

Saxophone & Shiraz

Wednesday, April 22 – 7:30 pm

José-Luis Gomez, conductor

Jess Gillam, saxophone

P.J. Perry, saxophone

Chris Andrew, piano

NOTE: There is NO intermission in tonight's performance.
Please join us in the lobby following the concert.

NYMAN

Where the Bee Dances

(17')*

HIGDON

blue cathedral

(12')*

GILLILAND

Dreaming of the Masters IV (2018 ESO commission)

(22)*

Perryscope

Reminiscence

Second Line

program subject to change

*indicates approximate performance duration

Where the Bee Dances

Michael Nyman

(b. Stratford, London, 1944)

First performed: 1991 in Bournemouth

This is the ESO premiere of the piece

Program note by the composer:

This saxophone concerto, written in one continuous movement with a wide variety of tempi, celebrates the talents of John Harle, who has been a central player in the Michael Nyman Band for over ten years.

The title has a double reference: on the one hand to the circular orientation dances which a foraging bee performs to communicate the location of food source, and on the other hand to my setting of "Where the bee sucks," composed for Peter Greenaway's film *Prospero's Books* and quoted sporadically during the concerto. However, most of the material is derived from a 4-chord sequence that John once overheard me playing and which he expressed a particular liking for.

blue cathedral

Jennifer Higdon

(b. Brooklyn, NY, 1962)

First performed: May 1, 2000 in Philadelphia

This is the ESO premiere of the piece

Jennifer Higdon is one of America's most acclaimed figures in contemporary classical music, receiving the 2010 Pulitzer Prize in Music for her *Violin Concerto*, a 2010 Grammy for her *Percussion Concerto*, and a 2018 Grammy for her *Viola Concerto*. Higdon enjoys several hundred performances a year of her works. According to the Centre for Future Orchestral Repertoire website, *blue cathedral* is the most performed contemporary orchestral work in the world. Her works have been recorded on more than 60 CDs. Higdon's first opera, *Cold Mountain*, won the International Opera Award for Best World Premiere and the opera recording was nominated for 2 Grammy awards. She holds the Rock Chair in Composition at The Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia. Her music is published exclusively by Lawdon Press.

Of her work *blue cathedral*, she writes:

Blue...like the sky. Where all possibilities soar. Cathedrals...a place of thought, growth, spiritual expression...serving as a symbolic doorway into and out of this world. Cathedrals represent a place of beginnings, endings, solitude, fellowship, contemplation, knowledge, and growth. These were my thoughts when The Curtis Institute of Music commissioned me to write a work to commemorate its 75th anniversary. Curtis is a house of knowledge--a place to reach towards that beautiful expression of the soul which comes through music. Coming to the writing of this piece at a unique juncture in my life, I found myself pondering the question of what makes a life. The recent loss of my younger brother, Andrew Blue, made me reflect on the amazing journeys that we all make, especially at a place like Curtis, where the pursuit of "the singing soul" is what music and life are all about. This piece represents the expression of the individual and the whole of the group...our journeys and the places our souls carry us.

Dreaming of the Masters IV (2018 ESO commission)

Allan Gilliland

(b. Darvel, Scotland, 1965)

The ESO premiered the work at the Robbins Pops & Sunday Showcase performances in January 2018.

Program note by the composer:

My *Dreaming of the Masters* series arose from a desire to combine my experience as an orchestral composer with my background as a jazz composer and performer. I wanted to write a series of concertos for soloists who were comfortable in both classical and jazz idioms. Each concerto would find inspiration in the jazz greats of the instrument for which I was writing, and though fully notated, would allow the player the option to improvise. *Dreaming of the Masters I* was a clarinet concerto written for James Campbell, *Dreaming of the Masters II* was a piano concerto written for William Eddins, and *Dreaming of the Masters III* was a trumpet concert written for Jens Lindeman.

My approach to *Dreaming of the Masters IV* was quite different from the previous three concertos because rather than looking for inspiration from past jazz masters, I'm working with one, the great PJ Perry. Where the previous concertos had optional sections of improvisation, this concerto has numerous sections that let PJ be the jazz master that he is.

The work is in three movements. Movement I, subtitled *Perryscope*, is an up-tempo showcase for PJ's virtuosic playing and improvising. Movement II, subtitled *Reminiscence*, is based on a melody I wrote for a production of *Sense and Sensibility* for the Citadel Theatre. It has a late romantic feel to it with a 5/4 section in the middle for solos. The last movement, subtitled *Second Line*, is blues based and has an infectious groove that jazz players call a "New Orleans Street Beat".

Program notes © 2020 by the respective composers, noted above with thanks