



Joel Garthwaite
Soprano



Lauren Hamer
Baritone



Hannah Riches
Alto





Lewis Evans
Tenor

Flux – Lunar Saxophone Quartet

Disc 1

- 1 *LM-7: Aquarius*, Gabriel Jackson – 7.27
 - 2 *Flux*, Ashley John Long – 9.51
 - 3 *Diaphanousphere*, Lucy Pankhurst – 7.08
 - (4–9) *Five Short pieces + Four Whispers*
for *Archie's Chair*, Keith Tippett
 - 4 *The Archer* – 2.08
 - 5 *The Blacksmith* – 4.53
 - 6 *The Starwatcher* – 4.31
 - 7 *The Swordsman* – 2.19
 - 8 *The Pastor* – 3.29
 - 9 *Four Whispers for Archie's Chair* – 1.56
- Total: 44.09 mins

Disc 2

- 1 *VENT*, Graham Fiktin – 8.24
 - (2–5) 4 *Chair Legs*, Eric Schwartz
 - 2 *La Valse* – 2.15
 - 3 *Lithium Tango* – 3.20
 - 4 *Tarantella d'Amore* – 2.53
 - 5 *But these chair legs were St Michaels and all angels* – 2.22
 - 6 *In Memoriam*,
James Williamson – 10.33
 - 7 *De L'hotel de la ville a la Concorde*,
Michael Nyman – 6.45
- Total: 36.45 mins

Imagine the situation, in the second half of the eighteenth century, when the string quartet was still a young and unestablished genre, its moods and humours waiting to be unlocked and discovered for the first time. In the first decade of the twenty-first century, the saxophone quartet is in a similar position and is, perhaps, one of the few genuinely new “classical” music ensembles to have recently emerged. In the last century, professors at the *Conservatoire de Paris* led saxophone quartets, but they attracted little or no music of significance. Only in the last thirty years has the character of the medium taken its place within the present *zeitgeist*: its sound rooted in a jazz past, but now embracing the multiplicity of stylistic references that lie at the heart of new music at the present time.

The Lunar Saxophone Quartet, formed in 2002, belong only to a second generation of such ensembles, moving away from the jazz orientated groups of the 70s, such as the World Saxophone Quartet and, in a British context, following on from the pioneering work of the Apollo Quartet, formed in 1985. Like any quartet not content to perform arrangements alone, commissioning new work lies at the centre of LSQ’s philosophy. *Flux*, originally planned as its debut album, but now appearing at a later juncture, is devoted to music either composed for LSQ or composers with whom they particularly identify. Like all saxophone quartets, LSQ have an individual performance style. The music on this disc reflects their attempt to build a repertoire that is both coherent in terms of the group and which will be accessible, without compromise. It includes the work of young composers

who are their contemporaries, working in London, where they are now based, and Cardiff, where the group was originally formed, alongside more established figures who have left an impression on their playing. The work heard on this disc then reflects a genuine “flux” of styles and represents the enthusiasms and tastes of the group.

CD1

Gabriel Jackson (b.1962)

LM-7: Aquarius

Between 1968 and 1972 the United States launched a series of manned space missions under the name “Apollo” which included the first moon landing (in July 1969). *LM-7: Aquarius* was the seventh lunar module that NASA sent into space, on the Apollo 13 mission. It was launched in April 1970 and would have been the third landing on the Moon, but the Command Module developed a technical failure and the three astronauts aboard were forced to use the Lunar Module’s resources as a “lifeboat” during the return trip to Earth, only narrowly escaping with their lives. Gabriel Jackson’s work for saxophone quartet takes not only its title from the mission but also the work’s underlying structure: the piece is in eleven continuous sections, the proportions of

which are derived from the ten letters and the number of the title. Its character is unashamedly extrovert; in the composer’s words, “a show-off display piece with spot-lit solos for each player, a burst of collective virtuosity to blast them into orbit and beyond, eventually reaching a much stiller, distant place”.

LM-7: Aquarius was commissioned by the Lunar Saxophone Quartet, and first performed by the quartet in St Mary’s Episcopal Cathedral, Edinburgh, in August 2006. Published by Oxford University Press.

