



ORCHID CLASSICS



AERO QUARTET

GLAZUNOV | SIMON | LAGO | MÁRQUEZ
D'RIVERA | CALLE | COLTRANE

ORC100225

AERO QUARTET

Alexander Glazunov (1865-1936)

Saxophone Quartet in B-flat major, Op.109 (1932)

1 I	Allegro	6.41
2 II	Canzona variée: Theme	1.27
3 II	Canzona variée: Variation I	1.18
4 II	Canzona variée: Variation II	1.11
5 II	Canzona variée: Variation III - À la Schumann	2.52
6 II	Canzona variée: Variation IV - À la Chopin	2.02
7 II	Canzona variée: Variation V - Scherzo	1.48
8 III	Finale	5.59

Carlos Simon (b.1986)

9	An Elegy: A Cry from the Grave (2016)	4.32
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Guillermo Lago (b.1960)

Ciudades (2011)

10	Sarajevo (Bosnia and Herzegovina)	3.43
11	Addis Ababa (Ethiopia)	4.50

Arturo Márquez (b.1950)

12	Danzón No.5, "Portales de Madrugada" (1997)	4.02
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Paquito D'Rivera (b.1948)

13	Wapango (1993)	2.11
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Ed Calle (b.1959)

The Iberia Suite (2004)

14	Midnight Rumba*	4.32
15	Siesta	3.53
16	Pamplona*	4.09

John Coltrane (1926-1967)

17	Dear Lord* (1965) arr. Dave Liebman (2014)	4.27
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Total time

60.32

Salvador Flores, *soprano saxophone*

Walt Puyear, *alto saxophone*

Matthew Koester, *tenor saxophone*

Brian Kachur, *baritone saxophone*

Arun Luthra, *soprano & tenor saxophones**

We are proud to share our debut album, *Aero Quartet*, which is a culmination of our musical journey as an ensemble to date. In our time together, we have found joy and inspiration from playing music of all styles. When creating this record, our goal was to highlight a taste of the music we love while demonstrating the versatility of the saxophone quartet. We conceived a track list that flows between classical and jazz music, interspersed with elements of music from around the globe.

Western-classical music represents the core of our activity as an ensemble. Representing this on the album are Alexander Glazunov's *Quatuor* and Carlos Simon's *Elegy*. Glazunov's composition is a magnum opus for the saxophone quartet. He elegantly showcases the beauty of the instrument by utilizing many classical forms and referencing the many great composers of his time. *Elegy* poignantly responds to tragedies of injustice and cruelty inflicted upon marginalized peoples. We feel Carlos Simon's work is important and needs to be heard; we are grateful to have had the chance to document our interpretation of this beautiful piece.

Guillermo Lago's *Ciudades* depicts his take on various sounds and musical styles from cities across the globe. *Sarajevo* echoes the despair and calamity surrounding the events of the Bosnian war in the mid 90's with a haunting melody atop drones and ostinati. *Addis Ababa* evokes the vibrant energy of Ethiopia's capital city through the use of extended techniques and the use of a traditional five-tone "kiñit" to create acrobatic melodies. These movements of *Ciudades* have a strong personal connection to our group, as they were some of the first works we played together when we formed in 2020. We would like to dedicate our recording of *Sarajevo* to producer and friend Trish Malin, who was one of our lovely hosts during our album recording sessions in Easton, Maryland. After hearing us play it in rehearsal, she expressed to us how powerful the piece was and instantly fell in love with it.

Arturo Márquez's *Danzón No.5*, subtitled *Portales de Madrugada*, has become one of our most well-received selections. Elegant and graceful in style, Márquez captures the essence of the Cuban dance style in this original composition for saxophone quartet. *Danzón No.5* is one of nine danzónes Márquez composed for various instrumentations – most famously *No.2* for orchestra – connecting the saxophone to a wider classical tradition.

Paquito D'Rivera is a major figure in the latin jazz genre, known as a great clarinetist, saxophonist, and composer. Among his many works is a saxophone quartet entitled *Wapango*. This is a short jazz-tinged tune based in the Mexican Huapango, twisting and turning through different registers of the saxophone in a quick waltz. This piece acts as a perfect segue to the final major work of the album, *The Iberia Suite* by jazz saxophonist Ed Calle. This three-movement set takes listeners through a cascade of latin jazz moods, featuring solos by our baritone saxophonist Brian Kachur, and this album's guest artist Arun Luthra.

