al Bustan Festival Beirut (Lebanon).

Highlights of their discography include two CDs on the Delos label and a CD of contemporary music on the Pentaphon label.

One of the greatest challenges that saxophonists face is the search for quality music to perform. Besides the "Top 40" pieces that all saxophonists play, it can be difficult to find music that will keep not only the performer challenged but also the listener rapt. Locating new works can also be a challenging endeavor. Consequently, many saxophone chamber ensembles arrange pieces written for other instruments. Today's program, entitled "Europe Meets the Americas", spans both the globe and musical styles and includes transcriptions, some the quartet made themselves, and pieces written originally for saxophone, saxophone quartet, and one composed for the Italian Saxophone Quartet.

PRELUDE & FUGUE XVI

This is so Bach! A striking trill spreads over the first several bars of the prelude, while the bass line steps steadily and carefully along. That trill recurs several times, sporadically in the bass, but the main melodic idea is a two-note slink between a triplet figure (material is traded back and forth between two voices, or repeated one after the other) while the motive develops into five-note figures with a single note serving as a transition between them. We get down to business with the fugue that features close entrances of each voice, another five-note figure that immediately wanders off into free counterpoint.

THREE PIECES

Domenico Scarlatti, who spent much of his life in the service of Portuguese and Spanish royal families, composed some of the most beautiful music of all time including nearly 600 pieces for solo harpsichord or pianoforte for which he is mainly known. He also wrote four pieces for organ and a few for small instrumental group, some of which display harmonic audacity in their use of discords and also unconventional modulations to remote keys. These pieces although classified as Baroque, presage the Classical.

PETIT QUATUOR

While still a student of Nadia Boulanger, Françaix proved to be a composer of unusual technical accomplishment with his frugal and misleadingly modest 1935 "Little Quartet" for four saxophones. It is some achievement to produce a piece of music that seems wholly calm and modest, that is assembled from the

most elementary rhythmic and melodic parts, and yet maintains our interest with its elegant poise and control. The suitably named *Gaguenardise* is an *Allegro* after the French word *goguenard* ("mocking") and reflects the character of the movement as a jocular dance, the rhythms of which exist during the course of development of the thematic material. The outer sections of the movement are agile and staccato-filled, while the central portion contrasts occasional moments of tender lyricism with the punctuated and rhythmic drive of the beginning. The dynamic range is extreme.¹ The second, slower movement, *Cantilène*, uses only three players with the alto sax taking the lead and the soprano tacet. Listen for one large arch that ascends from near silence and recedes back down at the end. The central portion of the *Cantilène* is, like the *Gaguenardise*, legato to the utmost. Françaix also selected a title with an amusing undertone to depict his closing movement, *Sérénade comique*. The four performers engage in a brisk, playful $\frac{3}{8}$ meter scrap, led by the soprano saxophonist who, having sat out during the *Cantilène*, has a more challenging task than his comrades.

ADAGIO

Barber arranged his famous *Adagio for Strings* from the second movement of his String Quartet No 1, Op. 11, in 1936, the same year he wrote the quartet. It also forms the basis for his *Agnus Dei* (c1967) for chorus and organ. This piece has also been arranged by others for organ, clarinets and woodwinds. In the quartet the *adagio* is placed between a violently contrasting first and third movements; you may envision it as a small stream that grows into a river in a bucolic countryside. The piece is considered by many to be the most popular of all 20th-century orchestral works, and many recognize it from sundry motion pictures. Listen for many unusual time signatures including $\frac{4}{2}$, $\frac{5}{2}$, $\frac{6}{4}$, and $\frac{3}{2}$. The piece's melody is made up mostly by the upper voices. The dynamics range from *pianissimo* to *fortissimo*. A climax is followed by resolution and dynamic change. After climaxing and a long pause, the piece reiterates the beginning and fades away on a sustained tone.

¹ A legendary feature of the saxophone, this dynamic control was a big selling point when the instrument was introduced by Adolph Sax in the eighteenth century

SONGS FOR TONY

"I began writing a saxophone quartet on New Year's Eve 1992. In the early afternoon of 5th January 1993, I was informed that my friend and business manager, Tony Simmons, had died after a long and heroic fight against cancer. I immediately sat down and wrote the music which became the fourth song, in what became a 'memorial' quartet. The previously composed music was scrapped as I decided to give each player, in turn, an 'aria' of his own.