About the Composer

Gabriel Jackson has gained a reputation as one of the most resourceful and inventive of British composers, with an output whose technical finish, elegance and refinement command particular attention. In the last decade he has been

noted for his choral music and, in January 2010, was appointed as the BBC Singers’ Associate Composer; a development that can doubtless be traced back to his youth when he served as a chorister at Canterbury Cathedral. Gabriel Jackson was born in Bermuda, and studied composition at the Royal College of Music with Richard Blackford and John Lambert. His music has been widely heard both in Britain and abroad and is now being recorded with increasing frequency on labels such as Hyperion, Delphian, NMC, Telarc, Linn and Signum. In addition he also has a strong involvement with the visual arts with compositions that have taken work by artists Richard Long, Ian Hamilton Finlay and Robert Mapplethorpe as its starting point.

www.myspace.com/gabrieljackson

Ashley John Long (b.1986)

Flux

Flux is structured in the following manner: two outer sections of mainly static material framing a middle section of more rapid writing. The two outer sections were formulated using calculations to determine the frequency of Ion Flux; the photon opening angle of an individual electron as a function of the device critical energy convolved with the electron beam divergence. The resultant pitches were calculated by taking readings of photon energy at certain points on the graph, and then their frequencies calculated and converted into pitches within the nearest quartertone.

The resultant pitch sequence is heard in their entirety during the opening and then subjected to manipulation at certain points

throughout the work and the resultant harmonies also produce various states of frequency oscillation which are another primary concern of the work. The work also uses various serial techniques but it is the mathematical principle that was the chief aspect involved in the compositional process. *Composer's note*

Flux was written for and premiered by the Lunar Saxophone Quartet at the Royal Welsh College of Music & Drama, Cardiff, in November 2006. Published by Staunch Music.

About the Composer

Ashley John Long has carved a niche as a composer of innovative scores for improvisers that balance fine detail with freedom and flexibility. He is also rapidly emerging as one of the most virtuosic double bassists in the U.K, specialising in contemporary repertoire, creating innovative performance techniques and performing as a soloist throughout Europe. He was born in South Wales, and studied double bass at the Royal Welsh College of Music & Drama, Cardiff. As a composer, his recent commissions include works for the Lunar Saxophone Quartet, percussion soloist Dave Danford as well as a big band work for Welsh harpist Catrin Finch. Leading jazz orchestras the world over have performed his jazz works and they have also received broadcasts on radio and television.

www.myspace.com/ashleyjohnlong

Lucy Pankhurst (b.1981)

Diaphanousphere

Diaphanousphere is so named to illustrate the delicate transparency of the work and its ultimate recapitulation. The music is essentially abstract, but is indicative of snowfall; gentle and restless, where fragmented melodies are passed between each member of the quartet and piano. There is a 'festive' theme introduced in the second section, which provides a stark contrast to the darker opening. The piece aims to create a very elegant sound world, in which the saxophones and piano have a constantly changing relationship. *Composer's note*
Diaphanousphere was written for and premiered by the Lunar Saxophone Quartet and Helen Mills (piano) at Wesley's Chapel, London, in February 2007. Published by Staunch Music.

About the Composer

Brass bands and the brass tradition are central to Liverpool-born Lucy Pankhurst who came to music playing tenor horn in Warrington and Cheshire before continuing her studies at the Royal Northern College of Music. Composition came later, but once embarked upon an M Mus with Adam Gorb, she embraced every opportunity to develop her own technique and personal voice. Her recent works for brass, including *Wired* (2009) have established her as one of the strongest and most individual new voices to emerge in the genre of works for brass, which she has described as an "endangered species". In common with many composers of her generation, her influences are diverse: folk music is important, as are composers as diverse as Vaughan Williams and Ligeti, through to Stevie Wonder, Radiohead, Muse and E.L.O. – www.lucypankhurst.com

Keith Tippett (b.1947)*Five Short Pieces + Four Whispers for Archie's Chair*

Five Short Pieces + Four Whispers for Archie's Chair were composed during the winter of 2003–04 for the Apollo Saxophone Quartet who gave the premiere at the Brighton Festival on 7 May 2004. Lasting no more than two or three minutes each, each piece takes as a title an occupation or craft of the kind that might have been found in late medieval society. The first (*The Archer*) alternates key clicks with unison passages that gradually move into the foreground. Flickering arpeggios and a sturdy bass dominate the second (*The Blacksmith*), evoking briefly the flames of the Blacksmith's fire and thud of his hammer. The spacious firmament can be felt in the slow solemn tread of the third movement (*The Starwatcher*) whilst in *The Swordsman*, the tricky rhythmic

unison mirrors the cut and thrust of the art of fencing. Finally, a chorale-like final piece, placed in the richest registers of the saxophones, reflects the gravitas of *The Pastor*.

