

Since 2006:

THE SAXOPHONE MUSIC OF ALLAN BLANK

Bill Perconti, saxophone
Alloy Saxophone Quartet
Idaho Saxophone Trio
Patrick McNally, contrabass

TROY1261

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SINCE 2006: THE SAXOPHONE MUSIC OF ALLAN BLANK comprises recordings of the prolific output of saxophone music dating from 2006-2009 composed by noted composer Allan Blank, including *Line Drawings* (2006) for solo soprano saxophone, *Scenes for the Ear* (2006) for ATB saxophone trio, *Five Sketches* (2007) for solo alto saxophone, *A Miscellany for Saxophone Quartet* (2007), and *Introduction, Seven Vignettes, & Conclusion* (2009) for alto saxophone and contrabass. These works, in combination with five pieces written for saxophone prior to 2006, qualify Blank as one of the most prolific major American composers for the saxophone.

Blank's entry in *Grove Music Online* describes his music as having "a broad range of expressive and idiomatic possibilities...often characterized by a soloistic impulse: flowing arabesque lines combine in a sonorous polyphony in which each instrument or voice remains distinct." These characteristics are a good fit for the lyrical tone of the saxophone, and the works on this CD exemplify this description. Blank is also a master orchestrator of the saxophone, as evidenced by his use of the entire range of each saxophone. His scoring of the low range in particular stands out; although the low range of all saxophones is often avoided by composers (and players) because of its resistance, Blank uses it for variety and sonority. One example is the second movement of *A Miscellany for Saxophone Quartet*; mm 5-8, a heterophonic section, begins on the lowest notes of all four horns. The passage is marked *mp*. The challenge is considerable, but the sonority is rich.

The compositions here were written for the saxophone ensembles associated with Lewis-Clark State College (ID) and for the solo repertoire. All works with the exception of *Line Drawings* were a result of our correspondence that began after a 2005 grant application that included an earlier work of Blank. The resulting communications revealed some of Blank's intentions and inspirations, such as this one for *Line Drawings*: "As I recall, the title was inspired by a painter who spoke of 'taking a line for a walk.' And on a walk the possibilities may, or may not magnify." And Blank's program notes in the score of *Scenes for the Ear* state: "One of the powers of music is its ability to evoke images

in the listener's mind, images that can be identified or suggested. While the title of these pieces do not identify an image, this power was very much in the front of my thinking as the work unfolded. What the listener 'sees' is certainly private, while the titles reflect a more immediate response, or character, to the music."

Due in part to Blank's generous contributions, historical limitations of the quantity and quality of concert saxophone repertoire are gradually giving way to the addition and growth of modern repertoire of the same high quality as that of orchestral wind instruments. And, to Blank's total output of more than 300 works, saxophonists can hope to add "and counting" to that number. —BILL PERCONTI

Composer **Allan Blank** (b. 1925) received early training on violin, attending the High School of Music & Art (New York, New York); further study in conducting and composition was accomplished at Juilliard School of Music, New York University (BA, 1948), the University of Minnesota (MA, 1950), and the University of Iowa. From 1950-1952 he was a violinist with the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra. He taught at Western Illinois University, Paterson State College (New Jersey), and Lehman College CUNY. Blank is Professor Emeritus at Virginia Commonwealth University, where he taught from 1978-1996.

No fewer than 16 companies publish Blank's music, and recordings of his works are found on Advance, Arizona University Recordings, CRI, Centaur, Contemporary Society, North/South Recordings, Open Loop, Orion, Pro Viva, and Titanic Recordings. He has received composition awards from the George Eastman Competition (First Prize), the Annual Choral Competition, the Lind Solo Composition (at Cornell University), and the Eric Satie Mostly Tonal Award. The National Endowment for the Arts, the Virginia Commission of the Arts, the Virginian Music Teachers Association, and the New York State Council on the Arts have supported his works.

Allan Blank's references include entries in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* and its associated web site *Grove Music Online*. He has been invited to deposit manuscripts with the Hans Moldenhauer Archive (Harvard) and the Diehn Composer's Room of Old Dominion University.

