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The University of Arkansas is accredited by the National Association of Schools of Music and the Department of Music is housed within the Fulbright College of Arts & Sciences.

Home to over 300 music students and fifty faculty members, we offer a variety of degree programs at the undergraduate and graduate levels.

Department faculty and students perform over 400 concerts per year, on and off campus. Large concerts are performed at the 600-seat Faulkner Performing Arts Center that opened in 2015. Chamber and solo recitals are primarily presented at the 200-seat Stella Boyle Smith Concert Hall, which is slated for a full renovation starting December 2022.

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BRIDGING DIFFERENCES SERIES

Akropolis Reed Quintet

3:00pm, Sunday, April 28th, 2024

Jim & Joyce Faulkner Performing Arts Center

University of Arkansas

Supported by the McIlroy Family Endowment in Visual and Performing Arts

PROGRAM

Splinter (2014)

Marc Mellits (1966)

Scarlet Oak

Sugar Maple

Black Ash

River Birch

Red Pine

These few specks of time (2023)

I. Oswald Huynh (1997)

II. The living need light

III. Father [TIME]

IV. Everything Everywhere All At Once

V. [TIME] is a Mother

VI. The dead need music

INTERMISSION

A Soulful Nexus

Derrick Skye (1982)

- I.
- II.
- III.
- IV.
- V.

Homage to Paradise Valley (2019)

Jeff Scott (1967)

- III. Roho Pumzika Kwa Amani (Spirits, Rest Peacefully)
- IV. Paradise Theater Jump!

PROGRAM NOTES

Splinter

Splinter, by Chicago-based composer Marc Mellits, is probably the most performed work of the reed quintet repertoire. Composed in 2014, Mellits delivers a work suitable for introducing the reed quintet to ears which may never have heard it before. Splinter is comprised of short “miniatures,” each with their own personality. Combined, they each express unique emotional qualities through hocketing rhythms and colorful orchestrations. Mellits often composes for amplified acoustic instruments, including percussion, piano, and strings. Rhythmic drive and development is a major component to his music, but does not overshadow his use of elongated phrases, subtle and effective harmonic motion, and beautiful textural creations.

These few specks of time

These few specks of time was commissioned by Akropolis as part of the 2022 Akropolis Chamber Music Institute.

Program notes by the composer:

These few specks of time is an examination of grief, time, and being. Living between two disparate cultures, I have had to reconcile many different identities and values, which has profoundly impacted my creative and moral philosophies. This piece is an exploration of some of those frictions, especially in regard to intergenerational relationships, conflicting ideals between East and West, and how different cultures perceive death. The title of the outer movements (I and V) are derived from a Vietnamese proverb: Sống dầu đèn, chết kèn trống; The living need light, the dead need music. The inner movement (II and IV) are conceptually inspired by two artists, Kendrick Lamar and Ocean Vuong, especially in their confrontations with intergenerational trauma--cultural conflicts between time. The central move-

ment (III) is titled after the 2022 film of the same name, *Everything Everywhere All At Once*. The melodic material in this work is derived from the Vietnamese folk song, *Lý Cái Mơn*, which is presented in its full form in the first movement.

A Soulful Nexus

From the composer: “A Soulful Nexus is a transcultural classical work that blends elements of Persian classical music with ornamental vocal techniques found in solo Balkan vocal melodies and the groove-based polyrhythms characteristic of electronic dance music. From Persian classical music, the piece uses an E koron, which to the Western trained ear may sound like a flat microtonal pitch. However, in Persian classical music, a koron is considered its own note, not a microtone between notes. Sonically, this demonstrates how something initially perceived as an imperfection, over time and with change in perspective, can be seen as an aspect of perfection.

Central to A Soulful Nexus is the use of the melodic framework Gushé Shekaste from Persian classical music, which includes the E koron. Shekaste translated means “broken,” due to the relationship between the main tetrachord and auxiliary notes of this melodic framework. Throughout the piece, Morakab-Navazie is used to move between Gushé Shekaste and Darâmad Dastgâh-e Mahur and Dastgâh-e Râstpanjgâh. The fourth movement in particular is inspired by Afro-Persian music from Southern Iran. From Balkan music, the piece uses mordents and fragmented motivic phrasing often used by solo vocalists in Bulgarian women’s choir music. From electronic dance music, A Soulful Nexus uses cyclical, groove-based polyrhythms to accompany instrumental solos. The title A Soulful Nexus serves as an invitation for listeners and performers to trace the intricate pathways of these musical idioms interwoven throughout the composition.”

A Soulful Nexus has been made possible by the Chamber Music America Classical Commissioning Program, with generous funding provided by The Mellon Foundation.

Homage to Paradise Valley

Homage to Paradise Valley was commissioned by and composed for Akropolis in 2019, with support from the Chamber Music America Classical Commissioning Program, with generous funding from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. Paradise Valley, a now-displaced neighborhood of Detroit, Michigan, became of interest to Jeff Scott after he and Akropolis visited the Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History in Detroit, while Jeff’s quintet, Imani Winds, was passing through Detroit on tour. Homage to Paradise Valley utilizes Jeff’s diverse musical background as a jazz and studio musician in New York City.

