

Pillars: New Works for Saxophone & Piano

Phil Pierick, saxophones
Casey Dierlam Tse, piano

Sonata in B-flat minor “Slavonic,” op. 43 (1917)

Dora Pejačević (1885-1923)

Allegro con anima
Adagio
Allegro molto vivace

Passacaglia (2016)

David Clay Mettens (b. 1990)

Sanctuary (2020)

Viet Cuong (b. 1990)

intermission

BLACK MARY (2018)

Shelley Washington (b. 1991)

crown-snow (2017)

Zach Sheets (b. 1991)

Pillars (2014)

Osnat Netzer (b. 1979)

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Phil Pierick is a saxophonist, improviser, singer, and educator based in Chicago. Equally at home performing a range of music from Renaissance motets to 21st-century works, he has been described as “the Swiss Army knife of saxophonists.” As a soloist and member of the saxophone duo Ogni Suono, he has performed more than 130 recitals worldwide, including teaching engagements at many of America’s leading university music programs. Classically trained and experimentally minded, Phil is dedicated to championing the diverse body of vibrant works written for the saxophone in the past century. An emphatic advocate for music by living composers, Phil has commissioned more than twenty-five new works and presented over fifty premieres throughout Europe, North America, Taiwan, Japan, and Singapore. Recent recording projects include an album of previously unreleased chamber music for saxophone by Percy Grainger (Naxos), an entry in the Stockhausen Verlag’s complete discography of Karlheinz Stockhausen, and *SaxoVoice* (New Focus), an album of new music composed for Ogni Suono. *I CARE IF YOU LISTEN* describes *SaxoVoice* as “a tour de force of new possibilities for saxophone and voice, providing a blueprint for the creation of future saxophone duo repertoire.” Phil regularly collaborates with pianist Kurt Eric Galván, presenting both classical repertoire and new commissions supported by New Music USA. An active concerto soloist, he has performed with the Eastman Wind Ensemble, University of Illinois’ Wind Symphony and Symphony Orchestra, the Slovenian Armed Forces Band, and Taiwan-based MIT. Phil is also a tenor at Chicago’s historic Fourth Presbyterian Church.

The only prizewinner at both the Jean-Marie Londeix International Saxophone Competition (2014) and the ISSAC International Saxophone Competition (2012), Phil is also a three-time prizewinner at the MTNA National Young Artist and Chamber Music Competitions (2009, 2011, 2012), and was named Vandoren Emerging Artist of 2011. He received Eastman School of Music’s 2014 Teaching Assistant Prize for chamber music instruction. Phil maintains a private studio in Chicago and aims to foster the internal

curiosity and creativity of students, cultivating their individual musical interests and goals. Guest teaching has taken him to the Allerton Chamber Music Symposium, Illinois Summer Youth Music, and nearly fifty universities and conferences around the world. He was previously on faculty at the College of Wooster. His students have taken first prize in the MTNA National Chamber Music (2016, 2014) and 198th Army Band Small Ensemble (2015, 2013) competitions, and have been semi-finalists in the ISSAC International Saxophone Competition (2013).

Phil teaches as Adjunct Instructor of Saxophone at Butler University in Indianapolis. He holds a Doctor of Musical Arts degree from the Eastman School of Music, where he served as teaching assistant to Chien-Kwan Lin and was awarded both the Performer's Certificate and Arts Leadership Program Certificate. As a 2014-2015 Fulbright Scholar, he studied contemporary performance practice in Vienna with Lars Mlekusch, presenting contemporary music concerts in unexpected locations. He holds Bachelor and Master of Music degrees from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, where he studied with Debra Richtmeyer and held the position of saxophone teaching assistant. Phil also studied in Paris with Jean-Michel Goury as a recipient of the 2009 Frank Huntington Beebe Fund for Musicians. Phil is a Vandoren Performing Artist.

Casey Dierlam Tse is an avid performer of contemporary music and is devoted to working with and promoting the music of innovative new composers, both through solo performances and collaborative endeavors. She was a recipient of the Urbana Public Arts Grant, won first prize at the Rose Petroff College Piano Competition held in San Antonio, TX, and won the "21st Century Piano Commission Competition," at the University of Illinois. She has been a finalist at the St. Louis Artist Presentation Society Competition and an alternate for the New Orleans International Piano Competition, and received Honorable Mention in the Bradshaw and Buono International Piano Competition.

