

CHANDOS

SAXOPHOBIA

CELEBRATING THE SAX CRAZE OF THE 1920s

CHAD SMITH
SAXOPHONES

SINFONIA OF LONDON

JOHN WILSON





Paretta Studios, Los Angeles, California. Personal gift of Sandra Holden. Courtesy of Doug Caldwell

Rudy Wiedoeft, 1928. Promotional photo for the 'Saxophobia Idea' tour.

Saxophobia: Celebrating the Sax Craze of the 1920s

- | | | |
|----------|--|-------------|
| 1 | Sax-O-Trix (1926)
by Rudy [Rudolph Cornelius] Wiedoeft (1893 – 1940)
and Domenico Savino (1882 – 1973)
Arranged by Lanny Meyers (b. 1937)
C Melody Saxophone with Orchestra | 2:17 |
| 2 | Valse Mazanetta (1925)
by Rudy Wiedoeft
Arranged by Lanny Meyers
Alto Saxophone with Orchestra | 3:41 |
| 3 | Saxophobia (1918)
by Rudy Wiedoeft
Arranged by Lanny Meyers
C Melody Saxophone with Orchestra | 1:43 |
| 4 | Dans L'Orient (1926)
by Rudy Wiedoeft and Domenico Savino
Adapted by Lynette Wardle (b. 1970)
Alto Saxophone with Harp | 3:58 |

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|---|--|------|
| 5 | Valse Llewellyn (1917)
by Rudy Wiedoeft
Arranged by Dan Higgins (b. 1957)
C Melody Saxophone with Orchestra | 3:27 |
| 6 | Kiss Me Again (1924)
Music by Victor Herbert (1859 – 1924)
Words by Henry Blossom (1866 – 1919)
Arranged by Andrew Cottee (b. 1978)
Voice and C Melody Saxophone with Orchestra | 3:51 |
| 7 | Sax-O-Phun (1924)
by Rudy Wiedoeft
Arranged by Lanny Meyers
C Melody Saxophone with Orchestra | 2:58 |
| 8 | Rubenola (1927)
by Rudy Wiedoeft and Hugo Frey (1873 – 1952)
Transcribed by Chad Smith (b. 1974)
Alto Saxophone with Violin and Piano | 3:13 |
| | <i>première recording</i> | |
| 9 | Cloudy Days (1919)
by Rudy Wiedoeft
Arranged by Lanny Meyers
Alto Saxophone with Orchestra | 3:21 |

- 10** **Gloria** (1923) **2:46**
Composed by Justin Ring (1876 – 1963)
and Frederick Hager (1874 – 1958)
Transcribed for saxophone by Rudy Wiedoef
C Melody Saxophone with Banjo and Piano
Justin Quinn banjo
- 11** **Canary Cottage-One Step** (1916) **2:38**
(Canary Cottage Medley: I Never Knew – That Syncopated Harp –
I Never Knew)
by Earl Carroll (1893 – 1948)
Transcribed by Dan Levinson (b. 1965)
C Melody Saxophone with Violin, Banjo, Trombone, Drums, and Piano
Justin Quinn banjo
Andy Wood trombone
Matt Skelton drums
- 12** **Danse Hongroise** (1924) **4:24**
Composed by Justin Ring and Frederick Hager
Transcribed for saxophone by Rudy Wiedoef
Arranged by Andrew Cottee
C Melody Saxophone with Orchestra

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|----|--|------|
| 13 | You Forgot to Remember (1925)
Words and music by Irving Berlin (1888 – 1989)
Arranged by Andrew Cottee
Voice and C Melody Saxophone with Orchestra | 3:42 |
| 14 | Saxema (1920)
by Rudy Wiedoeft
C Melody Saxophone with Piano | 2:19 |
| 15 | Valse Sonia (1932)
by Rudy Wiedoeft and Hugo Frey
Adapted by Lynette Wardle
Alto Saxophone with Harp | 3:46 |
| 16 | Saxarella (1923)
by Rudy Wiedoeft
Arranged by Lanny Meyers
C Melody Saxophone with Orchestra | 2:53 |
| 17 | Valse Vanité (1923)
by Rudy Wiedoeft
Arranged by Lanny Meyers
C Melody Saxophone with Orchestra | 3:22 |

Bonus Track:

18

Saxophobia (1918)

2:02

by Rudy Wiedoeft

Voice introduction with Alto Saxophone and Piano

TT 56:28

Chad Smith saxophones

Mikaela Bennett voice

Lynette Wardle harp

Dalton Ridenhour piano

Sinfonia of London

John Mills leader

John Wilson

Saxophobia: Celebrating Rudy Wiedoeft and the Sax Craze of the 1920s

A bolt from the blue

Audiences lucky enough to attend performances of the California-born musical *Canary Cottage* at the new Morosco Theater, on Broadway, in early February 1917 received an unexpected thrill. The pit orchestra included a specially added combo from Los Angeles, intended to inject West Coast-style 'pep and ginger' into the goings-on. Among them was a young player absolutely electrifying the air – spinning out rapid-fire runs on an odd horn, with luxurious tone and impeccable control. Quoting one witness:

[his] obligatos... on the musical's hit song were so thrilling that he took more bows from the pit than the singer did from the stage.