THE PERFORMERS

Saxophonist **Bill Perconti** is a Professor of Music at Lewis-Clark State College (Idaho). His CDs with Arizona University Recordings, Centaur, and Crystal Records contain numerous world-premier recordings, and his two solo CDs have received favorable reviews by such journals as *Fanfare* and *American Record Guide*. As a soloist and performer/founder of the LCSC Chamber Players and the Idaho Saxophone Trio, Perconti recorded contributions to multiple volumes of AUR's America's Millennium Tribute to Adolphe Sax. His solo recording of *Wings* by Joan Tower on AUR was singled out and submitted by AUR to the 42nd Grammy Awards. Perconti's recordings were supported by grants from the National Endowment for the Arts, the Bossak-Heilbron Foundation and the Washington Artists Trust. Advance Music Co. (Germany) and Roncorp, a part of Northeastern Music Publications (New Jersey) publish his arrangements. Perconti's mentors are Joseph Bosoty (Cleveland, Ohio), Louis Marini Sr. (Bowling Green State University), Galan Kral (Baldwin Wallace Conservatory of Music) and Ron Tyree at the University of Iowa, where Perconti received a DMA.

Contrabassist **Patrick McNally** studied bass with members of the Chicago Symphony, and received a Masters at Indiana University under Bruce Bransby. Performing in orchestras in six different states across the U.S., he has attended festivals throughout the world, including the Aspen Music Festival, the American Institute of Musical Studies in Austria, and the Schleswig-Holstein in Germany. Residing in Spokane, Washington, Patrick is currently the principal bassist of the Spokane Symphony.

Formed and directed by Bill Perconti, and based in the Pacific Northwest, the **Alloy Saxophone Quartet** (Bill Perconti, Nicole Barnes, Casey Emerson and Erik Steighner) and the **Idaho Saxophone Trio** (Bill Perconti, Joy Atkin and Vanessa Sielert) are dedicated to the saxophone as a classical instrument and to the exploration of saxophone ensemble repertoire. The Idaho Saxophone Trio has recorded on Arizona University Recordings, and the Alloy Saxophone Quartet has recorded with Vienna Modern Masters.

Joy Atkin holds a BME from the University of Idaho where she studied with Bob Miller. She also studied with Michael Jacobson at Baylor University. Joy has performed at regional conferences of the North American Saxophone Alliance, premiering Blank's works with the LCSC Saxophone Quartet and the Idaho Saxophone Trio.

Seattle resident **Nicole Barnes** is an Affiliate Saxophone Professor at Western Washington University in Bellingham Washington. She received a BM from the University of Washington and a MM in saxophone performance from the New England Conservatory of Music in Boston. Nicole has been a guest performer for the Boston Civic Orchestra, the Seattle Symphony, the Pacific Northwest Ballet, the Seattle Repertory Jazz Orchestra, and the 2006 Tanglewood Contemporary Orchestra. Overseas, Ms. Barnes toured the Netherlands with the Boston-based Thump Saxophone Quartet, and Japan with the University of Washington Saxophone Quartet. In 2003 she was a first-place winner in the 12th Annual Concerto Competition at the University of Washington. Currently Ms. Barnes performs and tours with the Northstar Saxophone Quartet.

Casey Emerson is a 2010 graduate of the University of Idaho, where he received a BM in education and composition, and a MM in saxophone performance. He has performed throughout the Northwest as a soloist and in various ensembles, including the Lewis-Clark State College Saxophone Quartet. Emerson performed in ensembles at the 2009 MENC Northwest Convention, the Lionel Hampton Jazz Festival, and (as a soloist) at the 2009 North American Saxophone Alliance Region I Conference. His teachers include Yiannis Miralis, Jim Pisano, and Vanessa and Vern Sielert.

Vanessa Sielert is an active performer whose teachers were Bob Miller, Michael Jacobson, and Debra Richtmeyer. With the Idaho Saxophone Trio Vanessa premiered Blank's *Scenes for the Ear* at the 2007 Region I conference of the NASA. She has taught at Bonney Lake High School (Washington) and is Assistant Professor of Saxophone at the Lionel Hampton School of Music at the University of Idaho.