Along with solo performances, Casey is also active as a collaborative pianist. She regularly performs for student and guest artist recitals throughout the country, and is the collaborative piano coordinator for the North American Saxophone Alliance (NASA) Biennial Conference. She has also coordinated and performed at NASA and MTNA competitions for the past decade. In summer 2018 she performed at the World Saxophone Congress in Zagreb, Croatia, and the Hong Kong Saxophone Symposium, and in 2019 was a guest performer at the Asian Saxophone Congress in Shanghai, China. She has collaborated with many internationally renowned saxophonists, including Claude Delangle, Branford Marsalis, Debra Richtmeyer, Kenneth Tse, Arno Bornkamp, Gerard McChrystal, Julia Nolan, Shyen Lee, et. al. She is currently a freelance musician in Iowa City.

ABOUT THE PROGRAM

The "**Slavonic**" *Sonata* of Dora Pejačević is one of the Croatian aristocratic composer's late and passionate works, characterized by a gloomy melancholy. It reflects the time of World War I, with its fateful changes in Countess Pejačević's homeland, a time full of nostalgia for the monarchy and yet, in the new political future, a reliance on local musical expression. Pejačević's *Sonata* comes close to the modern style of Rachmaninoff, Janáček, Scriabin, and Fauré, while her violin writing [played here for the first time on saxophone] is a unique continuation of the genre in a line from Beethoven to the Expressionists.

—Radovan Lorković

My *Passacaglia* for alto saxophone and piano is on a repeating sequence of multiphonic dyads rather than a ground bass or harmonic progression. The saxophone's stark two-part counterpoint unfolds first as the shadow of dramatic accented chords in the piano, and becomes progressively obscured over the course of

the piece. Eventually abandoning the literal sequence of multiphonics, the saxophone continues to ornament their harmonic framework. The piece concludes with a final repetition of the sequence, but clouded by opaque murmurings in the piano, completing the gradual transition from transparency to murkiness.

—David Clay Mettens

Sanctuary honors a few simple chord progressions that have provided me solace throughout my life. Over the years, these progressions have formed a sort of personal, sonic refuge that I can reliably visit in lonely or uncertain times. During this particular year of great loss, the comfort these chords provide is keenly felt. In *Sanctuary*, I hope to share this sense of comfort by placing the listener and performers in a reverberant atmosphere where these harmonies continually swirl and echo around each other. It's essentially my attempt at writing a musical hug.

—Viet Cuong

I've always been fascinated by the incredible stories of the cowboys who tamed the Wild West. Mary Fields, also known as "Black Mary" and most famously, "Stagecoach Mary," was a former slave born in Tennessee who was one of the first black women to be awarded a Star Route contract with the United States Post Office. In addition to that, Mary was the fastest to hitch a full team of six horses, liked to smoke cigars, curse, and fight, she carried two loaded guns, had a "foul reputation for a woman" with "the temperament of a grizzly bear," and was the only woman allowed to drink publicly in the local saloons. Mary was a respected public figure who fearlessly created her own path during a time when many African-Americans were shamed for even trying, and the path she blazed for herself from liberated slave to celebrated local heroine is one of my all-time favorite true historic stories. She was a strong, powerful, and deeply multifaceted woman. **BLACK MARY** is a galloping, roiling jaunt with pumping twists and turns meant to engage the performers entire body throughout the piece.

—Shelley Washington

crown-snow is a duo for baritone saxophone and piano with tape playback. It is a delicate work that layers lightly-prepared piano, resonant chords, soft multiphonics, and altissimo-register lyricism in silhouettes of live sounds and electronics. What moved me to write this piece—like many of my works—is a childhood memory from my Vermont upbringing: mountaintop pines that become so layered with snow and ice rime that you see only traces of the trees you know to be there, and, in their place, you see a forest of luminescent statues standing before you. I want the experience of my music to be like this search for beauty and calm in a strange and solitary terrain.

—Zach Sheets

I wrote **Pillars** in early 2014 after a year-long hiatus from composing. This hiatus, and my transition into becoming a faculty member at Harvard the previous September led me to reassess my own compositional pillars. I realized that those pillars can be diluted to four features:

- a) Idiomatic use of instruments and tailoring the piece to the performer's abilities, tastes and personality.
- b) Abstract and concrete Voice-Leading: smoothly maintaining line of musical thought, and concretely maintaining a linear continuity of pitches (Schenkerians know what I'm talking about...)
- c) Abstract and concrete Counterpoint: the layering of many meanings on one another, and the layering of musical ideas, each maintaining independence, but also communicating with one another.
- d) Play with groove: one of the features that is most appealing to me when I listen to music is a play of rhythms against a steady beat. For me, the steady beat can be almost hidden from plain hearing, as long as the music corresponds with that beat, conspiring against it while complying to it.

I continue to keep these pillars in mind when I compose today, though some of these pillars have certainly evolved or changed.

—Osnat Netzer