Our collaboration with Arun first began in December of 2021 on a guest artist recital at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. From the first notes of our rehearsal, we knew he was a special musician and person. Aero could not be more grateful for Arun's musical friendship and we are incredibly excited to have him be a part of our debut album. Arun's tenor saxophone improvisations on *The Iberia Suite* add an extra layer of unique artistry to the piece and our record as a whole. Coltrane's *Dear Lord* arranged by Dave Liebman is a sort of encore or epilogue to the tracklist, and even more heavily features Arun, now on soprano saxophone. This sensitive, reflective track is a final nod to the genres, styles, and friendships that make the album special.



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In 1879, the young Alexander Glazunov met Mily Balakirev, who recommended he start lessons with his friend and fellow member of the 'Russian Five', Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov. Glazunov was prodigiously talented and, according to Rimsky-Korsakov, progressed 'not from day to day but from hour to hour'. He became a towering figure in Russian music but had reservations about modern trends. Glazunov was suspicious of Stravinsky's use of dissonance, and said of Debussy: 'Could it be that Rimsky and I influenced the orchestration of all these contemporary degenerates?'

Perhaps surprisingly given this attitude, Glazunov was quite taken with the distinctive – and distinctly modern – timbre of the saxophone, and he became one of the first major composers to write for the instrument. In 1932, his health deteriorating, Glazunov settled in Paris, where he composed very little – but did manage to write both a Saxophone Quartet in B-flat major (1932) and, at the persistent request of German saxophonist Sigurd Raschèr, his Saxophone Concerto in E-flat of 1934 (both of which share the opus number 109). The Saxophone Quartet opens with a sonorous movement characterised by curving melodies redolent of Dvořák or Brahms, while the second movement variations explore a range of textures from rich chorales to rapid, imitative flourishes. The contrapuntal rigour of the rondo finale, suggesting the influence of Baroque composers such as J.S. Bach, lends the movement an almost neoclassical feel.

Carlos Simon, from Atlanta, Georgia, is a GRAMMY-nominated composer and activist 'with an ear for social justice' (NPR Music). Drawing on diverse influences including gospel, jazz and romanticism, Simon is the Composer-in-Residence for the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts. For string ensemble or saxophone quartet, Simon's *Elegy (A Cry from the Grave)* pays powerful tribute to those who have been wrongfully murdered 'by an oppressive power': Trayvon Martin, Eric Garner and Michael Brown. As Simon explains: 'The stimulus for composing the piece came as a result of prosecuting attorney Robert

McCulloch announcing that a selected jury had decided not to indict police officer Daren Wilson after fatally shooting an unarmed teenager, Michael Brown, in Ferguson, Missouri.' This harrowing subject-matter draws from Simon music of soulful lyricism supported by rich harmonies. A melodic idea is passed between the instruments in different guises – an ominous motif that 'represents the cry of those struck down unjustly'. The *Elegy's* mournful tone is lifted by bright harmonies representing 'moments of extreme hope'.

Saxophonist Guillermo Lago's composition career grew out of the need for more saxophone quartet repertoire. This Dutch composer, real name Willem van Merwijk, came to the rescue when his friends in the Aurelia Saxophone Quartet found themselves a few commissions short before a recording and a series of concerts. Their chosen theme was music inspired by Piazzolla, prompting the composer to write a tango under the Spanish-sounding pseudonym Guillermo Lago (an approximate translation of his real name). More works followed, many of them for saxophone, including the enormously popular *Ciudades* ('Cities', 2011) which has become a staple of the saxophone quartet repertoire. Lago's response to this success: 'I am very happy that I have been able to contribute to the repertoire of my beloved ensemble and instrument in this way.'

Lago has continued to add to this series of musical sketches. We hear 'Sarajevo (Bosnia and Herzegovina)', which is dedicated to Lago's many friends there. A decade after the devastation of the war of the 1990s, Lago helped to re-establish the saxophone class at the Sarajevo Academy of Music, as well as co-founding the 'Winds of Change' ensemble – Bosnia and Herzegovina's first wind ensemble, comprising a group of young musicians each affected by the country's recent history. The energetic 'Addis Ababa (Ethiopia)' was inspired by Lago's collaboration with the Ethiopian singer Minyeshu, with whom he worked at the New Year's Concert by the Netherlands Wind Ensemble in Amsterdam's Concertgebouw in 2007.