Dr. Erik Steighner is a Saxophone Lecturer at Pacific Lutheran University in Tacoma, Washington. He holds bachelor's degrees in Music and English from the University of Puget Sound and a MM and DMA in saxophone performance from the University of

Texas at Austin. Also a composer, Dr. Steighner's works are published by Dorn Publications. As a soloist, he has appeared with the Lyric Brass Quintet, the Camas Wind Quintet, the Indiana Symphonic Band, the Columbia Gorge Sinfonietta, the University of Puget Sound Orchestra, and the UPS Wind Ensemble. Dr. Steighner has performed with the Austin Symphony Orchestra, the San Antonio Symphony, the Tacoma Symphony Orchestra, and the Tipping Point Saxophone Quartet. In addition, he has performed with groups such as Toshiko Akiyoshi, Glen Campbell, Guster, Ed Shaughnessy, and The Spinners.

Acknowledgments

Cover Art: Margot Blank
Photo of Allan Blank: Margot Blank

Roncorp, a part of Northeastern Music Publications, publishes *A Miscellany for Saxophone Quartet*, *Scenes for the Ear*, and *Five Sketches*. Inquires about *Line Drawings* and *Introduction, Seven Vignettes, & Conclusion* can be directed to The Composers Alliance (New York, New York).

Produced by Bill Perconti and Peter Nothnagle. Recorded by Peter Nothnagle (*A Miscellany for Saxophone Quartet*, *Line Drawings*, *Five Sketches*, and *Introduction, Seven Vignettes, & Conclusion*), and David Bjur (*Scenes for the Ear*). *Scenes for the Ear* was recorded at the University of Idaho Hampton School of Music Recital Hall; all others were recorded at the Lewis-Clark State College Media Center.

This CD was made possible by support from Lewis-Clark State College and generous contributions from Gary & Jennifer Arndt, The Auer Family, Allan Blank, Bill & Vicki Daehling, and Bill & Kathy England. I wish also to thank Mary Flores and Kristin Prieur of LCSC, Gary Gemberling, and Ellen Perconti.



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<i>A Miscellany for Saxophone Quartet</i> [15:24]				<i>Line Drawings</i>	[6:27]
1	Introduction	[2:12]	18	I	[1:39]
2	Spirited	[2:36]	19	II	[2:50]
3	A Short Fantasy	[1:59]	20	III	[1:46]
4	Gently	[2:45]	Bill Perconti, soprano saxophone		
5	Together and In Pairs	[1:42]	<i>Introduction, Seven Vignettes,</i>		
6	On the Lighter Side	[1:27]	<i>& Conclusion</i> [17:08]		
7	Finale	[2:21]	21		Introduction
The Alloy Saxophone Quartet			22	I	[3:31]
<i>Five Sketches for Alto Saxophone</i>		[8:23]	23	II	Frisky [1:57]
8	Greetings	[1:43]	24	III	A Shared Recitative [3:36]
9	Reflective	[2:07]	25	IV	Energetic [2:02]
10	Active	[1:51]	26	V	Restrained [2:52]
11	Level-headed	[1:59]	27	VI	Pushy [1:09]
12	Busy	[1:24]	28	VII	Sixths and Half-steps [2:14]
Bill Perconti, alto saxophone			29		Ascents/Descents [1:23]
<i>Scenes for the Ear</i>		[11:22]	Conclusion [1:54]		
13	Getting Started	[1:54]	Bill Perconti, alto saxophone		
14	Reminiscence	[2:30]	Patrick McNally, contrabass		
15	Color Changes	[2:13]	Total Time = 59:12		
16	Two-some/Three-some/One-some	[2:16]	The Alloy Saxophone Quartet		
17	Echoes	[2:17]	Bill Perconti, soprano saxophone Nicole Barnes, tenor saxophone		
The Idaho Saxophone Trio			Casey Emerson, alto saxophone Erik Steighner, baritone saxophone		
<i>Scenes for the Ear</i>		[11:22]	The Idaho Saxophone Trio		
Bill Perconti, alto saxophone			Bill Perconti, alto saxophone Joy Atkin, tenor saxophone		
<i>Scenes for the Ear</i>		[11:22]	Vanessa Sielert, baritone saxophone		



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