Appended to the *Five Short Pieces* is a sixth: *Four Whispers for Archie's Chair*. Archie and Rene were neighbours. Archie was dying of Parkinson's disease and Keith and Julie lent him a chair with a bowed back for support. Thereafter Keith, Julie and their children referred to the chair as "Archie's Chair". Lasting just a couple of minutes and demonstrating an almost Skempton-like simplicity, *Four Whispers for Archie's Chair* is a small tribute or remembrance of that chair and its owner. It consists of four gentle refrains for the soprano saxophone over an undulating accompaniment. Published by Oriana Publications.

About the Composer

Keith Tippett has been at the forefront of contemporary European jazz and new music for over forty years. Amongst the multiplicity of roles he undertakes are those of pianist, composer, bandleader, band member and musical educator. His work ranges from unique free improvisation as a solo pianist and with duos and small groups such as the quartet Mujician, to compositions for, and performances with, contemporary classical groups (including the Composers' Ensemble, Kokoro and the Kreutzer and Elysian String Quartets). During this career he has led three major bands; Centipede, The Ark and most recently, Tapestry. Keith is also a sideman in the Dedication Orchestra. He is co-director of the Dartington International Summer School jazz course and holds fellowships at both Dartington College of Arts and the Royal Welsh College of Music & Drama, Cardiff.

Graham Fitkin (b.1963)*VENT*

VENT was originally composed in the autumn of 1994 for four clarinets (two B flat clarinets and two bass clarinets). The version heard on this disc is a transcription for saxophone quartet made by the composer. The score was commissioned by No Strings Attached early in 1995, with funds provided by South East Arts.

The idea of writing for a family of instruments with a common tone quality was an important factor behind the music; a concept that still remains central in this transcription for the family of four saxophones. The composer has written: "the timbral quality of four clarinets together was a factor I constantly kept in mind during composition – the homogenous

mellow wood sound in the low chalumeau register, the piercing nature of the high notes and the ability to move seamlessly through the whole range.

A number of ideas stemmed from this given – first I wished to explore arpeggio figures (something I had never done before) both in a controlled ‘bubbling’ kind of way and in a broad-brush fanfare sense. Out of this I began to use harmonic systems based on fourths, thirds and modes in quick succession or simultaneously so that for short stretches of the piece a harmonic instability might occur.

Finally I wished to pit sudden bursts of pent-up energy alongside carefully constructed passages thereby highlighting the exorcising nature of the music to which the title might refer”.

About the Composer

Graham Fitkin was born in Cornwall in 1963, studied at Nottingham University with Peter Nelson and Nigel Osborne and in the Netherlands with Louis Andriessen. His work includes music for dance, film and digital media through to orchestral and chamber music. A pianist himself, much of Fitkin’s early music was composed for keyboards and for groups such as Piano Circus and for the Graham Fitkin Group, which he formed in 1996. During the same period he was also Composer in Residence with the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra (1994–96). More recently he has composed *Still Warm*, for the Eden Project (2006), *Sinew*, for the Fibonacci Sequence (2009) and a BBC commission, *PK*, for the BBC Proms (2010). His influences range from Stravinsky and Webern through to Keith Jarrett and Miles Davies to the Smiths and Pet Shop Boys. – www.fitkin.com

Eric Schwartz (b.1976)

4 Chair Legs

In New York City, one of my freelance gigs is that of a modern dance accompanist. As such, I spend a lot of time improvising at the piano, and working with dancers. When the Lunar Saxophone Quartet asked me to compose this work, I stumbled upon the idea of creating a very modern version of the historic dance suite. Each movement started off from the idea of a classic dance form: The Waltz, The Tango, The Tarantella, and The Polka. From those starting points I simply let my imagination run free, abstracting and reconceiving these dances in wholly new ways. In doing so, my mind naturally wandered to a favourite Huxley quote from *The Doors of Perception* about seeing old things in entirely new ways; hence the title. Anyhow, as with many of my works, more important than anything

else this piece is about having a raucous good time while dancing the night away. Enjoy. Composer’s note

4 Chair Legs was written for and premiered by the Lunar Saxophone Quartet and Helen Mills (piano) at Wesley’s Chapel, London, in February 2007. Published by Staunch Music.

