



A Tribute to the Raschèr Saxophone Ensemble, and Beyond

*Hudson Valley Saxophone Orchestra
Dr. Paul Cohen, Guest Conductor*

The United States Navy Band
International Saxophone Symposium
January 16, 2016 at 4:00 pm

Shenandoah Conservatory
Armstrong Concert Hall
Winchester, Virginia

Program

Wachet Auf

Philipp Nicolai (1556 - 1608) / J. S. Bach (1685 - 1750)

Arranger: Walter S. Hartley (b. 1927)

Trauermarsch

Felix Mendelssohn (1809 - 1847)

Arranger: Lee Patrick (b. 1938)

Portals (1971)

Carl Anton Wirth (1912 - 1986)

Aubade (1985)

Walter S. Hartley (b. 1927)

Jubilate! A Concert Prelude for Saxophones (1982)

Ronald L. Caravan (b. 1946)

New England Countryside

Aaron Copland (1900 - 1990)

Arranger: Paul Cohen (b. 1951)

Sinfonia for Saxophone Choir (2010)

Steve Cohen (b. 1954)

Valley Views and Bridges (2015) (World Premiere)

Robert Shaut (b. 1950)

Mvt I. What Henry Saw...

Mvt II. Zap! View with a Twist

Mvt III. View That Changed Us

Mvt IV. View from East to West

The Heavens Resound

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770 – 1827)

Arranger: Frederick Hunt (1897 – unknown)

Program Notes

Wachet Auf

Program Notes by Charles W. Gray

From his LP *The Raschèr Ensemble Vol 2*, through his last American Study Week held at Yale University in 1992, Sigurd Raschèr often used this transcription by Walter Hartley as the first piece of his ensemble performances. It's grand and commanding nature combined with a deep and luminous sonority using soprano through contrabass saxophones, grabs the attention of all who are in attendance. It is the perfect introduction to the spectacular event that is about to begin.

Trauermarsch

Notes by Dr. Lee Patrick

"Mr. Raschèr brought his contrabass saxophone to the 1964 Eastman Saxophone Workshop. For this occasion, I made three ensemble arrangements that utilized the instrument. All were performed on a concert at Eastman's Kilbourn Hall on July 10 of that year. The first of these pieces was *From the Depths* by Edward MacDowell. This piece was especially fitting for this instrumentation. MacDowell's melody ends one octave below its starting pitch so each repetition of the melody brings you ever lower, like a giant screw boring into the earth. My other two contributions to this portion of the concert were transcriptions of Mendelssohn's *Lieder ohne Worte: Kräftig und Feurig* and the profound *Trauermarsch* that appears on today's program."

Portals (1971)

Notes by Dr. Paul Cohen

Carl Anton Wirth (1912 – 1986) was an American conductor and composer. Born in Rochelle, NY, Wirth graduated from the Eastman School of Music in Rochester in 1934 and commenced a conducting and teaching career that took him from Rochester, New York to the Twin Cities, to St. Joseph, to Djakarta, Indonesia, then to the San Francisco Bay Area. In his lifetime, Wirth composed over 100 orchestral works and chamber pieces, but is probably best known for his many contributions to the repertoire for classical saxophone – including the *Idlewood Concerto*, *Jephthah*, *Diversions in Denim*, *Beyond These Hills*, and *Portals* – many of which were premiered by classical saxophonist Sigurd Raschèr or, for later works, by the Bay Area saxophonist William Trimble.

Portals is based on the composer's near-death experience and was influenced by this Walt Whitman poem:

What are those of the Known
But to ascend and enter the Unknown?
What are those of Life
But for Death?

Aubade (1985)

Notes by Charles W. Gray

On May 15, 1985 two of Mr. Raschèr's former students, Roger Meyer and Dr. Laurence Wyman, organized a surprise birthday saxophone ensemble performance to occur at Mr. Raschèr's home in Shushan, NY. Involving other former students and close friends of Mr. Raschèr, they secretly crept into the house and gathered in his living room early that morning. They woke Mr. Raschèr to sounds so wonderful he thought somebody was playing passages from *The Raschèr Ensemble* LPs. As he walked down the stairs, to his astonishment, he found a group of musicians and friends performing a personal concert, which included many new works dedicated to him. Among the performers were Laurence Wyman, Roger Meyer, Lee Patrick, Walter Hartley, David Bilger, Michael Reed, William Frederickson, Tom Gorin, John Worley, Ronald Caravan, and Paul Cohen.