Mexican composer Arturo Márquez has embraced a wide range of styles and media in his long career, including avant-garde and electroacoustic techniques, mixed media, interdisciplinary works, film scores and, more recently, the incorporation of popular styles into his musical language. This last approach is particularly evident in his hugely successful series of *Danzónes*, which use the rhythms and melodic shapes of 20th-century urban music alongside idioms from the Veracruz region of Mexico. Each *Danzón* is for a different instrument or ensemble. The subtitle of *Danzón No.5 (Portales de Madrugada)* for saxophone quartet (1997), refers to 'portales' – which in Mexico are arcaded commercial buildings – in the 'early morning'. *Portales de Madrugada* may also be interpreted as 'Snapshots of an Early Morning', with its syncopated rhythms and bustling lines creating various images of an active city under the glow of a distant sunrise.

Paquito D'Rivera is a celebrated, multi award-winning Cuban American saxophonist and composer. He was taught the saxophone by his father before attending the Havana Conservatory of Music; later, alongside pianist and bandleader Chucho Valdés, he founded the Orchestra Cubana de Música Moderna and the fusion group Irakere. *Wapango* comes from D'Rivera's album *Mariel* (on which he also performs a number by John Coltrane). The piece dates back to the 1970s, when D'Rivera wrote it for the saxophone quartet of his old friend Carlos Averhoff. The composer describes it as a sort of divertimento 'inspired by the Huapango, one of the many musical styles from colourful Mexican folklore.'

Born in Caracas, Venezuela to Spanish parents, Ed Calle is a musical polymath who plays an array of instruments as well as composing and arranging. As a saxophonist he has made a huge number of recordings, working with a who's-who of artists. Now based in Florida, he regularly tours internationally and is a professor at Miami Dade College. *The Iberia Suite* dates from 2004. The work

starts with a jaunty Midnight Rumba, contrasted with the sultry and soporific Siesta, which features yearning harmonies, before concluding with the animated and rather enigmatic Pamplona.

John Coltrane is widely acknowledged as one of the greatest jazz musicians of all time. Soon after his early saxophone and theory lessons, he watched Charlie Parker in concert and was soon emulating Parker's style. Coltrane was called up to the navy during 1945 and 1946; he was sent to Pearl Harbor in Hawaii (a few years after the devastating attack there), where he played saxophone and clarinet in a swing band, the Melody Masters. Despite being beset by alcohol and drug problems, Coltrane's talents were soon recognised and his post-war engagements included tours with Dizzy Gillespie and Earl Bostic who, in Coltrane's words, 'showed me a lot of things' about saxophone technique.

Dear Lord (1965) reflected Coltrane's new focus driven by a sense of spiritual awareness. In the liner notes to *A Love Supreme* (1964-65), Coltrane recalled: 'During the year 1957, I experienced, by the grace of God, a spiritual awakening which was to lead me to a richer, fuller, more productive life.' In the liner notes to the album *Meditations*, he is quoted as saying: 'I believe in all religions', and the ballad *Dear Lord*, from the 1965 album *Transition*, reflects that general embrace of a higher being rather than a specific deity. Heard here in an arrangement by another innovative American saxophonist, Dave Liebman – first recorded by the PRISM Saxophone Quartet on their 2015 Innova release *Heritage/Evolution Volume I* – *Dear Lord* is not so much a prayer or cry for help, as a mellow yet joyful affirmation of life.

© Joanna Wyld, 2023



Aero Quartet

Praised by Pulitzer Prize finalist and Grammy-winning composer Augusta Read Thomas for their "nuanced, colorful, and artfully sculpted" interpretations, Aero Quartet has appeared on chamber music series including Detroit Chamber Winds and Strings, Chesapeake Music, Valparaiso Concert Association, and The Dame Myra Hess Concerts broadcast on WFMT Chicago. Aero is consistently recognized for their versatile and varied performances, with programming featuring conventional and contemporary works for saxophone, as well as arrangements spanning centuries of musical tradition.

As educators, Aero has presented masterclasses at institutions including the University of Wisconsin–Madison, University of Wisconsin–Eau Claire, University of Missouri–Kansas City, and the University of Kansas. Aero Quartet heavily values educational outreach, having performed for and worked with students at public schools across the Midwest and East Coast.

