

Quiet Hearts

Music for Saxophone

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Gilda Lyons



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Gail B. Levinsky, saxophone



Gail B. Levinsky, saxophone – all tracks

A native of Western Massachusetts, Dr. Gail B. Levinsky serves on the faculty of Susquehanna University. Her performance credits include presentations both nationally and internationally such as the World Saxophone Congress, Navy Band International Saxophone Symposium, North American Saxophone Alliance, and Mississippi Festival of Women Composers. She is active in supporting new solo and chamber works for the saxophone and has presented educational clinics at state, national, and international symposiums. Dr.

Levinsky's publications are varied and include the saxophone chapters in "Teaching Woodwinds" (Mountain Peak Music), a revised edition of Rosemary Lang's "Beginning Studies in the Altissimo Range," and a saxophone ensemble arrangement of Victoria's "O Vos Omnes." Levinsky earned her master's and doctoral degrees from Northwestern University under the tutelage of Dr. Fred Hemke. During the summer months, she serves as artistic director of the Frederick L. Hemke Saxophone Institute and is on the faculty of the New England Music Camp (Sidney, ME).

Dr. Levinsky plays exclusively on Selmer Paris saxophones and Vandoren mouthpieces, reeds, and ligatures.

Quiet Hearts: Music for Saxophone is a musical collage featuring the artistry of women and non-binary composers and performers. The compositions included were chosen for their historical and artistic value, while further trying – in a small way – to showcase in a single recording diversity in the music composition sphere. Each composition featured is uniquely powerful, meditative, and thought-provoking. As such, it is my hope for the listener to move beyond the digital performance and the beauty of the classical saxophone sonority and to reflect, explore, ponder, imagine, and discover this music intimately.

Quiet Hearts: A Kaddish for Alto Saxophone – Marilyn Shrude

In the Jewish religion, the Kaddish is recited at every traditional service. The Mourner's Kaddish, the most well-known of several variations, never uses the words death nor dying within verses. Instead, it asks the mourners, even in their sadness, to acknowledge God's greatness and for God to bring peace to the world. Likewise, each time chanted it is not only a moment to affirm the prayer itself, but to remember the loss and to reflect on the memories, the lessons learned, and the love. Shrude's composition unfolds gently, plays upon some of the more idiomatic characteristics of Jewish music, and is meant to be prayerful, thoughtful, and reflective. It was premiered at the Mississippi Festival of Women Composers in 2017.

Quiet Hearts: A Kaddish is dedicated to my parents, Roslyn and Herbert Levinsky.

Marilyn Shrude, (b. 1946) is a Distinguished Artist Professor of Music, currently teaching composition at Bowling Green State University and coordinating the doctoral program in contemporary music.

Active as a pianist, teacher, composer, and promoter of new music she served as founder and director of the MidAmerican Center for Contemporary Music. She is the winner of a Kennedy Center Friedheim Award (third place, 1984), a recipient of an American Academy of Arts and Letters Lifetime Achievement Award, and a Guggenheim Fellowship. Her music has been described as both powerful and fragile at the same time, creating enormous color and a sense of spirituality.

Website: marilynshrude.com

Chant Lyrique, Op 69 for Alto Saxophone and Piano - Fernande Breilh Decruck

Completed in 1932, *Chant Lyrique, Op 69*, highlights milestones for Fernande Breilh Decruck and within our saxophone history: a composition written by a woman composer that was entered into France's Garde Républicaine Band repertoire and subsequently used for many years as an audition piece for this same ensemble, a recognition that cannot be over-emphasized as important firsts. During this period of Decruck's compositional output, she wrote a total of 6 chant lyriques, three that survived and 3 that have been lost, including a later version orchestrated by Decruck for famed French saxophonist, Marcel Mule. *Chant Lyrique, Op 69*, begins with a soulful recitative introduced by the piano which is passed to the saxophone line. The middle section begins tumultuously with the piano creating a sense of excitement, culminating in several cadenza-like moments. The ending much like the beginning is reflective and thoughtful.

