

South Sound Saxophone Ensemble

Sunday, October 27, 2024 at 3pm
Lagerquist Concert Hall, Mary Baker Russell Music Center

Pacific Lutheran University
The College of Professional Studies and School of Music, Theatre & Dance present

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Welcome to Lagerquist Concert Hall.
Please disable the audible signal on all watches and cellular phones for the duration of the concert.
Use of cameras, recording equipment, and all digital devices is not permitted in the concert hall.

PROGRAM

Proclamation **Adrienne Albert (b. 1941)**

Morning Comes Always..... **Shane Valle (b. 1992)**

I. Gloaming
II. Midnight
III. (dreams)
IV. Morning

World premiere

Variations on "America"..... **Charles Ives (1874-1954)**
arr. Paul Cohen

Ave Maria **Franz Biebl (1906-2001)**
arr. B Carl Nelson

Phoenix.....**Joseph Sowa (b. 1984)**

I. Feverish
II. Ashen
III. Ascendant

South Sound Saxophone Ensemble

Dan Goodrich and Minna Stelzner, *soprano saxophones*
Corey Berman, Kyrsten Campbell, Barbara Hubers-Drake, and Jason Parshall, *alto saxophones*
Austin Baduria, Gwen Porter, Sophia Ramos, Jeff Tecca, and Shane Valle, *tenor saxophones*
Sheryl Clark, Aidan Hille, and Evan Takle, *baritone saxophones*
Kevin Hall, *bass saxophone*
Erik Steighner, *director*

Program Notes

Proclamation was commissioned by the Hartwick College Saxophone Ensemble and the Youth Orchestra of Central Jersey Saxophone Choir (YOCJ), Jordan Smith, Director.

Morning Comes Always is a paean to the irrepressible and renewing force that can give us a fresh start each day, causes us to create, and leads us to work for something bigger than ourselves. Though the title seems more than faintly related to “joy comes in the morning”—the ending is certainly a joyful shout—it’s not intentionally or explicitly biblical.

Sometimes there are days that go from bad to worse. Nothing specific happens, but a series of small things tilt your emotional state negative and then it becomes a self-reinforcing process. By evening you feel without worth or purpose or joy. On the worst of these days, just before going to sleep, you might experience the thought of how nice it would be to sleep and not wake up at all. The first two movements (*I. Gloaming* and *II. Midnight*) trace this arc.

Between night and morning, perhaps dreams not remembered transform you, perhaps something else intervenes—it’s not quite clear what happens—but come morning, those feelings and notions that weighed you down and cast such a significant and definitive judgement on you have almost totally evaporated. You gently prod at the memory of yesterday’s thoughts and black gloom like a missing tooth, trying to see what it was all about. But it’s as if yesterday’s verdict has no power in the light of a new day. You experience a renewed and unblemished joy for being alive. The third and fourth movements (*III. (dreams)* and *IV. Morning*) express this arc.

The pivot point of this music is the third movement *III. (dreams)* and bears saying a bit more about: growing up, my parents would often drop me and my brother off to spend the night at grandma’s, who then lived in the Kent/Green River Valley south of Seattle, not too far from the train tracks running through the valley. Come bedtime, I remember grandma tucking us in and falling asleep to the mournful muffled sounds of trains blowing their horns a couple miles away, rumbling down the valley through the dark – a sound I’ve associated with comfort and safety ever since. The pitches that make up my favorite train horn became a doorway for this movement, transformed into something spectral and arpeggiated, passed between the upper voices to give the music an ethereal but forward-moving sound, carrying us away from the darkness. Below the floating, something deep quietly works under the level of consciousness – a renewing force that can keep us going, making the world new and fresh with possibility each day. The movement ends with the bass saxophone in its lowest register intoning the universal signal for an approaching train—long long short long—transforming the driving rhythm from the first movement into a calm herald the coming of dawn.

– Shane Valle

Charles Ives is regarded as the first truly American composer of the twentieth century and a visionary musical pioneer. Many of his works, including *The Unanswered Question*, *Symphony No. 4*, *Three Places in New England*, “*Concord*” *Sonata*, and *114 Songs* redefined the idea of American music while using unprecedented, innovative compositional ideas and techniques.