Aubade, Walter Hartley's contribution, was the second piece performed that morning. It is dedicated to the pioneer saxophonist Sigurd M. Raschèr upon that morning of his 78th birthday, May 15, 1985.

Jubilate! A Concert Prelude for Saxophones (1982)

*Notes by Dr. David Bilger (1945-1997) and Dr. Ronald Caravan
(edited by Charles W. Gray)*

Jubilate! Was composed in 1982 to serve as the opening work in the landmark Lincoln Center, Alice Tully Hall inaugural concert of *The Saxophone Sinfonia* under the direction of the late David V. Bilger.

Following a chordal introduction, which builds from a unison A-flat, the main portion of the piece comprises a spritely section in mixed meter. A cadenza-like middle section features brief solos from all seven different sizes of saxophones; heard, in order, are Dr. Christopher Brellocks on tenor, Eric Aweh on soprano, Deborah Tice on alto, Alix Janove on baritone, Patrick Quinn on contrabass, and Charles W. Gray on bass. The bass, having re-established the metric flow is joined for a brief duet passage by the sopranino, played by Ryan Mantell. The recapitulation follows with the high sopranino soaring above the ensemble towards the final cadence on an A-flat major triad with a six-octave spread. This performance is using a little known optional contrabass saxophone part that has only been performed twice before.

New England Countryside

Notes by Dr. Paul Cohen

For the 1942 concert suite *Music for Movies*, Copland took selections from three films, *The City*, *Our Town*, and *Of Mice and Men*, to create a five movement suite for small orchestra. Each movement bears a title linking it with the action of the movie. It begins with the evocative and colorful *New England Countryside*, which is the first scene from the famed 1939 documentary, *The City*. With it's majestic, noble and expansive musical gestures, Copland effectively captures the New England landscape and famed regional spirit depicted in the film.

Sinfonia for Saxophone Choir

Notes by *Steve Cohen*

"I wrote the Sinfonia for Saxophone Choir in 2010, and it was my first original piece for saxophone choir, after testing the waters with a transcription of Giuseppe Verdi's "*Nabucco*" Overture.

The piece was premiered by the Rutgers Saxophone Ensemble, led by Dr. Paul Cohen, on a concert they performed on 14 December 2010.

It occurred to me that George Frideric Handel would have loved saxophones if they had been invented during his lifetime. I think of all those grand, festive pieces he wrote, such as *Water Music* and the *Royal Fireworks Music*; he had to assemble dozens of instruments on each part just to be audible outdoors over a distance, and his life would have been a lot easier if he could have had a sax section for such occasions! This piece is in a neo-Handelian style, with a Maestoso "French Ouverture" opening, heavy on the double-dotted rhythms, and an Allegro main section, heavy on the counterpoint. It's called "*Sinfonia for Saxophone Choir*," as the orchestral openings in Handel oratorios and operas are often called Sinfonia."

Valley Views and Bridges

Notes by *Robert Shaut*

The Hudson River Valley is a magnificent place to see, to visit, and to live an entire lifetime. The musical ideas were inspired by the river's size and power, the mountains rising from its coast line, its wealthy mansions (including one of a former president), and the many unique bridges connecting east with west.

I. "What Henry Saw...." - As Henry Hudson sailed into what we now call New York Harbor in search of the Northwest passage, the river and the valley must have been a sensational sight.

II. "Zap! View with a Twist" - The Tappan Zee bridge just north of New York City is a unique bridge, in that it is so close to the water, very long, and twists from the west side into the east side. The music describes the twisting of the always busy traffic patterns.

III. "View That Changed Us" - On a sunny September day in 2001, the Hudson River was the guide used by the hijackers to reach the Twin Towers. The soprano saxophones are randomly playing the 9th and the 11th above the recurring bass pattern. Today the soprano parts will be played by the composer, Robert Shaut and Ryan Mantell.