A prize-winning pianist, organist, and composer, *Fernande Breilh Decruck* (1896-1954) compiled a compositional catalog of 250 works, more than forty of which were written for saxophone, including her most notable *Sonata in C-Sharp for Alto Saxophone & Piano* (1943). Decruck was married to multi-instrumentalist, composer, and publisher Maurice Decruck, whose own fame was highlighted as the first saxophonist for the New York Philharmonic. Sadly, Decruck's compositional gifts were hidden and credited as works written or co-written by her husband. The fear was compositions written by a woman would not be performed or profitable. Only in the 1980s did her saxophone works truly come to light.

Women to Vote Together for Change for Alto Saxophone and Fixed Media - Erin Graham

Women to Vote Together for Change is a powerful work reminding us that the 100th-anniversary observance of universal women's suffrage was neither the anniversary of universal women's suffrage nor a resounding victory for social equity and political empowerment as it is often portrayed. Graham's composition begins with the reading of Stalina Villarreal's poem, which is then manipulated and intertwined with the saxophone voice and other created computer-generated sounds throughout the work. The saxophone line is continuous and provides both repetitive and flowing rhythmic gestures coupled with an almost march-like pattern aligned to the motivic text phrase "Ain't, I a Woman." "Women to Vote Together for Change" was premiered at Susquehanna University in 2020.

Erin Graham, (b. 1996) is a composer of contemporary music and an active percussionist. They seek to explore concepts of visceral energy, unconventional forms of repetition, and elements of humor by incorporating abstractions of familiar rhythmic idioms into their music. Their prizes include Rice University's Paul and Christiane Cooper Prize (2019), ASCAP Morton Gould Young Composer Award (2015), and Eastman School of Music's Louis Lane Prize and a finalist in the BMI Student Composer Awards. Graham is a PhD student in Composition at UC San Diego, and in 2021, a composition fellow at the New Jersey Symphony Orchestra's Edward T. Cone Composition Institute, where they worked with Steven Mackey and Ludovic Morlot.

Website: erinegraham.com

A Justice for All for Oboe/English horn, Alto Saxophone, and Piano - Stephanie Berg

No project celebrating women could take place without remembering Supreme Court Justice, Ruth Bader Ginsburg. Her impact both in support and dissent on women's rights, anti-discrimination, fair pay, and much more will certainly have a prodigious effect on American jurisprudence for years to come. Ginsburg's steadfast and methodical approach to enacting change guided her unwavering commitment for a more equitable society. Written in three movements, Berg conveys in her score that "Vision" is bright, aspirational, yet strong and well-grounded. "Diligence" is seeking, contemplating, and ever evolving. The movement ends abruptly, symbolizing how the pursuit of justice is ongoing. "Legacy" opens sweetly; its sentimental tone takes a moment to reflect on the magnitude of Justice Ginsburg's life. The music that follows is warm, reassuring, and perhaps slightly pained, as her loss is deeply felt even as many seek to take up her mantle. The theme from the first movement returns in its strongest form, heralding the triumphant ending, that though she no longer walks among us, her vision will hopefully still guide us. *A Justice for All* was commissioned and premiered by the Topaz Trio.

Stephanie Berg, (b. 1966) heralded as a "promising new compositional voice," has received performances from ensembles including the St. Louis Symphony, Rochester Philharmonic, Symphony Tacoma, Arkansas Symphony, Alarm Will Sound, and numerous collegiate ensembles. She has received commissions from the Arkansas Symphony, St. Louis Civic Orchestra, Quincy Symphony, and many chamber groups across the region. She is the 2013 winner of the Missouri Composers Orchestra Project, a 2012 resident composer in the Mizzou International Composers Festival, a national finalist in the 2011 MTNA competition, and the 2009 Sinquefield Composition Prize recipient.

Website: stephanieberg.com

komorebi: tree escape light for solo alto saxophone - Miho Sasaki

Commissioned in 2018, *komorebi* in Japanese translates to "sunshine filtering the leaves" in English. It represents the beauty of nature in the forest where you see the contrast between light and dark. *Komorebi* changes its shape and pattern throughout the day by clouds, wind, birds, and animals; sometimes it stays still. Written in three movements, "Filter," "Earth Bed," and "Scatter," each at times offers a sense of peace and tranquility and everchanging images of nature's wonder. *komorebi* was premiered at Bowling Green State University in 2019.