The first song is a transcription of an actual song - 'Mozart on Mortality' - which I wrote for the Composers Ensemble in the spring of 1992. The text, by Mozart himself, is all too appropriate: 'I may not see another day'. The second song is adapted from the music for the scene in Jane Campion's film *The Piano*, where the mute Ada (Holly Hunter) pushes her chief means of communication, her piano, overboard. This film was the last major deal Tony negotiated on my behalf. The third song, a soprano sax solo, is based on a tune I composed some years ago, but was saving for a special occasion."

Michael Nyman—April 1993

SUITE HELLÉNIQUE

Pedro Iturralde, himself a well-known saxophonist, is one of the key names in Spanish jazz. In his *Hellenic Suite* he has fashioned a piquant, fresh and diminutive five-movement suite, showy in part but also with legato warmth. We hear movements 1, 3 and 4 from this piece today.² The *Kalamatianos* is one of the best known, popular dances of Greece. It is a joyous and festive dance in $\frac{7}{8}$ meter, subdivided into two sets of 3 and 4 beats. The third movement, *Valse*, you might think of as a grander waltz but with a bit of a jazzy Brubeck cocktail party tossed in. *Kritis*, the Greek word for Crete, lends a vivacious ending to finish this charming work.

THE EASY WINNERS

This is one of Scott Joplin's most popular ragtime compositions and one of the four that had been recorded as of 1940. Its publication

² The second movement is entitled *Funky* and is reminiscent of the Brecker brothers in mixolydian mode and the last movement is a short repeat of *Kalamatianos*

marked the beginning of what would become a constantly edgy relationship between Joplin and his chief advocate in most respects, publisher John Stark.

The Easy Winners is a rag in ABCD form. The A section follows a well-known folk pattern that was used in many black-composed pieces throughout the era. It is followed by what was his most complex syncopated melodic line to date (1901) in the B section. The trio (C section) consists of a simple pattern that is carried through to the end, and its last four measures also end the D section, which is largely a call and response type of phrase, also common for the time. This piece was suitably used (horse racing was depicted on the original sheet music cover) and adapted by composer Marvin Hamlisch in the 1974 movie *The Sting*.

BLUES

An American in Paris is a symphonic tone poem written in 1928 and inspired by the time Gershwin had spent in Paris. It suggests the marvels and vigor of the French capital in the 1920s. Gershwin based *An American in Paris* on a melodic fragment called "Very Parisienne", written in 1926 on his first visit to Paris. He described the piece as a "rhapsodic ballet" because it was written freely and is more modern than his previous works. The piece is structured into five sections, which culminate in a loose ABA format. The B section's *Andante ma con ritmo deciso* introduces the American Blues and spasms of homesickness. You might forget Gershwin's original orchestration of *An American in Paris* when hearing this version of the famous blues tune arranged for saxophones.

CYCLES

An eclectic, multi-instrumentalist and composer who is active in both classical and jazz genres, Pepito Ros completed his musical studies at the Conservatory "GB Martini" in Bologna and the Paris Conservatoire. Ros' compositions are addressed mostly to the saxophone. *Cycles* is a two-part piece composed for the Italian Saxophone Quartet in which a slower, self-contained meditative exercise is contrasted with a lively exposition of a more throbbing, vivacious nature. Listen in *Meditativo* for a sweet, melancholy over a pulsing continuo, and in *Vivo* for how Ros brightens the mood by lifting both theme and continuo.

UM A ZERO

The youngest of twelve children, Alfredo da Rocha Viana, Jr., better known as Pixinguinha, was a black composer, arranger, flautist and saxophonist born in Rio de Janeiro. He is considered one of the greatest Brazilian composers of popular music, particularly the genre of choro. Pixinguinha composed dozens of choros, including some of the most well-known works in the genre including "Carinhoso", "Glória", "Lamento" and "Um a Zero", which we hear today. Pixinguinha's compositions are more sophisticated in their use of harmony, rhythm and counterpoint compared to many of the older choros, but "Um a Zero" is still in the traditional three-part form. Listen for intricate melodic lines, brassy fanfares, contrapuntal bass lines, and highly syncopated rhythms. In 1919, he recorded "Um a Zero" as a tribute to the victory over Uruguay that gave Brazil its first South American soccer Championship title.