Few in those audiences would have had much of an opinion about the saxophone. If at all, they might have seen it in a vaudeville act or tucked away in a military band, but nothing suggested that the lacklustre horn could amount to much. Over the next few months, holding sway at a Broadway club and waxing sides for Edison and Columbia, Rudy Wiedoeft – the *Canary Cottage* saxman – would introduce a new kind of saxophone

playing, sparking an enthusiasm that soon would gather far greater force.

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It is not an exaggeration to say that the saxophone came into its own in the 1920s. Before being swept up into the Saxophone Craze – nearly seventy years after its invention – the instrument had struggled to find a place in the music world. Early stirrings of the craze had begun in the 1910s, but it was during the Roaring Twenties that it came into full force, ushering in a new conception of the horn and drawing unprecedented numbers of players to the instrument. The Saxophone Craze raised the bar for what was considered good playing, turned focus toward tone and technique, and generated a body of literature and pedagogy that the instrument previously lacked.

That said, as the saxophone surged ahead into the 1930s and beyond, few were inclined to look back. Each decade's new heroes loomed larger than the last, and very quickly, the pioneers responsible for the instrument's early breakthrough faded into anonymity.

The purpose of this album is to remedy that a bit. More precisely, it is to pay homage to the man who, more than any other, served as the model for hordes of young players who flocked to the instrument during that crucial formative period.

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Rudy Wiedoeft: Beginnings

Born on 3 January 1893, in Detroit, Wiedoeft was the youngest, and first American-born, in an intensely musical Prussian family. The father, Adolf Wiedoeft – a former regimental violinist and cornetist in Danzig – used Draconian methods to make top-tier musicians of his five children. In addition to Rudy there were Herb (cornet, later leader of the nationally famous Cinderella Roof Orchestra), sister Erica (piano), Gay (bass), and Ad (percussion and xylophone).

Wiedoeft began on violin around the age of six, but broke his bowing arm falling off a bicycle and was moved to clarinet when the arm failed to heal properly. As he quickly advanced through several teachers in his first years – including the soloist for the Detroit Symphony Orchestra – it became apparent to Adolf that he was something of a prodigy. A later colleague, citing his prodigious abilities, described him as 'a freak of nature'.

The Wiedoeft Family Orchestra – all the children as well as Adolf, on violin – debuted in 1903, on an excursion steamer serving Sugar Island, on the Detroit River. This was a three-month engagement – eleven-hour days, playing both on the steamer and on the island for dancers – which they held for two years running.

In 1904, diagnosed with TB, Adolf relocated the family to Los Angeles where they quickly advanced into better engagements. Following his death, in 1908, the boys remained in steady demand, gaining top jobs across the city, including summers in the elite Catalina Island Band. Rudy joined the union in 1909 alongside his lifelong, and closest, friend, Ferde Grofé. During this time, possessed of an extraordinary capacity for sustained work on his instrument, and increasingly called upon to perform solos and virtuosic flourishes, he came to identify as a featured, standout player. By his late teens, he was astonishing veteran colleagues by

reeling off fast cadenzas in pieces such as Liszt's *Hungarian Rhapsody* – entirely staccato.

Chicago

By 1912, however, his prospects for further musical growth in Los Angeles were diminishing, and it was Erica who recognised



Alexander James

From the recording sessions

it. 'Rudy, I felt, should have his chance', she recalled, and she offered up her savings to send him to Chicago to study with Joseph Schreurs, soloist with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra and one of the greatest clarinetists in the country. That experience – two years using Chicago as a hub – would bring unforeseen results.

Wiedoeft quickly gained access to 'some of the best jobs in Chicago'. He played with the Chicago Grand Opera Company, performed 'with a symphony' (likely subbing for his teacher), and became clarinet soloist for the Bohumir Kryl Band – a nationally famous Sousa-esque outfit – with whom he did two gruelling, three-and-a-half-month summer tours in 1913 and 1914.

Everything, it would seem, was heading in the right direction. However, as postcards back to Grofé reveal, Rudy was not quite feeling it. 'Business is bum here,' he wrote, 'there are too many men here for the amount of work.' What the stint in Chicago showed him was that the life of a clarinet player was likely to be a struggle. As he later put it, 'Unless you can make money out of art, there isn't much art in it'.

Considering where Wiedoeft eventually steered his career, we can also guess that the upper echelons of music – opera, symphony, and military band – began to lose their appeal. It is also worth noting that the Dance

Craze was erupting while he was in Chicago: cabarets, small combos, the Turkey Trot and its hot rhythms were becoming all the rage – a new musical excitement was in the air.

The switch to sax

Excitement or no, by 1914, Rudy had hit a wall: as a clarinetist he was exasperated; as a musician, disillusioned. He quit the music business altogether and went home to L.A., determined to 'embark in some business that offered better prospects'. But that resolve did not hold: 'His innate love of music... [was] stronger than his will', and within a few months, he was searching for ways to make his music career more productive.

When he first tried the saxophone, then, Wiedoeft was groping for a life raft. By all accounts, he knew nothing of the instrument 'save its name'. Yet, 'something attracted him to it'. He would later say that he 'thought there might be big money in the novelty'. *Novelty* suggests that he was aware of the Brown Brothers – a vaudeville saxophone act – but he later revealed that it was the playing of H. Benne Henton – a military band soloist – that alerted him to the horn's serious potential.

While it may have been a monetary experiment at first, the saxophone quickly turned into an obsession – one that would benefit the instrument as much as it would

Wiedoeft himself. It was through falling into the hands of such a musician – curious, persistent, and extraordinarily skilled – that the horn saw its true voice and potential emerge. The convergence of the two, in 1914, was historic.

