



Frederick Hemke Master Class with Heidi Siberz



Joe Luloff Master Class with Tyler Flowers



The UNC Wilmington Saxtet

## 2010 NASA BIENNIAL CONFERENCE

by James Skretta

In April of 2009, I enjoyed the opportunity to attend my first North American Saxophone Alliance Conference, a Regional Conference in Columbia, Missouri. I was overwhelmed by the draw of the event—by both the caliber of performers and quantity of premieres. Recalling how much I enjoyed this event, I eagerly anticipated the NASA gathering at the University of Georgia.

Over a week has passed since the conclusion of the 2010 NASA Biennial Conference in Athens, and I have yet to fully digest the excitement that occurred during the first week of March at the Hodgson School of Music. This exhilaration can best be described in a quick statistical overview of the event: nearly two hundred performances, approximately forty world premiers, ten lectures, seven master classes, four large ensembles, three competitions, two state-of-the-art buildings and, finally, one didgeridoo.

Though impossible to detail every performance that stands out (there were many!), I would like to mention a few. I was especially drawn by the master classes of Cliff Leaman, who provided an excellent list of pedagogical suggestions; Debra Richtmeyer, who shaped phrases and drew musicality out of the far corners of her participants; Fred Hemke, who continues to be a voluminous resource on pedagogy, repertoire, and history; and Joe Lulloff, who always brings intense attention to musical line and direction. Perhaps the most memorable master class moment occurred during Eugene Rousseau's as a participant performed the Denisov *Sonata*. Dr. Rousseau reminisced over the piece's premiere, making mention of the incredible development of our repertoire and consideration of the pieces that have become our standards. It is indeed astonishing to see the advancement of the available music for our instrument and the exponential rate at which it has increased!

The quartet performances were as polished as ever. I was particularly astounded by the playing of three student groups. The H2 Quartet (2008 Classical Quartet Competition 1<sup>st</sup> Prize winners) performed three recently composed pieces, dazzling the audience with musical artistry and technical precision. The Zzyzx Quartet (2008



Steve Mauk Master Class with Katy LaFleur

Classical Quartet Competition 2<sup>nd</sup> Prize winners) presented a world premiere of a work by John Leszczynski that was written with virtuosic gaiety. Zzyzx also brought a new twist to Piet Swerts, performing an earthshaking quartet arrangement of *Klonos*. The Mana Quartet (2009 Coleman Chamber Ensemble Competition Grand Prize Winner) demonstrated heartwarming delicacy on both individual and ensemble levels while producing a sonic blend I've rarely heard from a quartet of saxophones. These performances were merely the tip of the iceberg.

I must also congratulate the competition winners. The Red Line Quartet (Doug O'Conner, Brandon Kies, Gai Qun, Quinn Lewis) claimed the first prize in the Classical Quartet Competition. Their final round performances of Albright's *Fantasy Etudes*, Barber's *Adagio*, and Ticheli's *Backburner* were truly inspirational; they have achieved a remarkable caliber of musicianship. Stephen Page garnered first prize in the Classical Solo Competition. Stephen is a true champion of our instrument and, as he showed in his final round performance, is capable of expressing the most subtle emotions and maneuvering the most demanding passages with apparent ease. Finally, Daniel Janklow took first prize in the Jazz Performance Competition. Daniel demonstrated superb tonal and stylistic flexibility and technical mastery. His performance was a real treat to hear!

The evening concerts were also a treat. It is certainly a rare occasion when a saxophonist performs a concerto with a large ensemble. Even more rare is when five virtuosos are allowed this opportunity on one concert! This was what occurred during the conference's opening evening concert. Chief Musician Joshua Thomas of the US Coast Guard Band and Master Sergeant Wayne Tice of the USMA West Point Band each performed with the University of Georgia Wind Symphony. Their performances were technically flawless and musically moving. Connie Frigo gave a superb performance of Jacob T.V.'s *Tallahatchie Concerto*, accompanied by the UGA Wind Ensemble. She played with driving excitement and energy that captivated the audience throughout the composition. Jonathan Helton also performed with the UGA Wind Ensemble, flying through Paul Richard's *Bat out of Hell*. His thrilling virtuosity surely brought the piece's title into reality. My highlight of the evening was a spirited rendition of the Creston Concerto by Taimur Sullivan. While bringing the dance-like rhythms of the outer movements to life, he also brought a cantabile beauty that I've never before heard to the second movement.

