

CHAMBER MUSIC NORTHWEST
CLARINET QUINTETS FOR OUR TIME

DAVID SHIFRIN, clarinet
DOVER QUARTET • HARLEM QUARTET

DUKE ELLINGTON (ARR. DAVID SCHIFF): DUCAL SUITE
CHRIS ROGERSON: THIRTY THOUSAND DAYS
VALERIE COLEMAN: SHOTGUN HOUSES



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CLARINET QUINTETS FOR OUR TIME

DAVID SHIFRIN, clarinet

DUKE ELLINGTON (arr. DAVID SCHIFF): Ducal Suite (2017)

Clarinet Lament • Air-Conditioned Jungle • Heaven • Kinda Dukish/Rockin' in Rhythm
• with **Dover Quartet**

CHRIS ROGERSON: Thirty Thousand Days (2017)

Quasi una danza • Prestissimo, con sordino • Quasi una ciaccona
• with **Dover Quartet**

VALERIE COLEMAN: Shotgun Houses (2018)

Shotgun Houses • Grand Avenue • Rome
• with **Harlem Quartet**

Total Playing Time: 55:37

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CHAMBER MUSIC NORTHWEST

CLARINET QUINTETS FOR OUR TIME

Duke Ellington (arr. David Schiff): Ducal Suite (18:45) *

1. Clarinet Lament (3:35)
2. Air-Conditioned Jungle (3:32)
3. Heaven (6:27)
4. Kinda Dukish/Rockin' in Rhythm (5:04)

Chris Rogerson: Thirty Thousand Days (17:34) *

5. Quasi una danza (4:22)
6. Prestissimo, con sordino (4:32)
7. Quasi una ciaccona (8:40)

Valerie Coleman: Shotgun Houses (19:12) #

8. Shotgun Houses (5:34)
9. Grand Avenue (6:15)
10. Rome (7:23)

David Shifrin, clarinet

Dover Quartet*

Joel Link, Bryan Lee, violin; Milena Pajaro-van de Stadt, viola;
Camden Shaw, cello

Harlem Quartet #

Ilmar Gavilan, Melissa White, violin; Jaime Amador, viola;
Felix Umansky, cello

Total Playing Time: 55:37

Duke Ellington, *Ducal Suite*

Edward Kennedy “Duke” Ellington (1899–1974) was one of the greatest composers of the twentieth century. His vast oeuvre includes a long list of jazz standards, popular songs, symphonic works, movie scores, sacred music and a ballet. In the fall of 2015 Reed College hosted the 23rd International Duke Ellington Study Group Conference, attracting scholars and experts from around the globe to a celebration of the music of Duke Ellington and Billy Strayhorn. A high point of the conference was a concert featuring clarinetist David Shifrin and pianists Darrell Grant and Matt Cooper. For this event I arranged four Ellington pieces for clarinet and piano. The concert attracted an overflow audience to Kaul Auditorium; afterward David Shifrin asked me to re-score the work so he could perform it with the Dover String Quartet, and so my *Ducal Duo* was reborn as the *Ducal Suite*.

The first two movements of the suite, *Clarinet Lament* (1936) and *Air-Conditioned Jungle* (1946) are tributes to Ellington’s two great clarinetists, Barney Bigard and Jimmy Hamilton. Ellington composed these two pieces as

one-movement concertos, and they display the very different styles of the clarinetists. Barney Bigard was from New Orleans and was a follower of Sidney Bechet. Like Bechet, he played with considerable vibrato and could bend pitches up and down to give the music emotional intensity. Ellington subtly hinted at the New Orleans setting of “Barney’s Concerto” (his alternative title) by basing the middle section on the harmonic changes of “Basin Street Blues.”

Jimmy Hamilton replaced Bigard in the Ellington Orchestra in 1943 (when Bigard joined Louis Armstrong’s All-Stars). He brought a more modern approach to the instrument, strongly influenced by Benny Goodman. *Air-Conditioned Jungle* is modern with a vengeance, updating the “jungle” style that Ellington deployed at the Cotton Club in the 1920s, to the more dissonant idiom of bebop, and beyond. Some sections dispense with harmonic “changes” altogether, forecasting the free jazz and modal jazz styles of the 1960s.