Formed in 2020 at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor, Aero Quartet received the Gold Medal at the 2021 Fischhoff National Chamber Music Competition, along with First Prize awards at the Music Teachers National Association Chamber Music Competition and Briggs Chamber Music Competition, among others. Aero's artistic mission is to provide audiences with listening experiences that are engaging, entertaining, and thought-provoking, whilst actively contributing to the evolving chamber music medium by commissioning new repertoire and exploring eclectic arrangements.



Salvador Flores

In addition to his work with the Aero Quartet, Salvador Flores maintains an active solo career and is a member of the U.S. Army Band "Pershing's Own" located in Washington D.C.

He has garnered many prestigious awards and honors over the course of his career, including being selected as a 2022-23 Performance Today Young Artist in Residence. This program annually features five outstanding young soloists from across the country in an interview with host Fred Child. In 2021, Salvador was named the second saxophonist to ever receive the University of Michigan School of Music, Theatre and Dance's most distinguished performance award, the Albert A. Stanley Medal, after his teacher Dr. Timothy McAllister. Some of his other achievements include being named the 1st Prize Winner of the 2020 North American Saxophone Alliance Collegiate Solo Competition, a 2020 Yamaha Young Performing Artist, and Winner of the 2020 University of Michigan School of Music, Theatre and Dance Concerto Competition.

A multi-disciplined saxophonist, Salvador enjoys performing in a variety of styles and genres. He frequently performs in the Regional Mexican style, having toured with many bands in countless major cities and venues across the United States. He is also an avid Jazz Saxophonist, having performed as a featured soloist and Lead Alto Saxophonist of the University of Michigan Jazz Lab Ensemble and a concert at the Blue Llama Jazz Club, Ann Arbor's premiere jazz venue.

Salvador has earned M.M. Degrees in Saxophone Performance and Improvisation, as well as B.M in Saxophone Performance, from the University of Michigan School of Music, Theatre and Dance under the direction of saxophonists Dr. Timothy McAllister and Dr. Andrew Bishop.



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Walt Puyear

Walt Puyear is a saxophonist, chamber musician, and educator currently serving as a Graduate Student Instructor in saxophone at the University of Michigan.

As a soloist, Walt was the 1st prize winner in Vandoren's 2021 Emerging Artist Competition and was a prize winner in the 2022 Walter Naumburg International Saxophone Competition. He has appeared as a concerto soloist with the UMKC Conservatory Wind Symphony and the University of Michigan Chamber Winds.

His recent engagements include a guest artist recital for the Pennsylvania Music Teachers Association and performances with the New World Symphony.

In the fall of 2022, Walt served as a sabbatical replacement at the University of Michigan, teaching applied saxophone, chamber music, and studio class.

He is pursuing a Doctor of Musical Arts degree at the University of Michigan.

He holds bachelor's degrees in Saxophone Performance and Music Theory from the University of Missouri-Kansas City, and a Master of Music in Saxophone Performance from the University of Michigan. Walt's primary teachers include Timothy McAllister, Zach Shemon, and Andrew Bishop.



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Matthew Koester

Celebrated for his “commitment to stellar sound and control” by Quebec’s La Tribune and “gorgeous sonority” by the South Florida Classical Review, saxophonist Matthew Koester enjoys a vibrant career as an educator, chamber musician, and soloist across North America. His recent engagements include performances with the Grammy-Award winning PRISM Quartet, the New World Symphony, Flint Symphony Orchestra, Ann Arbor Symphony Orchestra, Southwest Michigan Symphony, and the premiere of an opera by Pulitzer Prize-winning composer William Bolcom. Matthew recently joined the University of Wisconsin-Madison’s Mead Witter School of Music faculty, where he teaches applied saxophone and chamber music.

Matthew values collaboration with friends and colleagues and regularly performs commissioned works. Recent premieres include chamber music by George Lewis, Arturo O’Farrill, HK Gruber, and Gala Flagello. He earned solo prizes at the Prix Orford Musique in Montréal, the MTNA National Young Artist Competition, and appears on the Naxos label’s American Classics series with conductor James Judd and XAS label with the PRISM Quartet. Matthew has enjoyed performing with conductors Teddy Abrams, Stéphane Denève, Juano Mena, and HK Gruber. In addition to his role at the Mead Witter School of Music, he visits the Conservatoire de musique de Rimouski’s annual Symposium de Saxophone and is a frequent masterclass clinician at universities across the US.