Charles Edward Ives was born in Danbury, Connecticut into a musical family. His father, a Civil War bandmaster, was a musician whose love of sacred and vernacular music was combined with a penchant for musical experimentation. From him Ives gained an appreciation for natural sounds and events as well as for popular music (hymns, marches, dance tunes), all of which defined the post-Civil War society in which Ives grew up and loved. This music and the experiences of his childhood became an integral part of his musical output and expression.

Variations on “America” was composed for organ in 1891 when Ives was just 17. It consists of five variations on the familiar tune, separated by two remarkable bitonal interludes. The variations themselves are of diverse character — at times humorous, pensive, or stirring – and all asserting a devout patriotism that characterized much of Ives and his music. It was arranged for orchestra in 1949 by the American composer William Schumann transcribed for Wind Ensemble in 1964 by William E. Rhoads. This version for saxophone ensemble was created from the original organ score, and is not a transcription of the orchestra or band settings. The color and exuberance of the ensemble is ideally suited to the wit and brilliance of the music.

The idea for a saxophone version of *Variations on “America”* came from Ives’ own use of the saxophone in his music. Despite the relative newness of the saxophone in America in the late 19th and early 20th century, Ives used the saxophone

in a number of his orchestra and chamber works, including his Symphony No. 4, *Ragtime Dances*, *Orchestral Set No. 2*, *Country Band March*, *The Seer*, and *Scherzo, Over the Pavements*.

– Paul Cohen

Originally composed for a fire station choir in 1959, **Franz Biebl**'s setting of the identically-titled Catholic prayer faded into obscurity after its 1964 publication. When the Cornell Glee Club visited Munich, Biebl gave them a packet of his compositions, asking them to consider performing his music upon their return. Eventually his *Ave Maria* would become much more popular in the US than it was in Germany. The composer has published versions of *Ave Maria* for different voices and in different keys, but it always features one larger choir taking turns with a smaller ensemble of three parts or soloists. B Carl Nelson has been enamored with Biebl's *Ave Maria* since childhood, having performed it with his family, his high school band, various college ensembles, and heard it on his parents' wedding video. Nelson rescored *Ave Maria* several times for personal projects & college assignments, and when he first heard the South Sound Saxophone Ensemble, his imagination leapt at the possibility of hearing them perform Biebl's masterpiece.

– B Carl Nelson

The legendary bird that rises from its own ashes, the phoenix is a symbol of rebirth and renewal. Each movement of this eponymous piece for saxophone choir represents part of that cycle. The first movement, *Feverish*, begins with delusions of grandeur that become increasingly bizarre until the music self-combusts. The second movement, *Ashen*, plaintively mourns its humble state and yearns for transcendence. The third movement, *Ascendant*, rises from these ashes to become again confident and resplendent.

– Joseph Sowa

About the Conductor

Praised by the *Tacoma News Tribune* for his “effortless lyricism” and “smooth tone and fluid virtuosity,” saxophonist **Erik Steighner** has performed with ensembles including the Austin Symphony Orchestra, the Federal Way Symphony, the Northwest Sinfonietta, the Pacific Northwest Ballet Orchestra, the San Antonio Symphony, the Tacoma Opera, and Symphony Tacoma. Steighner teaches at Pacific Lutheran University, the University of Puget Sound, and Tacoma Community College, where his courses have included saxophone lessons, chamber music, music theory, ear training, music appreciation, and digital music. He is also on faculty at the University of Puget Sound Community Music Department and is the founder and conductor of the South Sound Saxophone Ensemble.

About the Composer

Born and raised in Seattle, **Shane Valle** is the soprano/alto saxophonist for the Portland Wind Symphony, a founding member of the Portland Saxophone Ensemble and Quartet 321, and has studied classical saxophone performance at Portland State University and the University of Washington with Dr. Sean Fredenburg and Dr. Michael Brockman. A self-taught composer with degrees in Civil & Environmental Engineering and Urban & Regional Planning, Shane brings his cross-disciplinary fascination with structure and time to his music, which is written in a familiar language that still finds a way to take listeners to new places. Ultimately, Shane seeks to write music that is fun to perform and fun to listen to. In non-musical life, Shane is a Senior Urban Planner for the City of Portland, a rapacious reader, a forest bather, an easily impressed backpacker, and a mediocre-but-enthusiastic gardener.