Ellington composed the song *Heaven* for his Second Concert of Sacred Music, which premiered at the Cathedral of Saint John the Divine in New York in 1968. The original soloists were the Swedish sopra-

no Alice Babs and alto saxophonist Johnny Hodges; the latter's sound defined the Ellington Orchestra from 1928 right up to his death in 1970. In this arrangement, I have tried to translate the extraordinary styles of both of these performers to the language of the clarinet.

Ducal Suite concludes with one of Ellington's earliest hits, *Rockin' in Rhythm*, first recorded in 1931. Ellington often prefaced performances of this song with a later piece, "Kinda Dukish," and I have followed this precedent in this arrangement, which might be termed a jazz rondo.

— David Schiff

Chris Rogerson, *Thirty Thousand Days*

Thirty Thousand Days was composed in the first half of 2017. My father, ever the statistician, prefers to think of life as a 30,000-day journey, divided into three equal stages. When my sister and I reached our 10,000th days soon after turning 27, he excitedly called to make sure we knew the milestone we had reached. With a sharp memory he recounted stories of his own 10,000th and 20,000th days. While we were amused

by his enthusiasm for this seemingly random day, I came to realize the value of looking at life from a broader perspective. *Thirty Thousand Days* explores this idea of life's three stages.

In the first movement, I try to evoke the joy, innocence and sweetness of youth. The second movement depicts struggle, coldness and fury. Finally, the last movement imagines acceptance, resignation, loss and love. In each movement, I constantly change the musical material so that no motive or moment is ever repeated; it is always evolving. While we may have memories, we can never again truly experience how things were.

Commissioned by Chamber Music Northwest and premiered by David Shifrin and the Dover Quartet in 2017, *Thirty Thousand Days* is dedicated to my father, Peter Rogerson.

—Chris Rogerson

Valerie Coleman, *Shotgun Houses*

Shotgun Houses is a tribute to the life of Muhammed Ali, a man who carried the pride of West Louisville, KY, with him everywhere, throughout his career.

Ali was a role model to me, as someone who also grew up in West Louisville, so the work also celebrates his early beginnings in our beloved neighborhood.

The first movement, *Shotgun Houses*, is a sketch of the neighborhoods of West Louisville in the 1950s. Inspiration came from observing photos and tracing the path to get to Ali's childhood home on Grand Avenue from my own childhood home just blocks away. The beginning is a nod to Southern life, the vocal drawl, and the design of shotgun houses all lined up in a row. Soon the music becomes punctuated and the clarinetist's upper register is prominently featured, symbolizing the bold personalities that all West Louisville children learn early on: to verbally boast and tease one another as a part of playing in the streets. The music ends gently with a dark reminiscence from the modern-day blight of the neighborhood.

Ali's home on *Grand Avenue* titles the second movement, and is a love ballad to his mother. In my research, every photo of Ali with his mother shows a kiss or embrace. The clarinet is once again mostly within the upper register, but gone now is the brassy, larger-than-life, dominating sound, replaced with an intimate, and vul-

nerable, sweet sound. Ali wanted to give his mother a better life than what Grand Avenue could provide, so the melody evokes a tenderness that is supported by harmonic shifts in the string quartet, reminiscent of Duke Ellington's *Come Sunday*.

The final movement, *Rome 1960*, begins with a young Cassius Clay, Jr. training with a boxing bag, as shown through the rapid repetitive rhythm between cello and viola. The clarinet part is meant to unapologetically boast like Ali during his workout sessions when the news cameras came to visit. The second section depicts Cassius Clay at the Olympics and his gold-medal match against European champion Zbigniew Pietryzkowski. The bell "dings" loudly through the combination of clarinet attack and strings' pizzicato, to begin the first round, in which Pietryzkowski dominates. The bell dings again for the second round, bringing about unpredictable swings and punches that jump out of the texture to show a more heated clash between the boxers, who are evenly matched for that round. As the bell dings for the end of the round, Clay has an introspective moment that digs up the desire to show everyone what he already knows: he is the champion. And with the bell, Clay revs

up the intensity of punches, culminating in a triumphant win.