Following his shift to the saxophone, Wiedoeft had by 1915 begun to veer toward the rising energy and better prospects of the Dance Craze. It was in 1916 that Earl Carroll – composer for *Canary Cottage* – heard him at the Vernon Country Club, a disreputable nightspot outside L.A., and immediately snapped him up.

First compositions and dance recordings
Deluged with offers after his 1917 New York debut, Wiedoeft left *Canary Cottage* after just two weeks to weigh his options and within a month joined forces with the West Coast dance team Fanchon and Marco, assembled a cadre of fellow Californians – the Frisco Jazz Band – and opened at an exclusive Broadway cabaret.¹ He spent the next seven months playing and recording with the band, but also

¹ Along with Wiedoeft and Marco Wolff (violin), the Frisco Jazz Band included J.J. Richard, banjoist from the *Canary Cottage* pit, and three players from the San Francisco cabaret scene, who had previously worked behind Fanchon and Marco: Arnold Johnson (piano), Buster Johnson (trombone), and George Higgins (drums).

writing and recording his own saxophone solos. By the time that World War I sent him back to California to join the Marines, on Mare Island, he had fifteen sides entering the market, most notably the FJB's hottest tune, **Canary Cottage-One Step** (1916) – the tune that had wowed New York audiences – and two self-composed waltzes: *Valse Erica*, dedicated to his sister, and **Valse Llewellyn** (1917).

While the war hampered his progress for fourteen months, his recordings continued to be issued, and his reputation spread. Military officials put Wiedoeft in charge of entertainment, and recruited him to lead Liberty Loan war-bond drives, playing his solos up and down the Pacific Coast. In the autumn of 1918, he was granted a transfer to the United States Marine Band ('The President's Own'), in Washington D.C., where he barely had time to settle in before the war ended. Upon being discharged, in November, he returned to New York and, within days, was recording again.

Two months earlier, in October 1918, when the Spanish flu locked down Mare Island, Rudy, confined to the barracks, had written a ragtime piece arranged for saxophone sextet, playfully entitled **Saxophobia**. Back in New York – after waxing a new version of *Valse Llewellyn* in response to its growing popularity – this was the first thing he tackled.

If World War I encouraged a post-traumatic 'Eat, drink, and be merry' ethos, *Saxophobia* may have been one of its opening salvos. Over the next year and a half, he would record it for no fewer than seven labels, establishing a pattern in which he enjoyed near-*carte blanche* access to the studios.

Impact and influence

Prior to 1922, Wiedoeft composed just three solos: *Valse Erica*, *Valse Llewellyn*, and *Saxophobia*. But they became his triumvirate of signature works – inspiration and sustenance for a rising generation of sax players hungry for repertoire. Along with the lyricism and ingeniously wrought passagework in his compositions, it was 'the beauty of Wiedoeft's tone, the terrific speed of his tonguing, [and] his clean-cut execution' that, as one enthusiast put it, 'hit me like a thunderclap'. 'It was our despair', another devotee lamented, as many found his works beyond their abilities. Even more bewildering, he was said to do it all single-tongue.

As the Sax Craze snowballed, Wiedoeft became a household name, synonymous with great saxophone playing. During this early period, he chose not to work on the concert stage, but in front of the phonographic recording horn; and rather than solo work, he put his energy where the money was: making

records 'for dancing'. He can be heard on an abundance of sides by Rudy Wiedoeft's Palace Trio, Wiedoeft's Californians, and on an even greater number by Brunswick's house band, Carl Fenton's Orchestra, in which he was often teamed with the rising sax star Bennie Krueger.

Pushing boundaries

Behind the scenes – in the seclusion of home, office, and rehearsal rooms – Wiedoeft obsessed over the mysteries of the saxophone, experimenting endlessly not only with technique (tongue speed and dexterity), tone (reed setup and embouchure), and articulation (*staccato*, slap tongue, rasps), but with texture and blend: how the horn worked in combination with other instruments. During this period of emerging 'jazz' and the expanding possibilities of the dance band, there was no blueprint for the way in which the saxophone should contribute – and he tried everything. Utilizing C melody, E flat alto, and (with surprising frequency) soprano sax, he experimented with the solo saxophone's carrying the melody, and sax lines woven through the arrangement (using up to four horns); he isolated the sax in full-chorus breaks (anticipating the jazz 'break chorus') and featured it in stop-time breaks. He tested

the horn in duos, trios, quartets, sextets, and mixed woodwind ensembles – all the while raising the bar for the complexity of saxophone playing. With his Californians, he initiated the extended use of three- and four-sax sections, a device that would soon become standard, though rarely in so ambitious a manner.

Amidst the postwar Tin Pan Alley boom, he even tried his hand at popular songwriting (the lyrics were by others), finding great success with *Karavan*, *Saxophone Blues*, *Na-Jo*, and others. An unpublished melody from this period, **Cloudy Days** (1919), recently discovered, is heard here for the first time.

All along, there was relentless practicing. In the words of those close to him, Rudy had extraordinary endurance: '...hours, time, meant nothing to him.' On Catalina he used to disappear 'up into the canyon... tonguing, tonguing, tonguing'. Eight hours was common. On long train trips 'he'd go to the observation platform on the backend of the train' and work just on the mouthpiece. On tour, he was up well before any others, working scales and arpeggios, up and down – 'like glass'.