About the Composer

Eric Schwartz was born in New Jersey, studied composition at Cleveland Institute of Music and, later, at New York University where he also taught. An important aspect of his music is its ability to bring together a synthesis of archetypes and genres or, in the composer’s own words, “genre-bending projects”, that might, typically bring together 80s glam rock and Schoenberg. He was appointed Resident Composer for the Los Angeles based Tonoi contemporary music ensemble’s 2007-08 season and his

debut CD, *24 Ways of Looking at a Piano*, was named one of the top classical CDs of 2005 by *All Music Guide*. He has recently taken a position at the University of North Carolina School for the Arts, where he now works full time with dancers.

www.myspace.com/ericjschwartz

James Williamson (b. 1984)
In Memoriam

I wanted to create a piece for saxophone quartet that endured a sound world that was quite different from other works that I have heard, such as works that flourish with melodies and bestow a platform for the virtuosity of the instruments. Instead, *In Memoriam* is a very slow piece and built upon the idea of a very gradual and subtle unwinding of harmonies as it progresses. I also wanted to experiment with using overtones, as I knew they could be effective within the environment I wanted to set up. The beginning and end of the piece demonstrates this timbral effect – I have written G (tenor) against Ab (alto), which creates a warm panorama of overtones that beat against each other. These attributes perhaps explore the virtuosity

of the players in the way of stamina, subtlety and the way the instruments can melt together and sometimes become one.

Overall, the techniques used were to create a piece that is meditative and forms a kind of expressive staticism to aid relief of a contemplative wilderness that one can endure with the loss of someone very close to you.

The piece was written in the memory of my father, Leslie Williamson. Composer's note

In Memoriam was written for the Lunar Saxophone Quartet and premiered at The Warehouse, London, on 18 December 2007 where it won first prize in the LSQ New Music Award 2007. Published by Staunch Music.

About the Composer

James Williamson was born in Selby, North Yorkshire and his initial studies in composition were pursued in his locality: first at the Leeds School of Music and later at the University of Huddersfield under Patrick Stanford. Later studies were undertaken with Philip Cashian at the Royal Academy of Music, London. He also works as a trumpeter with the Powder Jazz Trio. His interests and influences range from Miles Davies, Bill Evans and John Coltrane through to David Bowie, Dream Evil, John Cage and J S Bach.

www.myspace.com/jam_williamson

Michael Nyman (b.1944)

(arr. Joel Garthwaite)

De L'hotel de la ville a la Concorde (from La Traversée de Paris)

Composed to mark the 200th anniversary of the French Revolution in 1789, *De L'hotel de la ville a la Concorde* (From City Hall to the Concorde) forms part of *La Traversée de Paris* (The Crossing of Paris), an album consisting of seventeen pieces. Each refers to a specific or generic location, historical incident, or cultural development in Paris since the time of the Revolution, charting the city's rich and often violent history from 1789 to 1989. The work was composed for an audio-visual exhibition of the same name that took place at the Grande Arche de la Défense from July to December 1989 to celebrate the bicentennial of the French Revolution. *De L'hotel de la ville a la Concorde* is the thirteenth section and

refers to the Place de la Concorde, the largest square in Paris situated between the Tuileries and the Champs-Élysées. In 1792, during the French revolution, it was called Place de la Révolution and a guillotine was set up. In the two years that followed 1119 people were beheaded there.

The original scoring was for the Michael Nyman Band and the arrangement for saxophone quartet and piano was made for the present CD by Joel Garthwaite.

About the Composer

Michael Nyman is predominantly known for his film scores, many of which were written during his collaboration with the film-maker Peter Greenaway and include *The Draughtsman's Contract* and *Drowning by Numbers*. Much of his work draws on sources taken from early music, an influence that can be traced back to

his student days at the Royal Academy of Music where he studied the seventeenth century baroque with the now legendary Thurston Dart. Nyman is on record as stating that the core of his mature style emerged from playing Mozart's "Catalogue" aria (*Don Giovanni*) on the piano in the style of Jerry Lee Lewis which, "dictated the dynamic, articulation and texture of everything I've subsequently done." During the 1970s, Nyman was particularly associated with the English Experimental School and published his now classic text, *Experimental Music – Cage and Beyond* (1974). He subsequently formed the Michael Nyman Band with which he still tours as a pianist.

www.michaelnyman.com



Credits

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LUNAR
SAXOPHONE
QUARTET

At the centre of the Lunar Saxophone Quartet's philosophy is the relationship between performer and composer: it's an interaction that feeds and nourishes any healthy and vibrant musical culture. Already, since their formation in 2002, some of the UK's most prominent composers including Gabriel Jackson, John Metcalf and Hilary Tann have written dozens of new works for the group. Performances have spanned a wide range of occasions, from Bryn Terfel's *Faenol Festival* and the *Welsh Proms* to live broadcasts on BBC TV and Radio. Other recordings include their critically acclaimed album *Catching Sunlight* (Edition Records 2008) and *These Visions* (Signum Records 2010). For further information please visit www.lunarsax.co.uk