I dedicate this to my neighborhood, Ali's neighborhood of West Louisville. May his life remind us of the greatness we are all capable of achieving.

— Valerie Coleman

Duke Ellington grew up in Washington, D.C., and began to play piano profes-



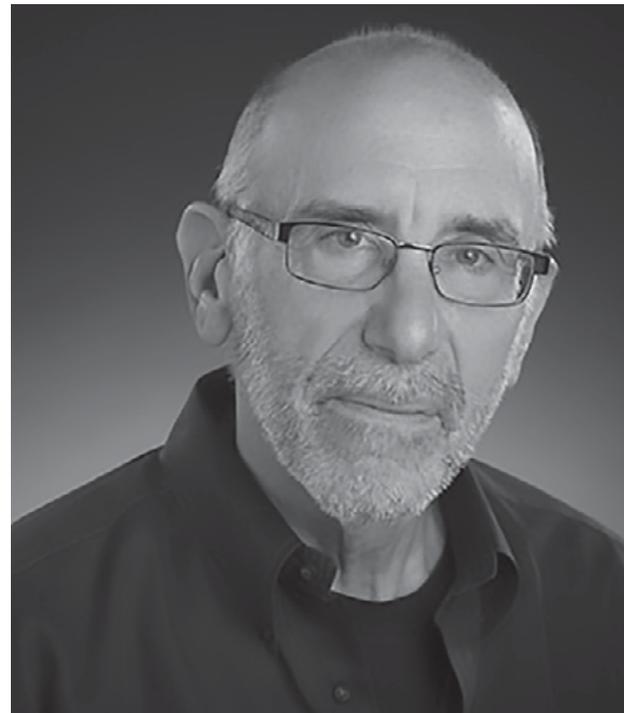
sionally at age seventeen. The orchestra (or "big band") that he formed included several jazz greats; Ellington gained national fame when his orchestra began

playing at the Cotton Club in Harlem in 1927. Worldwide success and recognition soon followed.

During his long career, Ellington wrote more than one thousand compositions and recorded more than two hundred albums; his recordings show his genius for

improvisation and orchestration, which often took into account the personal style of the performers in his orchestra. Ellington leaves a lasting legacy and he continues to influence performers and composers well into the twenty-first century.

Born in 1945, composer, conductor, arranger and author **David Schiff** holds degrees from Columbia and Cambridge Universities and from the Manhattan School of Music and the Juilliard School. His compositions include op-



era, orchestral works, chamber music, and choral and sacred music. Schiff's music draws on many influences, including classical, jazz, klezmer, and Broadway show tunes. He writes, "If you grow up in America you hear many different kinds of music; but much of the music being played in New York when I was a student was closing itself off from those other forms. Since many different kinds of music are inside of me, I'm interested in making those connections."

He has been a professor at Reed College in Portland since 1980 and has written books on Elliott Carter, George Gershwin and Duke Ellington. Schiff's compositions *Divertimento from Gimpel the Fool* (a four-movement work for clarinet and piano trio, adapted from his opera of the same name), and his *Sacred Service* and *Scenes from Adolescence* are available on a Delos recording (DE 3058), and others are on the Argo, New World and Naxos labels.

For more information, please see www.davidschiffmusic.com

Born in 1988, **Chris Rogerson** studied at the Curtis Institute of Music, Yale School of Music and Princeton University. He is



currently on the Musical Studies Faculty at Curtis. His music has been performed by the Atlanta, Houston, Kansas City, Milwaukee, New Jersey, New World and San Francisco Symphonies. In addition to orchestral music he has written vocal works, chamber music and pieces for solo cello, viola, guitar and piano.

Rogerson has received awards and fellowships from the American Academy of Arts and Letters, the MacDowell Colony, Yaddo, Copland House, the Aspen Music Festival, ASCAP, BMI and the Theodore Presser Foundation.

For more information, please see www.chrisrogerson.com



Born in 1970, flutist and composer **Valerie Coleman** had written three full-length symphonies and won several competitions by the time she was fourteen. She holds degrees from Boston University and the Mannes College of Music. Her compositions have received critical acclaim and are performed widely. She has received commissions from the American Composers Orchestra, the Brooklyn Philharmonic and Chamber Music Northwest, to name just three of many. Her composition UMOJA for wind quintet was listed by Chamber Music America as one of the "Top 101 Great American Ensemble Works."