CONTRABAJEANDO

Anibal "Pichuco" Troilo, known as the Bandoneon Mayor de Buenos Aires, was a bandoneon player, composer, arranger and bandleader in Argentina. His orquesta típica was among the most popular with social dancers during the golden age of tango (1940-1955), but he changed to a concert sound by the late 1950s. *Contrabajando*, which dates from 1955, is a play on contrabajo, Spanish for double bass. The piece is collaboration between Astor Piazzolla and Troilo who was employer, mentor, and colleague to Piazzolla. Troilo wrote the opening cadenza for this piece, but the balance is Piazzolla's work: still a tango, but adding harmonic and rhythmic touches that stamp it as Piazzolla's. Of Piazzolla's three works for solo bass, *Contrabajando* is the most soloistic.

OBLIVIÓN

We heard Astor Piazzolla's work earlier in our current season with Intersection's presentation of *Milonga del Ángel*. Piazzolla capitalized on the universal appeal of his native Argentina's celebrated tango; before his death, he was known as the "King of the Nuevo Tango" in his homeland. *ObliviÓN* was composed in 1982 and became popular in 1984 when used in Mario Bellocchio's film *Henry IV, the Mad King*. The film's protagonist is an actor-historian who suffers a fall during an historical

pageant. Upon regaining consciousness he assumes the identity of the character that he was playing, Henry IV, Holy Roman Emperor. Piazzolla's nostalgic tune unfolds in a slow milonga, a song genre of Uruguay and Argentina that was a forerunner of the tango. It shows less influence from jazz or rock forms which was common in his work of that period and holds more true to the original tango form. It has been arranged in several versions, including Klezmer clarinet, oboe, orchestra, and saxophone quartet.

ObliviÓN is a beautiful, haunting piece that speaks of tragedy and love. It is one of Piazzolla's most famous Tango works and remains one of his best. The upper voice enters immediately, with a subtle, arpeggiated accompaniment, and the melody is extremely forlorn and somewhat depressing. With long and beautiful, alternating notes and elegant figures, *ObliviÓN* is a song that spins a sad account of ardor and anguish. It is a beautiful, unhappy song, and very sophisticated in form. Half way through, the melodies change a little, with a contrasting theme, although not as intense as the previous notes and melodies.

LA PASSARELLA

Nino Rota was a fertile and celebrated Italian composer and academic known mostly for his film scores, notably those for Federico Fellini and Luchino Visconti. The film *8½* is recognized as Fellini's masterwork and Rota's soundtrack captures its quintessence, although Rota is probably more well-known for his soundtrack to Coppola's first two *Godfather* films.

"Passarella" means footbridge, typically one made with boards and ropes such as the one in the *Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom* movie. But in this context, think of it as a parade, like you see in a fashion show catwalk or at the front of the theater where the artists walk on at the conclusion of the show with the essential feature that people must walk in single file. In the Fellini film, "La Passarella" is both the title of Rota's soundtrack and the final scene with the parade of characters. Will the quartet follow this example?

—notes ©Dr. Michael Spencer

57TH SEASON

2012-2013

*Presented in Cooperation with
University of the Pacific Conservatory
of Music; Giulio Ongaro, Dean*

Daedalus String Quartet

2:30 PM Sunday, October 7, 2012

Faye Spanos Concert Hall

RECEPTION FOLLOWS

Intersection

2:30 PM Sunday, October 28, 2012

Faye Spanos Concert Hall

RECEPTION FOLLOWS

Musica Pacifica

Baroque Ensemble

2:30 PM Sunday, November 11, 2012

Faye Spanos Concert Hall

RECEPTION FOLLOWS

Italian Saxophone Quartet

2:30 PM Sunday, February 17, 2013

Faye Spanos Concert Hall

RECEPTION FOLLOWS

Enso String Quartet

2:30 PM Sunday, April 21, 2013

Faye Spanos Concert Hall

RECEPTION FOLLOWS

TO OUR AUDIENCE

- The use of cameras and recording devices of any kind is forbidden.
- There is no smoking in the building.
- Please turn off cellular telephones and disengage audible alarms on pagers and watches during concert.
- Concert programs are subject to change without notice.
- Seating is unreserved for the 2012-13 Season.
- Contributions, including memorials, are tax deductible to the extent allowed by law.

Tickets are available at the door.

Adult: Single \$25, Season \$100

Children 12 and younger & students: Free

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FOCM welcomes children to our concerts. However, an adult must accompany all children ten years of age and younger (please, no babes in arms). At the request of the artists, children should not sit in the first four rows.

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For information

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