

American Music for Saxophone and Piano



JONATHAN HELTON, SAXOPHONE
BARBARA GONZÁLEZ -PALMER, PIANO

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The music of **John Anthony Lennon** has been championed by many contemporary performers and has been received with much critical acclaim. Lennon is currently professor of composition at Emory University in Atlanta, Georgia. *Distances Within Me* has long been a recital piece favored by performers and audiences alike. The composer offers the following note about the piece: "The music for *Distances Within Me* is in essence about a thread of emotion that traverses the piece as it changes in color and density and registration. The line encounters sudden twists and turns, diversions, interruptions, and returns to familiar places as it expresses its main themes through the instruments. The title refers to a range of emotions and reflects the instinctive, rather than formal, manner in which the work was composed. Several recurring themes or motives provide the sense of a rondo form though the structure is through-composed. I have attempted to arrange the pace at which the emotions shift by creating areas of differing intensity. The overall

sweep of the work lends itself to a feeling of being spontaneously composed."

With over 400 works spanning most instrumental and vocal genres, Minneapolis-based composer **Libby Larsen** is one of the most prolific living composers today. Of *Holy Roller* she writes, "The longest running revival meeting in America took place on Azusa Street in Los Angeles, California and lasted from 1906 to 1909. Night after night, the Reverend William Seymour preached so passionately that he brought about an ecstatic outpouring from all that were there. They wept, shouted and dropped into dead faints. They spoke in tongues. They jerked uncontrollably. They danced in the aisles. It is said that the Pentecostal movement in the United States was born of this three-year revival meeting. *Holy Roller* is inspired by classic revival preaching. To me, revival sermons are stunning musical masterpieces of rhythm, tempo, and extraordinary tension and release. The music flows directly from the language, cajoling, incanting and repeating, at the same time magnetizing and mesmerizing the listener with its irresistible invocations. The music is the language, the language is the music and the result moves the spirit to other states of being. I love the way the saxophone speaks. Because of its

incredible dynamic range and its flexibility a fine performer can make the listener hear words, abstract though they may be. *Holy Roller* is a revival sermon captured in the sounds of the alto saxophone and piano."

Award-winning New York composer **Jonathan Elliott** has written over 120 works in all media. His first work for saxophone, *Epiphany* (1986), was written for Jonathan Helton and won a BMI Young Composers Prize in 1987. Elliott's music has been performed internationally by leading concert artists. The composer offers the following note for this recording: "*Odd Preludes* was written for Jonathan Helton and premiered at the International Saxophone Congress in Montreal in 2000. These pieces were inspired by Helton's virtuosity and Chopin's Preludes. In these preludes are found numerous references to works that have long obsessed me. Over the course of the five preludes one might experience a range of musical worlds. While normally I work in longer forms, writing a set of short pieces posed a delightful challenge: each prelude must be complete in itself and at the same time the whole must be complete."

The work of the brilliant composer and organist **William Albright** has been honored by awards from the American Academy of Arts

and Letters, the Guggenheim Memorial Foundation, the National Endowment for the Arts, the Koussevitzky Music Foundation, and the Fromm Music Foundation of Harvard University. He was professor of composition at the University of Michigan from 1970 until his death in 1998. His Sonata for alto saxophone and piano is widely considered one of the most powerful pieces in the saxophone repertoire. The four movements of the work are contemporary reworkings of established musical forms. The composer notes: "Of all the movements, the second perhaps most deserves comment. The piece is dedicated to the memory of the composer George Cacioppo who died unexpectedly on April 8, 1984. Co-founder of the ONCE group and mentor to three generations of composers, Cacioppo and his music and personality rest at the foundation of my thinking. He would very much appreciate the use of the traditional title 'La Follia' ('the madness') in my reincarnation as 'La Follia nuova.' Like its Baroque antecedents, the piece is a chaconne-variation form, though sometimes the sections are curiously jumbled together, or intersect. The fact that the key is F-sharp minor may be important."

Sherwood Shaffer was professor of composition at the North Carolina School of the Arts

from the time of its founding in 1965 until his retirement in 2000. The *Summer Nocturne*, his first work for solo saxophone, was written for and premiered by Jonathan Helton in 1981. The movement titles are taken from poems by Walt Whitman, John Donne and Marie Graybeal Sparks. The composer includes the following note in the score: "The sounds and symbols of these lines of poetry have triggered the *Summer Nocturne* as a musical experience rather than a literal musical representation of their meaning. Therefore these lines only suggest the catalyst rather than indicate specifically what the music is about. *The experience is the thing.*"

Notes prepared by J. Helton and B. González-Palmer.