Toward soloist

By the autumn of 1922, Wiedoeft had begun to drift away from working with dance bands toward performing as a solo saxophone

artist, which was still largely uncharted territory. This began with joining the Eight Victor Artists, a nationally beloved group that toured extensively and regularly each year. The group paid well, and returned frequently to New York, which allowed ample recording time.

As his status as a solo artist rose, he was increasingly invited to make 'guest appearances' on the recordings of star vocalists, including Ernest Hare, Sophie Tucker, Marion Harris, and Henry Burr, whose **You Forgot to Remember** (1925) is also reproduced here. In 1923, the Capitol Theater, in New York, offered him a recurring solo spot on its weekly concert programme, which reached large audiences both in the theatre and over the radio.

Working now almost exclusively with piano accompaniment, he began consolidating a solo repertoire – much of it issued through Rudy Wiedoeft Publishing Company – and between 1922 and 1926, this shift more than quadrupled his output of solo recordings.

As a soloist, Wiedoeft worked in a few distinct styles. As he had come up when almost all popular music was touched by ragtime, this was his go-to idiom for energetic showpieces. In addition to *Saxophobia*, the style is evident in his **Saxema** (1920), **Saxarella** (1923), **Sax-O-Phun** (1924), and



From the recording sessions

Sax-O-Trix (1926), all laced with impossibly difficult passagework.²

He also clearly felt that the waltz, still *en vogue* in the 1920s, was both conducive to expressive writing and suited to his lyrical virtuosity. He composed eight – all but one named after women – including **Valse Mazanetta** (1925), using a pet name for his wife, Mae, *Marilyn*, *Pamela*, and a final late waltz, **Valse Sonia** (1932), hauntingly beautiful but one that Wiedoeft himself never recorded.

Some of his most impressive material grew out of his foray into salon / encore pieces. After recording his own interpretations of *Serenade* (Riccardo Drigo) and *Souvenir* (František Drdla), in 1924 he worked up a saxophone transcription of Tchaikovsky's *Mélodie (Souvenir d'un lieu cher)*, followed by a host of other transcriptions published in collections – bearing titles such as *Famous Classics*, *Love Songs*, and *World Famous Ballads* – many of which he recorded himself. Concurrently, he built up a body of self-composed, artistically ambitious pieces – including **Valse Vanité** (1923),

² While Wiedoeft wrote many of his own compositions, a few well-known works were written by others (e.g. *Danse Hongroise*, *Gloria*), and several list co-composers – often Hugo Frey or Domenico Savino – likely reflecting their contributions to the piano accompaniment. Full credits appear in the track list.

Danse Hongroise (1924), co-credited to Justin Ring and Frederick Hager, and **Dans L'Orient** (1926) – that would become his hallmark. These, combined with earlier works and transcriptions, not only formed his showcased repertoire, they became standard concert and study material for countless saxophonists, and remain in use.

His musical moods veered from happy-go-lucky to pathos. Wiedoeft was drawn to simple and beautiful melodies – waxing covers such as *The World Is Waiting for the Sunrise* and Victor Herbert's **Kiss Me Again** (1924) – but was equally willing to expose a frivolous side, with pieces such as *Sax-O-Phun*, **Gloria** (1923), and the comical, barnyard mischief of **Rubenola** (1927).

London

Nineteen-twenty-six was a banner year in what already had become a stellar career. By that time Wiedoeft had waxed some seventy solos, composed and published more than twenty solo saxophone works and fifty carefully curated transcriptions – greatly expanding the saxophone's previously sparse literature. He was increasingly in demand on radio. In April, he put on a first-of-its-kind programme of all-saxophone music at New York's Aeolian Hall, which was broadcast as far west as Illinois.

At the peak of his game, in June that year, he set off for a three-month engagement in London, with the then little-known pianist Oscar Levant. They opened on 28 June, at the New Prince's Hotel and Restaurant, on Piccadilly, Wiedoeft offering a blend of his best solos, Levant introducing London audiences to *Rhapsody in Blue* during his solo spot. According to *Variety*, opening night was 'an emphatic success', and during his stay, Wiedoeft received much attention in *The Melody Maker* and *British Metronome*, including a cover portrait and an interview / profile in the August edition. He and Levant moved back and forth between Prince's and an outdoor venue on the Thames, the Palm Beach Café, near Hampton Court, and during their stay recorded twelve sides for Columbia and broadcast a half-hour concert over the radio (2LO).

Following the engagement, he flew to Paris to spend time with the legendary Selmer brothers, Henri and Alexander, and to visit the Selmer factory. According to several reports, he went 'over the entire Selmer line of saxophones minutely', made 'suggestions for improvements', and 'played a private concert for the Selmer factory workers'. Henri Selmer, the company founder, then sixty-eight, was quoted as saying:

I have never heard a saxophonist to equal Wiedoeft, and doubt if there will be any

to excel him, his staccato is so rapid, his execution so brilliant.

Before sailing home, in early September, Rudy returned to London to wax four additional sides with Percival Mackey's band. *Melody Maker* summed up his visit with the following:

His performances in London have both dumbfounded and confounded the critics who, in the face of the obvious, have been forced to admit... that the saxophone is truly musical and beautiful, and as a reed instrument is second to none for 'legitimate' music.