The second evening featured Griffin Campbell in the world premiere performance of Paul Hayden's *Concerto* with the UGA Symphony Orchestra. He demonstrated the saxophone's full potential in his performance, displaying a mastery of the instruments' difficult extremities in both range and dynamics. The jazz concert on Friday evening was also highly enjoyable. Both Brad Leali and Peter Sommer gave splendid showings of musicianship.

I cannot complete this review before mentioning one final performer. It was our greatest privilege to have Claude Delangle present for the conference's conclusion—an even greater privilege was to hear him perform twice, playing a duet by Jean-Baptiste Singelée with Kenneth Tse and Fernande Decruck's *Sonata*, both to packed audiences. Rarely do we hear musicians play beyond the music; such is

what the audiences of these performances enjoyed.

Though conferences like ours serve many important purposes, I find a purpose unique to our 2010 Biennial to be the most important—providing a memorial. The success of this conference is a resounding testament to the tremendous influence that Dr. Kenneth Fischer had and will continue to have on the saxophone world. The many pages of remembrances in the program assembled by Dr. Thomas Liley and the many touching words spoken by Dr. Fischer's colleagues and family show how far his hands have reached. He most certainly would have been elated that the conference was able to continue as planned. His son, Dr. Stephen Fischer, deserves special congratulations for his efforts in taking on the hosting responsibilities.

I departed the conference with much sadness, though I was able to take much delight with me. I must confess to the tremendous pleasure I took in knowing that nearly every person passed in the crowded hallways was a saxophonist. This is something which I certainly took for granted, for upon my return to my own school of music, the smiling faces, though many in number, did not belong exclusively to patrons of our instrument. With this in mind, my anticipation for the 2012 Biennial is building with each passing day. I look forward to seeing you there!



Inara Zandmane, Claude Delangle, and Kenneth Tse



Eugene Rousseau Master Class with Matthew Tracy

by Brianna Dolce

The 2010 NASA biennial conference proved to be a great success, gathering saxophonists from all over the continent for 4 days of great music, good friends, and inspirational moments. Attendees had a variety of performances each day to choose from, and there was always something going on in Athens, Georgia from March 3-6. The Hugh Hodgson School of Music's practice rooms were flooded with saxophonists; Athens restaurants were noisy with talk of mouthpieces; and each morning, hundreds of saxophonists arrived at the University of Georgia with a sole purpose: to hear great music.

Students and teachers alike filled each day with dozens of performances, while each night featured fantastic soloists and an incredible crowd who came to hear great saxophonists as featured performers. The first night of the conference, the University of Georgia Wind Symphony and Wind Ensemble provided an evening of music for wind band and saxophone. Featured soloists Joshua Thomas, Wayne Tice, Taimur Sullivan, Connie Frigo, and Jonathan Helton each gave incredible performances, showing off new works for the instrument while also playing great classics. This stunning concert kicked off

the conference beautifully, leaving attendees with lots to talk about. On the second evening of the conference, the University of Georgia Symphony Orchestra premiered Paul Hayden's *Concerto* with Griffin Campbell as the featured soloist. Campbell played beautifully and gave an absolutely stunning performance of the piece. Friday night was set aside for great jazz as Peter Sommer and Brad Leali were featured with the University of Georgia Jazz Ensemble. The final day of the conference, a celebration was held in honor of Kenneth Fischer, with featured performers Eugene Rousseau, Claude Delangle, and the Classic City Saxophone Quartet.

Claude Delangle, Frederick Hemke, and Eugene Rousseau are just a few of the people who graced the halls of the Hugh Hodgson School of Music in early March. During the conference, many young, up and coming performers premiered works, participated in competitions, and remarkably displayed what the next generation of saxophonists is about. The number of performances and new works showed that this instrumental community is alive and thriving. Most important, the sense of community spanned from the oldest generation of saxophonists to the newest additions to the performing world of saxophone.