A native of Albuquerque, NM, Matthew is a graduate of the University of New Mexico and earned a Doctor of Musical Arts degree from the University of Michigan. His primary teachers include Timothy McAllister, Eric Lau, Glenn Kostur, and Andrew Bishop. Matthew is a Conn-Selmer Endorsing Artist and plays on Selmer Paris instruments exclusively.



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Brian Kachur

Brian Kachur, originally from Pompton Lakes, NJ, has earned national and international recognition as a musician, including being named a Winner of the 2023 Yamaha Young Performing Artist Competition, a Winner of the 2022 University of Michigan Graduate Concerto Competition, and having been selected among hundreds of saxophonists worldwide to compete in the 8th Adolphe Sax International Competition in Dinant, Belgium.

An active performing artist, Brian has performed as an orchestral musician with the Battle Creek Symphony Orchestra and the University of Michigan Symphony Orchestra. As a soloist, he performed Steven Bryant's *Concerto for Alto Saxophone* with the University of Michigan Symphony Band in September of 2022. As a jazz musician, Brian has performed with the One More Once Big Band and the University of Michigan Jazz Lab Ensemble.

In addition to performing, Brian is a passionate music educator, teaching private students both in-person in Michigan, and virtually across the country. Brian has provided saxophone instruction for public schools in the Southwestern Michigan area, including Discovery Middle School in Canton and West Bloomfield High School. Brian was also a saxophone instructor for the 2018 West Milford Concert Band Academy in West Milford, NJ.

Brian earned Master's and Bachelor's Degrees in Saxophone Performance from the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor studying with Dr. Timothy McAllister, with additional instruction in Jazz Improvisation under Dr. Andrew Bishop. Brian is currently earning a Doctor of Musical Arts Degree in Saxophone Performance from Northwestern University in Evanston, IL studying with Taimur Sullivan.



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Arun Luthra

Arun Luthra (Hindi: अरुण लूथ्रा, Punjabi: ਅਰੁਣ ਲੂਥਰਾ) is one of New York's premier saxophonists and composers, and an exponent of konnakol – the Carnatic (South Indian classical) music art form of vocalizing rhythms. Luthra has performed with such prominent jazz, Afro-Cuban, Brazilian, and pop musicians as Billy Harper, Eddie Henderson, Kenny Garrett, Mike Stern, Joe Chambers, Charli Persip, Bernard Purdie, The Temptations, The Four Tops, Frankie Valli, Bobby Short, Lew Soloff, and Zé Renato. As the leader of his Konnakol Jazz Project, he is one of the small group of American musicians of Indian heritage who have continued to explore the possibilities of fusing jazz with elements of Indian classical music, as well as drawing from the various cultures and traditions which he embodies, to create a vibrant new sound and style. Luthra has performed with his Konnakol Jazz Project across the United States as well as in Japan, the United Kingdom, Europe, Australia, and South America.



We would like to thank all the wonderful people who have helped make our debut album become a reality:

Matthew Trusler and **Orchid Classics**— for sharing our music with the world.

Sam McElroy— for taking a chance on us as artists and helping get this project off the ground.

John and Trish Malin— for their support and friendship, and for being amazing hosts each time we return to Easton!

Jonathan Allen— for taking the time to record and mix this album—we are so grateful to have had the opportunity to meet and work with you, and had an amazing time in the studio!

Chad Lilley— for his help in producing the recording session and for his continued friendship.

Arun Luthra— for laying down some beautiful and killer solos, and for being an amazing collaborator and friend with whom we are excited to continue working!

Our friends, family, and colleagues— for their constant support and encouragement in our artistic endeavors.

You, the listener— for supporting our work and listening to our music!

Executive Producers: John and Trish Malin

Producers: Jonathan Allen, Charles Lilley

Recorded and mixed by: Jonathan Allen

Editor: Caroline Haigh

Recorded at The Ebenezer Theatre, Easton, MD on 18 & 19 September 2022

Mixed & mastered at Olliewood Mix Room, UK

For more information on Orchid Classics please visit

www.orchidclassics.com

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