“The Valley, the Bottom, and Hastings Street,” is a poem by Detroit author Marsha

Music, commissioned by Akropolis in 2020 to accompany Jeff Scott's composition. Marsha grew up in the Black Bottom neighborhood. Her father, Joe Von Battle, was a record producer for Aretha Franklin and others. He owned Joe's Records, one of hundreds of music and arts-related cultural centers on Hastings Street.

Comprised of 4 movements, Jeff Scott provides these notes about each movement:

"1. Black Bottom was a predominantly black neighborhood in Detroit, Michigan. The term has sometimes been used to apply to the entire neighborhood including Paradise Valley, which reached from the Detroit River north to Grand Boulevard. In the early 20th century, African-American residents became concentrated here during the first wave of the Great Migration to northern industrial cities. Informal segregation operated in the city to keep them in this area of older, less expensive housing. The name of the neighborhood is often erroneously believed to be a reference to the African-American community that developed in the 20th century, but it was named during the colonial era by the early French settlers because of its dark, fertile topsoil (known as river bottomlands). Black Bottom/Paradise Valley became known for its African American residents' significant contributions to American music, including Blues, Big Band, and Jazz, from the 1930s to '50s. Black Bottom's substandard housing was eventually cleared and redeveloped for various urban renewal projects, driving the residents out. By the 1960s the neighborhood ceased to exist.

2. Hastings Street ran north-south through Black Bottom and had been a center of Eastern European Jewish settlement before World War I, but by the 1950s, migration transformed the strip into one of Detroit's major African-American communities of black-owned businesses, social institutions, and nightclubs. Music was the focal point of Hastings Street, with world-famous jazz and blues artists visiting almost daily.

3. From the Bantu language of Swahili, "Roho, Pumzika kwa Amani" (Spirits, Rest Peacefully) is a lullaby. My humble offering to the many souls who came before me, and preserved through the middle passage, decades of slavery, disenfranchising laws, and inequality. I am who I am because of those who stood before me. May their spirits rest peacefully.

4. Orchestra Hall, where the Detroit Symphony Orchestra now performs, closed in 1939, but reopened in 1941 as the Paradise Theater. For 10 years it would then offer the best of African-American musicians from around the country. Duke Ellington opened Christmas week with his big band, admission was 50 cents, and patrons could stay all day. There were 3 shows every day and 4 on weekends. "B" movies were shown between acts. During the glory days of jazz the Paradise The-

ater saw Ella Fitzgerald, Billy Eckstine, Billie Holiday, and many more. “Paradise Theater Jump” is dedicated to the famed theater and harkens to the up-tempo style of “jump blues,” usually played by small groups and featuring saxophone or brass instruments.”

One can learn more about this part of Detroit’s history by visiting the Detroit Historical Society website at detroithistorical.org.

ABOUT THE QUINTET

Tim Gocklin, oboe; Kari Landry, clarinet; Matt Landry, saxophone; Ryan Reynolds, bassoon; Andrew Koeppe, bass clarinet

Celebrating their 15th year as “a sonically daring ensemble who specializes in performing new works with charisma and integrity” (BBC Music Magazine) and a “collective voice driven by real excitement and a sense of adventure” (The Wire), Akropolis has “taken the chamber music world by storm” (Fanfare). As the first reed quintet to twice grace the Billboard Charts (2021, 2022), the untamed band of 5 reed players and entrepreneurs are united by a shared passion: to make music that sparks joy and wonder.

Winner of 7 national chamber music prizes including the 2014 Fischhoff Gold Medal, Akropolis delivers 120 concerts and educational events each year and has premiered over 130 works. In November 2023 Akropolis will become the first reed quintet to grace the luminary University Musical Society (UMS) stage, and previously have appeared on Oneppo (Yale University), Chamber Music San Antonio, Phillips Collection (Washington, D.C.), and many more.

“There’s nothing tentative in [Akropolis’] approach, and that extends to their programming of multifariously challenging and imaginative new works” (The Wire). Akropolis’ 23-24 season will include world premieres by Derrick Skye and Stephanie Ann Boyd; performances of *Are We Dreaming the Same Dream?* with 2-time Grammy-nominated composer/pianist Pascal Le Boeuf and drummer Christian Euman; imaginative renditions of music by Ravel and Gershwin; and the release of their 6th full length commercial album on the Bright Shiny Things label.

Winner of the 2015 Fischhoff Educator Award and a nonprofit organization which has received 7 consecutive grants from the National Endowment for the Arts, Akropolis runs a festival in Detroit called Together We Sound and an annual, year-long residency at three public Detroit high schools. The “pure gold” (San Francisco Chronicle) Akropolis Reed Quintet performs worldwide and is represented exclusively by Ariel Artists.

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