Not only was the city of Athens bustling with talk of mouthpieces and reeds, but an important figure to UGA and to the saxophone community was in constant remembrance: Kenneth Fischer. Fischer's legacy and hopes for the conference were honored, and his impact on not only the faculty and students at UGA but on the saxophone community as a whole was evident. Georgia students participated throughout the conference and truly honored their teacher in the ways in which they performed, socialized, and helped run the entire event. Dr. Kenneth Fischer's son, Stephen Fischer, was a huge part of this year's biennial conference. He was a truly remarkable host and brought the conference together beautifully. Because of the strength of the studio and Dr. Stephen Fischer, the conference ran smoothly. Even at informal events, Dr. Fischer was fondly remembered by everyone, and his legacy surely lives on.

The next biennial conference is scheduled for 2012 at Arizona State University. As an ASU student, I can tell you that Dr. McAllister and the entire studio are excited and already preparing to host the biennial. We hope to see you all there!

## NEWS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

### **Saxophone Quartets named winners of Coleman Competition**

The winners of the Coleman Chamber Music Association's 2010 competition have been announced. The Alice Coleman Prize (\$7,500) was awarded to the Red Line Saxophone Quartet (Doug O'Connor, Brandon Kies, Gai Qun, and Quinn Lewis – Chein Kwan Lin, Coach) from the Eastman School of Music. The QuardATOMIC Saxophone Quartet (Xin Gao, Sean Dynan, Colette Hall, and Devin DiMauro – Stephen Pollock, Coach) of Duquesne University won the Coleman-Saunderson Prize for Woodwinds & Brass (\$4000). The Charis Trio from Yale University won the \$4,400 Coleman-Barstow Prize for Strings. The competition took place on April 24<sup>th</sup> at Caltech in Pasadena, and the winners gave a concert on April 25<sup>th</sup>.

The Colman Competition began in 1947 as the Coleman Auditions for young, non-professional performers; today's competing ensembles have an average age of less than 26. From a modest beginning, the annual Coleman Chamber Ensemble Competition (renamed in 1982) has become a highly respected national and international event with competitors coming from the major music schools across the country.

### **International Saxophone Festival - Faenza Estate Musica 2010**

The 2010 Faenza Estate Musica will be held July 11-18. The program is open to undergraduates, graduates, and qualified saxophone performers. Both individual performers and established quartets are encouraged to apply. The seminar emphasizes the saxophone music repertoire. Individual lessons, quartet lessons, swing band, and group seminars are planned for the students in classical, ethnic and jazz performances. Participants who wish to take part in these activities are encouraged to prepare works of their choice prior to their arrival in Faenza. The faculty for the festival includes Marco

Albonetti, Francisco Martínez, and Michael Zsoldos with guest lecturers Vincenzo Rapanà, Emiliano Rodríguez, and Silvio Zalambani.

For the 2010 edition festival, Professor Michael Zsoldos will prepare transcriptions and arrangements of swing era pieces by the following composers: Count Basie, Woody Herman, Mary Lou Williams, Duke Ellington, and Fletcher Henderson. Participating students will have the opportunity to play these historic pieces adapted for saxophone ensemble with rhythm section accompaniment in the *SaxArt Orchestra* in public concerts called *Swing Evolution*.

2010 Lectures and master-classes include the Spanish repertoire for saxophone today, *Swing Evolution: 1930's, '40's and '50's*, *Pranajama-Breathing*, and the *Concertino da Camera: the French exotic ideal*

Information is available by contacting [info@faenzasaxfestival.com](mailto:info@faenzasaxfestival.com).

### **Saxophonists win MTNA Competition**

The Axius Quartet from the University of Iowa won 1st Prize in the MTNA Chamber Music Competition held in Albuquerque, New Mexico. The quartet members are Stephen Page, Colin Young, Ryan Smith, and Nathan Bogert, and they are coached by Kenneth Tse. Stephen Page, University of Iowa, won 2nd Prize in the MTNA Young Artist Competition, and 3<sup>rd</sup> Prize was awarded to Xin Gao from Duquesne University.

### **Region V Conference**

The Region V Conference will be held on February 25 - 26, 2011, and hosted by Northeastern Illinois University in Chicago. Proposals for participation may be submitted between September 1 and November 30, 2010. All proposals and inquiries should be addressed to Jim Kasprzyk, Region V Director, at [jimzyk44@gmail.com](mailto:jimzyk44@gmail.com).

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