In practical terms, London was Wiedoeft's last hurrah. Over the next sixteen months Rudy would record only six additional sides, ending a recording career which had lasted just over a decade.

The bluesy, gutsy style we now associate with 1920s jazz had moved into the mainstream by 1922. Though his brothers joined the fun – and he himself frequented jazz clubs – it was not a path that Rudy would go down. It is no coincidence, then, that 1922 marked the point at which he veered away from dance-band work – down a private cul-de-sac of his own making.

What is striking about Wiedoeft, however, is that this disconnection from jazz did nothing to diminish the impact he had on the saxophone world, which was deep and far-

reaching. The number and range of musicians who cited him as an influence during the 1920s is remarkable. They span the jazz spectrum – from Frankie Trumbauer, Lester Young, and Benny Carter, to early classical saxophonists such as Sigurd Raschèr and Cecil Leeson, and even unexpected figures such as the legendary British bassoonist Gwydion Brooke, actor Fred MacMurray, and Bing Crosby, who wrote that he developed his style in part by 'imitating the kind of saxophone solo' that Wiedoeft might do.

Decline

After 1926, there continued to be intermittent bursts of activity: touring appearances, spotty radio work, a saxophone model named after him (Holton's Rudy Wiedoeft model), and brief appearances in two Vitaphone shorts. Wiedoeft continued to publish as well, issuing a method book, a book of etudes, a handful of new solos (never recorded), and several transcriptions. By the end of the decade, however, his output had slowed to a trickle and his career was waning. Going into the 1930s, across the board, record sales were collapsing and vaudeville was in sharp decline. The most dependable life raft for saxophonists was radio orchestra work – but that was a young man's game. Almost certainly, his unwillingness to get on the jazz bandwagon worked against him.

It was a series of personal setbacks,

however, that seemed to accelerate his fall: the sudden death of his brother Herb, in 1928, derailed plans to open a nightclub together; a broken leg, in 1929, scuttled a return engagement in London; the Holton company reneged on their arrangement; and as the Depression hit, his royalties plummeted. In a letter to his brother Gay in 1936, Rudy wrote, 'my luck has been nothing but tough since 1929 and I really think I am due for a better break'. By that time, he had abandoned music once again, this time for good, and was prospecting gold near a ghost town in Nevada.

More corrosive forces were at work as well: Rudy's marriage to Mae Mahoney, in 1919, had steadily devolved into an on-again, off-again battle, and by the late 1920s alcohol was an ongoing destructive presence in both their lives. 'It came so easy to him at first,' Rudy's sister, Erica, later reflected, 'maybe he got tired of the grind, you know.'

Personal legacy

Those who met Wiedoeft remembered him as the kindest of men. Rudy Vallee, who adopted the name 'Rudy' after his idol, wrote that Wiedoeft

was one of God's kindlier creatures, a man of great charm and personality... I don't think he ever knew anything but friendship from those around him.



Jenny Anderson Photography

Mikaela Bennett

Aleksandr Karjaka



Lynette Wardle



Dalton Ridenhour

Several remarked that he was 'serious', even 'shy'. Grofé's wife remembered him as

a quiet, refined, dignified man - who never drank. Then he suddenly started to drink... He just became kind of heartbroken. It can happen to anyone, especially someone who was on the top.

Rudy died in the evening of 18 February 1940, succumbing to cirrhosis of the liver at the age of forty-seven.

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A note by the performer

This music carries a smile inside.

The sound of the saxophone was once new, daring, and full of sparkle. It came into its own in the 1920s - the 'Golden Age' of the instrument. It laughed, it danced, it showed off - and it captured hearts.

Saxophobia: Celebrating the Sax Craze of the 1920s is a love letter to that moment in time, when the saxophone did not belong to any single world; not quite classical, not quite jazz, it borrowed freely from several kinds of music, it shimmered brightly, and spoke with a voice entirely its own. These pieces are virtuosic, yes - but above all, they are joyful.

My journey with this music began in 1996, in the quiet corners of the West Chester

University library. There, I first heard these classics on two of my professor's albums - music that felt playful and elegant, nostalgic and alive all at once. I had never heard the saxophone sing this way before. It was impossible not to be changed by it. The music was written and performed by Rudy Wiedoeft, a saxophone superstar and household name of his time. He made the saxophone so popular that cities across the United States instated sax curfews in residential districts from 9pm to 6am owing to incessant noise complaints.

Pieces such as *Saxophobia*, *Saxarella*, and *Sax-O-Trix* are musical postcards from another era - vibrant, brilliant flashes of personality. My hope is that this music will stir something in you, cross generations, and invite you to linger a little longer.

History is woven into every note you hear. The C melody saxophone that I use on this album once belonged to my teacher, Ted Hegvik. It is the very instrument that first introduced me to this sound. The C melody has a range between an alto and tenor saxophone and is rarely heard today. The alto saxophone on which I perform once belonged to Al Gallodoro, a legendary voice of the New York music scene. These instruments have stories to tell. I invite you to listen as they speak again.