Concert saxophonist **Jonathan Helton** has performed throughout the United States, Canada, in Europe and the Far East, appearing with orchestras and wind ensembles, in recital, and in numerous chamber concerts. He has appeared in Paris, London, Tokyo, Beijing, Shanghai,

Singapore, Bangkok, Taipei, Calgary, Vancouver, Montreal, Chicago, Washington, D.C., Miami and New York. He has been featured on programs of the North American Saxophone Alliance, the World Saxophone Congress, the College Music Society, Society of Composers Incorporated, and the New Music Chicago Festival. His performance credits include concerto appearances with the New Philharmonia of Riverside in New York City, the United States Navy Band, the US Air Force Tactical Air Command Band, and the Twelfth and Fifteenth World Saxophone Congress Wind Orchestras. His performances have been heard on North Carolina Public Radio, on WFMT in Chicago, and in national radio syndication. From 1992 to 1999 Dr. Helton served on the faculty at Northwestern University. He is currently Professor of Saxophone at the School of Music of the University of Florida. Jonathan Helton is a Selmer Artist-Clinician, and a past President of the North American Saxophone Alliance.



Barbara González-Palmer, pianist, enjoys an international performing career, appearing in concert throughout the United States, Europe, and Asia. Holding degrees from Oberlin Conservatory and The Juilliard School, she has performed recitals with

numerous artists including Barry Tuckwell, Phyllis Bryn-Julson, Richard Zeller, and Michael Tree, and has been master class accompanist for such artists as Frederica von Stade, Dorothy Delay, Jean Pierre Rampal, Simon Estes, James Galway, and Martina Arroyo. Recent seasons included performances in Spain, England, France, Germany, Austria, Malaysia, the Czech Republic, China, Korea, New York, and Washington, D.C. From 1992 to 2002, she spent her summers in Austria, performing and teaching at the American Institute of Musical Studies. More recently, she adjudicated piano exams for an internationally known music institute in Cyprus, and gave master classes for its faculty on teaching techniques. She has also served on the faculties of Northwestern University, the University of Oregon, and the Music Academy of the West. Ms. González-Palmer is currently an Associate Professor of piano and director of the graduate Collaborative Piano program at Rutgers University's Mason Gross School of the Arts.

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| 1. John Anthony Lennon:
Distances Within Me | 12:09 | 10 Scherzo "Will o' the wisp" | 1:58 |
| | | 11 Recitative and Dance | 4:39 |
| 2 Libby Larsen: Holy Roller | 10:55 | Sherwood Shaffer:
Summer Nocturne | (16:10) |
| Jonathan Elliott: Odd Preludes | (11:44) | 12 Verse: | |
| 3 Misterioso | 1:32 | "the dark has a star of its own" | 2:24 |
| 4 Vivace et brillante | 1:35 | 13 "Go and catch a falling star" | 5:20 |
| 5 Ghostly | 4:43 | 14 Verse (reprise) | 2:18 |
| 6 Energico | 2:10 | 15 "The night in silence | |
| 7 Molto espressivo, sentimentale | 1:42 | under many a star" | 4:09 |
| | | 16 Verse (envoi) | 1:58 |
| William Albright:
Sonata for alto saxophone and piano | (20:36) | Total Duration: | 71:36 |
| 8 Two-Part Invention | 4:36 | | |
| 9 La follia nuova:
a lament for George Cacioppo | 9:21 | | |



Recorded November 2004 at HAMU Sound Studio, Prague, Czech Republic. Produced by Jiří Gemrot. Engineered by Martin Vrzal. Cover Photo: "Skyline Reflections" by Susan R. Osborn. Photo of Jonathan Helton: UF News Bureau. Photo of Barbara González-Palmer by Yinka Oyelese. Jonathan Helton plays Selmer Paris saxophones and mouthpieces. This recording is made possible, in part, through the generous support of the University of Florida Fine Arts Scholarship Enhancement Fund and Rutgers University's Mason Gross School of the Arts.