IV. "View from East to West" - The George Clinton (Kingston-Rhinecliff) Bridge is an open and high standing bridge that allows the drivers and passengers an uninterrupted view of where they are going. Looking east to west, one views the Catskill Mountains rolling for hundreds of miles.

The idea of bridging genres of music is also a part of the *Valley Views and Bridges* concept. Robert Shaut is presently composing movements for a jazz saxophone quartet with bass and drums.

The Heavens Resound

Personal reflections about Fred Hunt and The Heavens Resound arrangement.

Program Notes by Dr. Lee Patrick

"One day during the 1959 Eastman Summer Saxophone session, Mr. Raschèr told me that a contrabass saxophone would be delivered the following day and would I make an ensemble arrangement of Beethoven's *The Heavens Resound* with a part for the instrument. I confessed to being completely ignorant of the nature of the contrabass saxophone having never before seen or heard one, but that I'd try. The following morning the behemoth was sitting in Mr. Raschèr's studio and my arrangement was ready to test. As one would expect, an arrangement by a young and relatively inexperienced arranger for an instrument he was unfamiliar with was not a great success. Soon thereafter Mr. Raschèr contacted his friend Fred Hunt who quickly made the magnificent arrangement you are hearing today.

It seems that much of Fred Hunt's personal history is lost. I believe he was a book designer by profession. What I know for a fact is that his musical calligraphy was world class. In addition to today's Beethoven arrangement he gave the large saxophone ensemble beautifully crafted and visually stimulating transcriptions of parts of the *Art of Fugue*, Telemann's *Tafelmusik*, as well as music by Buxtehude and Purcell, plus a delightful quartet setting of a canzona by Frescobaldi.

The rest of the story: I had a recording of Mr. Hunt's Beethoven arrangement and I listened to it many times in an effort to learn all that I could from it. It was a text-book example of my learning from my mistakes. It was time and effort well spent. In the years that followed I don't think Mr. Raschèr was ever again disappointed with the quality of the arrangements and transcriptions I made for his use. Also, in the years that followed Mr. Raschèr never seemed to tire of telling others how I profited from my early failure by studying Fred Hunt's Beethoven arrangement."

Hudson Valley Saxophone Orchestra

Founded in 2012 by Charles W. Gray, the Hudson Valley Saxophone Orchestra began as an ensemble of music professionals and educators who teach in middle schools, high schools, and colleges in the Hudson Valley region of New York State. With thirteen members performing on soprano through contrabass saxophone, the group strives to capture the rich and sonorous sound established by the Raschèr Ensemble. They perform an annual Christmas concert of music first done by David Bilger's Saxophone Sinfonia as well as new works commissioned from area composers. Proceeds from these concerts have been donated to help fund local music scholarships. Their recording "It's That Time Again" features this holiday music and is available on iTunes and CD Baby.

Thank you to Dr. Paul Cohen, Dr. Lee Patrick, Dr. Laurence Wyman, Dorrine Bilger, William Stevens, Dr. Wildy Zumwalt, The Raschèr Archive at SUNY Fredonia, and many others who have helped in assisting us with today's performance, our debut concert beyond the holiday season.

Hudson Valley Saxophone Orchestra

Guest Conductor

Dr. Paul Cohen
Englewood, NJ

Sopranino Saxophone

Ryan Mantell
Lake Hiawatha, NJ

Tenor Saxophone

Dr. Christopher Brellocks
Poughkeepsie, NY

Soprano Saxophone

Eric Aweh
Ellenville, NY

Joseph North
Highland, NY

Robert Shaut
Kingston, NY

Dr. Brian Kauth
Wurtsboro, NY

Baritone Saxophone

Alto Saxophone

Deborah Tice
New Windsor, NY

Alix Janove
Poughkeepsie, NY

Wayne Tice
New Windsor, NY

Jim Briggs
Montgomery, NY

Bass Saxophone

Dan Shaut
Kingston, NY

Charles W. Gray
Poughkeepsie, NY

Contrabass Saxophone

Patrick Quinn
Poughkeepsie, NY

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