Thoughtful arrangements by the veterans Dan Higgins, Lanny Meyers, and Andrew

Cottee elevate this music to the concert stage. It never existed with an orchestra before. The genre-defying Broadway and opera star Mikaela Bennett lights up the lyrical songs by Victor Herbert and Irving Berlin. Sinfonia of London, conducted by John Wilson, was the ultimate reason this album was made. John Wilson is truly one of a kind – full of brilliance, energy, and passion for every period and style of music. He has a masterful relationship with his musicians, and together they nailed the spirit of this music from the very first note. Unique musical journeys, such as this project, often render great friendships. Doug Caldwell, an authority on 1920s music, is the author of the liner notes on this album. At the Library of Congress he unearthed a Wiedoeft melody titled *Cloudy Days*. It now has an accompaniment and a brand-new orchestration for this album. Most importantly, my long-time collaborators Dalton Ridenhour (piano) and Lynette Wardle (harp) add their unique style to these gems – both in interpretation and century-old flair.

This was surely an artistic experience of a lifetime, three days of recording I shall cherish forever. The 1920s reimaged...

Saxatively yours,
Chad Smith

Chad Smith is a powerhouse saxophonist and elite multi-woodwind specialist whose sound has become a defining force on Broadway, in Hollywood, and on concert stages across the United States. A veteran of Broadway since 2002, he has performed in countless Broadway productions, including *Legally Blonde*, *Follies*, *A Christmas Story*, and the *Radio City Christmas Spectacular*, and has performed at *Wicked* since 2008, navigating the bassoon, baritone sax, bass clarinet, clarinet, and flute. Renowned for his versatility and musicianship, he has appeared as a concert soloist and ensemble member with many of America's premier orchestras and arts organisations, including the Philadelphia Orchestra, Los Angeles Philharmonic, Metropolitan Opera, Festival Orchestra of Lincoln Center, American Ballet Theatre, New York City Ballet, New Jersey Symphony, New York Pops, and Hollywood Bowl Orchestra. His collaborative work, which spans genres and generations, has seen him share the stage with legendary artists such as Tony Bennett, Aretha Franklin, Ray Charles, Paquito D'Rivera, Arturo Sandoval, Lady Gaga, Bernadette Peters, Audra McDonald, and The Temptations.

A sought-after studio musician since 2012, Chad Smith has played on major film, television, and streaming projects for Disney,

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From the recording sessions



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From the recording sessions

Pixar, Lucasfilm, Netflix, and others, notably *Toy Story 5*, *Minions 3*, *The Devil Wears Prada 2*, *The Secret Life of Pets 2*, *Star Wars: The Last Jedi*, *West Side Story*, *Ted 2*, *Monsters University*, *Lilo & Stitch*, *Focker In-Law*, *The Informant!*, and *The Wizard of Oz* (Sphere, Las Vegas). You can hear him on *The Simpsons*, *Family Guy*, *American Dad*, *Ted*, *Star Trek*, *Schmigadoon!*, and *Mid-Century Modern*. He has also been a part of the orchestras for the Academy and Tony Awards.

Committed to education and artistic leadership, Chad Smith is an Adjunct Professor of Saxophone at Montclair State University and founder and director of its Masters in Multiple Woodwinds programme. In 2024, he founded the Montclair State Broadway Repertory Ensemble and the Broadway Institute for up-and-coming Broadway and commercial musicians. He is the creator of *SAXOPHILM: Sounds and Sights of the Roaring 20's*, and as a frequent clinician and guest lecturer has made an appearance at the World Saxophone Congress in Strasbourg, among others. He holds a B.S. in Music Education from West Chester University and an M.M. in Saxophone and Multiple Woodwind Performance from the Eastman School of Music. Chad Smith is a Selmer Artist and D'Addario Clinician, and performs on the gold-plated saxophones of his mentors Al Gallodoro and Ted Hegvik.

A native of Ottawa, Canada and a graduate of The Juilliard School, the celebrated singer and actress **Mikaela Bennett** is praised for her artistic versatility on stage and in concert halls around the world. She is a recipient of the Lincoln Center Award for Emerging Artists and was also named one of WQXR's '40 Under 40: A New Generation of Superb Opera Singers'. She has premiered new compositions by leading composers such as Sarah Kirkland Snider, Derek Bermel, Michael Gordon, and Michael Tilson Thomas. Additional career highlights include her New York City solo recital début, at Alice Tully Hall, her Lyric Opera of Chicago début, as Maria in *West Side Story*, taking the role of Rosasharn in Ricky Ian Gordon's *The Grapes of Wrath* with MasterVoices at Carnegie Hall, and performing Handel's *Israel in Egypt* with the Orchestra of St Luke's at Carnegie Hall. In the 2025 / 26 season, she made her LA Opera début as Richardis von Stade in the world première of Sarah Kirkland Snider's *Hildegard*, then returned to the Prototype Festival in the same production. She also returned to Bard SummerScape to sing Catharine in the world première of Courtney Bryan's *Suddenly, Last Summer*, an opera written for her.

On the concert stage, she debuted at Emerald City Music in a solo recital featuring the première of a new song cycle by Molly

Joyce, and appeared with MasterVoices in Fauré's Requiem and the world première of *Sins and Grace* at Alice Tully Hall. In December 2025, Mikaela Bennett appeared in Holiday Pops programmes with the Grand Rapids, Cincinnati, Toronto, and Edmonton symphony orchestras. In the 2024 / 25 season, she made her début at the Festival Musica Strasbourg in Ted Hearne's contemporary oratorio *The Source*. Additional concert appearances included her débuts with the Orlando Philharmonic Orchestra in Mahler's Symphony No. 4 under Eric Jacobsen, Kalamazoo Symphony Orchestra in an all-Gershwin programme, Kansas City Symphony in its Memorial Day concert, and Baltimore and Nashville symphony orchestras in Mary Lou Williams's *Zodiac Suite* with the Aaron Diehl Trio. Operatic engagements included her début at the Prototype Festival as Leona Raines and Leona's Mother in Christopher Cerrone's *In a Grove* and a return to the Glimmerglass Festival to sing *Esperanza* in the world première of Derek Bermel and Sandra Cisneros's *The House on Mango Street*, written with her voice in mind.