Coleman is the founder and former flutist of the Grammy-nominated Imani Winds, and is currently Assistant Professor of Performance, Chamber Music, and Entrepreneurship at the University of Miami. About teaching, she says, "My goals are always to inspire and guide students to discover their own unique artistry."

For more information, please see www.vcolemanmusic.com

Winner of the coveted Avery Fisher Prize in 2000, clarinetist **David Shifrin** is a professor of music at the Yale School of Music and serves as director of the Yale in New York concert series at



Carnegie Hall. He has been the artistic director of Chamber Music Northwest since 1980 and is active as an orchestral soloist, recitalist and chamber music artist. He was artistic director of the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center from 1992 to 2004, and received Yale University's Cultural Leadership Citation in 2009. A graduate of the Interlochen Arts Academy and Curtis Institute of Music, Mr. Shifrin has made more than twenty recordings for Delos.

For more information, please see www.davidshifrin.com

The **Dover Quartet** was recently named the winner of the Cleveland Quartet Award. They have also been awarded the esteemed Avery Fisher Career Grant. With their burnished warmth, incisive rhythms, and natural phrasing, the Dover's distinctive sound has helped confirm its status as "the young American string quartet of the moment," as they were called by the *New Yorker*. The group serves as the quartet-in-residence for the Bienen School of Music at Northwestern University. A recent season included debuts at Carnegie Hall, Yale University and the Lucerne Festival, as



well as participation in Lincoln Center's "Great Performers" series.

For more information, please see www.doverquartet.com

The **Harlem Quartet** advances diversity in classical music while engaging new audiences with varied repertoire that includes works by minority composers. Their mission to share their passion with a wider audience has taken them around the world, from their

2006 debut at Carnegie Hall to a 2009 performance at the White House, to a highly successful tour of South Africa in 2012, and numerous tours in between, including performances in the U.K., France, Belgium, Brazil, Panama, Canada, Venezuela and Japan. "Mozart Goes Dancing," featuring the quartet with Chick Corea and Gary Burton, won a Grammy Award in 2014.

For more information, please see www.harlemquartet.com



Chamber Music Northwest hosted the world premiere recordings of ***Ducal Suite*** and ***Thirty Thousand Days***.

Special thanks to the CMNW Commissioning Fund for the Valerie Coleman quintet and the Ellington/Schiff quintet arrangements; and to Marge and Carl Abbott for the Rogerson quintet.

Ducal Suite

Producer: David Schiff

Engineer: Rod Evenson

Recorded in July 2017, at Chamber Music Northwest, Kaul Auditorium, Reed College, Portland, OR.

Thirty Thousand Days

Producer: Chris Rogerson

Engineer: Rod Evenson

Recorded in July 2017, at Chamber Music Northwest, Kaul Auditorium, Reed College, Portland, OR.

Shotgun Houses

Producer: Valerie Coleman

Engineer: Ben Taylor

Recorded in February 2019, at the Winter Festival of the Phoenix Chamber Music Society.

Editing and mastering: Matthew Lefevre, at the Yale School of Music (Fred Plaut recording studio)

David Shifrin performs on Backun Clarinets. Backun Musical Services, Vancouver, BC, was a co-sponsor of this recording.

Cover photo: Robert Crum (Mt. Hood seen from Trillium Lake, Oregon)

Design and layout: Lonnie Kunkel

Photo of David Shifrin: Yuki Tei

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From Ellington-Schiff Ducal Suite performance and recording at Chamber Music Northwest:
Left to right: Joel Link (violin); Bryan Lee (violin); David Shifrin (clarinet); Camden Shaw (cello);
Milena Pajaro-van de Stadt (viola)



From Coleman *Shotgun Houses* recording:
Ilmar Cavilan (violin); Melissa White (violin); Valerie Coleman (composer, standing);
Felix Umansky (cello); Jaime Amador (viola); David Shifrin (clarinet)



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