An orchestral musician, chamber musician, recording artist, and soloist, **Lynette Wardle** has enjoyed a wide-ranging and distinguished career. Praised for her 'refined tone production and spot-on rhythmic sense', she is currently

principal harpist of both the Richmond Symphony and the Albany Symphony. As an active New York City freelancer, she performs regularly with the New Jersey Symphony, New York Pops, New York City Ballet, Festival Orchestra of Lincoln Center, and Philadelphia Orchestra, and fills in at the blockbuster Broadway show *Wicked*. Her recording credits include Grammy Award-winning albums of the Albany Symphony as well as numerous Original Broadway Cast Recordings, including *The Notebook*, *Camelot*, *Flying over Sunset*, *Amélie*, and *Beaches: The Musical*. She has shared the stage and studio with Joshua Bell, Angel Blue, Kristin Chenoweth, Anthony Roth Costanzo, Cynthia Erivo, Marvin Hamlisch, Megan Hilty, Yo-Yo Ma, Barry Manilow, Johnny Mathis, Edgar Meyer, Lin-Manuel Miranda, Father John Misty, Jason Mraz, Olivia Newton-John, Kelli O'Hara, Luciano Pavarotti, Gil Shaham, and Trisha Yearwood. She toured with the Tony Award-winning musical *The Light in the Piazza* and was featured in the 2023 *Encores!* production at New York City Center. She is an integral part of *SAXOPHILM: Sounds & Sights of the Roaring 20's*, a multi-media concert production, and for the holiday seasons has been in the orchestras for *A Christmas Story: The Musical*, the *Radio City Christmas Spectacular* with the world-famous Rockettes, and Balanchine's beloved *The Nutcracker*.



From the recording sessions



Alexander James

From the recording sessions

Lynette Wardle holds a Master of Music in Orchestral Performance from the Manhattan School of Music, and a B.A. from the David Eccles School of Business at the University of Utah.

Dalton Ridenhour has been a student of the ragtime and stride piano traditions for over thirty years. His career has spanned a variety of notable venues including Carnegie Hall, Lincoln Center, Town Hall, Birdland, and the Newport Jazz Festival, New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival, Scott Joplin International Ragtime Festival, West Coast Ragtime Festival, Bix Beiderbecke Memorial Jazz Festival, and Blind Boone Ragtime and Early Jazz Festival. He lives in New York City and performs locally and internationally with various groups including The Lovestruck Balladeers, Vince Giordano and The Nighthawks, Chad Smith's *SAXOPHILM*, Naomi and Her Handsome Devils, Mike Davis and The New Wonders, Goodbye Picasso, and Mona's Hot Four. Dalton Ridenhour has issued a solo album, *Eccentricity*, on Rivermont Records.

Sinfonia of London brings together outstanding musicians for special projects, live and recorded, under its Artistic Director and conductor, John Wilson. Described in the press as 'one of the best ensembles

anywhere' (*The Guardian*), the orchestra made its acclaimed live début in 2021 at the BBC Proms and has gone on to appear there every year since. In November 2025 it made its much-praised international début at the Concertgebouw, Amsterdam, and was named as an Artistic Partner of the Glasshouse, Gateshead. It gives regular concert tours across the UK, cementing its reputation for excellence with 'typically exhilarating performances' (*The Arts Desk*) and five-star reviews. Its much celebrated recording profile on Chandos Records covers a wide range of repertoire, including works by Korngold, Respighi, Ravel, Strauss, Rachmaninoff, Britten, Walton, Bliss, and Rodgers & Hammerstein. The magazine *BBC Music* declared of the orchestra's recording of works by Respighi that 'Wilson and his hand-picked band of musicians continue to strike gold with almost anything they turn their hands to', while *The Mail on Sunday* found the album of English Music for Strings 'dazzling... some of the finest string playing ever put on disc by a British orchestra'. Their most recent recording is the second in the orchestra's series devoted to orchestral works by Sir William Walton, the first, centred round the Violin Concerto, having earned universal acclaim. Alongside outstanding reviews ('leaves music critics ready to die

for joy', in the words of *iNews*), the orchestra has received five *BBC Music Magazine* Awards in five years and, in 2022, a *Gramophone* Award. In 2023, *The Sunday Times* stated that 'Sinfonia of London sets the gold standard – an orchestra of generals that takes the unfashionable, the obscure, the overlooked, and makes it unmissable'.
www.sinfoniaoflondon.com

Born in Gateshead and since 2011 a Fellow of the Royal College of Music where he studied composition and conducting, **John Wilson** is now in demand at the highest level across the globe and has over the past thirty years conducted many of the world's finest orchestras. In 2018 he relaunched Sinfonia of London, which *The Arts Desk* described as 'the most exciting thing currently happening on the British orchestral scene'. His much-anticipated BBC Proms debut with this orchestra, in 2021, was praised by *The Guardian* as 'truly outstanding' and admired by *The Times* for its 'revelatory music-making'. They are now highly sought-after across the UK, regularly returning to the BBC Proms, Aldeburgh Festival,

and London's Barbican Centre among other festivals. Their large and varied discography having received near universal critical acclaim, in the autumn of 2025 they released their twenty-ninth album since 2019. Their CDs have earned several awards, including numerous *BBC Music Magazine* Awards: for recordings of Korngold's Symphony in F sharp (2020), Respighi's Roman Trilogy (2021), Dutilleux's *Le Loup* (2022), Rodgers & Hammerstein's *Oklahoma!* (2023), and works by Vaughan Williams, Howells, Delius, and Elgar (2024), a disc which won the Orchestral Award and was chosen Recording of the Year. *The Observer* described the Respighi recording as 'Massive, audacious and vividly played' and *The Times* declared it one of the three 'truly outstanding accounts of this trilogy' of all time, alongside those by Toscanini (1949) and Muti (1984). In March 2019, John Wilson was awarded the prestigious Distinguished Musician Award of the Incorporated Society of Musicians for his services to music and in 2021 was appointed Henry Wood Chair of Conducting at the Royal Academy of Music.



Rudy Wiedoef, left, with Alexander Selmer, 1926

Photographer unknown. Courtesy of Joanna Wiedoeft



Frisco Jazz Band, late 1917, promotional postcard for the 1917 - 18 Orpheum tour. Reconfigured lineup (left to right): Samuel Gottlieb (drums), Paul Van Loan (trombone), Rudy Wiedoeft (saxophone), George Lehritter (banjo), Fred Rich (piano), and Marco Wolff (violin)

Courtesy of Chad Smith

SAXARELLA
C MELODY

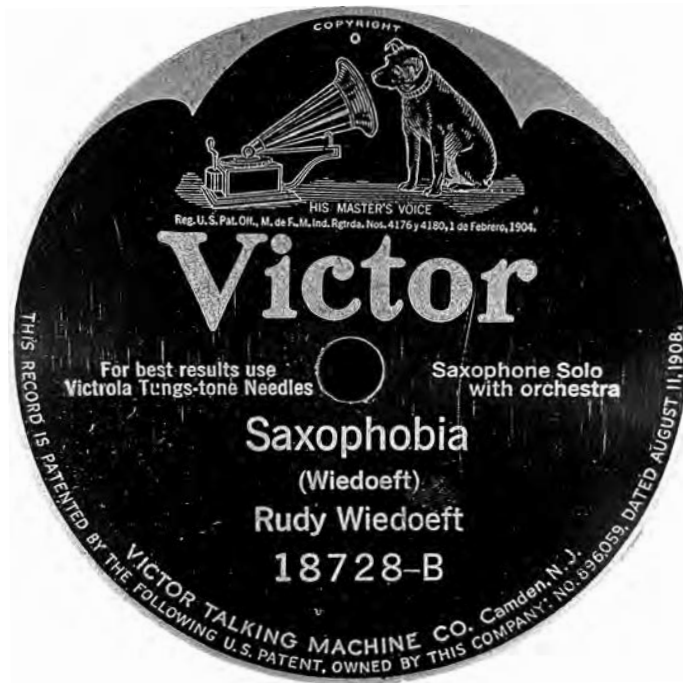
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Cover of the published score of 'Saxarella'

Courtesy of Chad Smith



Original Victor record of 'Saxophobia'



Source unknown. Courtesy of Doug Caldwell

Rudy Wiedoef, c. 1924. Photo used in Selmer promotional material.

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Lanny Meyers

Dan Higgins

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Aleksandr Karjaka

Chad Smith Trio: Lynette Wardle, Chad Smith, and Dalton Ridenhour

Orchestral manager Bethany McLeish
Assistant conductor Lee Reynolds

Executive producer Ralph Couzens
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'Canary Cottage-One Step' lineup, during the recording sessions



Alexander James

From the recording sessions



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SAXOPHOBIA

CELEBRATING THE SAX CRAZE OF THE 1920s

- | | | |
|----|--------------------------------|------|
| 1 | SAX-O-TRIX (1926) | 2:17 |
| 2 | VALSE MAZANETTA (1925) | 3:41 |
| 3 | SAXOPHOBIA (1918) | 1:43 |
| 4 | DANS L'ORIENT (1926) | 3:58 |
| 5 | VALSE LLEWELLYN (1917) | 3:27 |
| 6 | KISS ME AGAIN (1924) | 3:51 |
| 7 | SAX-O-PHUN (1924) | 2:58 |
| 8 | RUBENOLA (1927) | 3:13 |
| | PREMIÈRE RECORDING | |
| 9 | CLOUDY DAYS (1919) | 3:21 |
| 10 | GLORIA (1923) | 2:46 |
| 11 | CANARY COTTAGE-ONE STEP (1916) | 2:38 |
| 12 | DANSE HONGROISE (1924) | 4:24 |
| 13 | YOU FORGOT TO REMEMBER (1925) | 3:42 |
| 14 | SAXEMA (1920) | 2:19 |
| 15 | VALSE SONIA (1932) | 3:46 |
| 16 | SAXARELLA (1923) | 2:53 |
| 17 | VALSE VANITÉ (1923) | 3:22 |
| | BONUS TRACK: | |
| 18 | SAXOPHOBIA (1918) | 2:02 |

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