A native of Japan, *Miho Sasaki* has served as a guest composer across the US and abroad, including in Japan, South America, and Europe. She has collaborated as a composer/pianist with many organizations including *Tokyo to New York*, Aichi University of the Arts, Manhattan Contemporary Chamber Ensemble, San Francisco Conservatory of Music, Indianapolis Women's Chorus and the RAM Queens NY New Music Festival. She has received the CRAF fellowship from the Arts Council of Indianapolis and various grants. Her music is published by *Colla Voce* and *Editions Musica Ferrum* (UK). "Sacrosanct" was commercially recorded by the Brno Philharmonic Orchestra and released on Ablaze Records (2023).

Website: saskimusic.com/2.html

Lullaby for Alto Saxophone and Piano - Lori Laitman

Lullaby was composed in 1996 for saxophonist Gary Louie and pianist Kirsten Taylor, before the birth of their first child. The saxophone's lilting melody floats above the lush harmonies of the piano.

Described by *Fanfare Magazine* as “one of the most talented and intriguing of living composers,” Lori Laitman has composed operas, choral works, and hundreds of songs setting texts by classical and contemporary poets, including those who perished in the Holocaust. Laitman's music is praised for its uniqueness, craft and beauty: “unmistakable sense of identity...masterful skill” (*Opera News*); “artistry of the highest order” (*Textura.org*); “gripping and thought-provoking” (*American Record Guide*). She's received commissions from the BBC, The Royal Philharmonic Society, Opera America, Lyric Opera of Kansas City, Opera Colorado, Seattle Opera, Grant Park Music Festival, Music of Remembrance, Baltimore Symphony Orchestra and others. Her discography is extensive with releases on Naxos, Albany, Acis, and more. A magna cum laude Yale College graduate, Laitman received her MM from Yale School of Music.

Website: <http://artsongs.com>

hush for solo alto saxophone - Gilda Lyons

This composition is fueled by the composer's “need to explore, unpack, and reexamine the ways a voice can be informed by received gendered language over the course of a lifetime.” Although specific phrases used are meaningful to the composer and the work's commissioner Carrie Koffman, I like to say these phrases are all taken from the “girl's handbook,” e.g., “You're pretty when you smile!” and phrases most young women have experienced growing up. In this exaggerated moment of contradictory, unfair expectations and pressures placed on women, Lyons' composition offers insight into how significantly the rights and pressures of women today have drifted backward. “hush” was premiered in 2018 by Carrie Koffman, Professor of Saxophone, Hartt School of Music.

Gilda Lyons, composer, vocalist, and visual artist, combines elements of Renaissance, neo-baroque, spectral, folk, agitprop, music theater, and extended vocalism to create works of uncompromising emotional honesty and melodic beauty. Her music—described as “hair-raising, yet elegant” (*Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*), “like nothing you've ever heard before” (*NATS Journal of Singing*), and “masterly” (*Pittsburgh Tribune-Review*)—is available on the Clarion, GPR, Naxos, New Dynamic, New Focus, Roven, and Yarlung labels. She serves as Co-Chair of Composition at Wintergreen Music Academy; Chair of Composition at The Hartt School; Executive Director of the Richard P. Garmany Chamber Music Series; and on the Board of Advisors of Composers Now, Steven R. Gerber Trust, and Sparks & Wiry Cries. Her music is published by Schott, E.C. Schirmer, and Burning Sled Media.

Website: www.gildalyons.com



Lorraine Duso Kitts, Oboe/English horn - tracks 04-06

Serving as a Professor of Double Reeds at the University of Central Arkansas, Dr. Duso Kitts plays oboe with the Arkansas Symphony and principal oboe with the Conway Symphony (AR). She has premiered works by Steinmetz, Theofanidis, Quayle, Berg, and Dickinson with the DDG Trio (Duck, Duck, Goose) and is an active solo and chamber artist. She received her Bachelor of Music in Oboe from Indiana University, her Master of Music degree in English horn from Manhattan School of Music and her Doctor of Musical Arts degree in Oboe from the University of Michigan.



Jackie Edwards-Henry, piano - tracks 04-06

Jackie Edwards-Henry, PhD is Professor Emeritus of Music at Mississippi State University. Dr. Edwards Henry performs regularly as a collaborative musician and soloist on piano and harpsichord, including performances at the Prague Conservatory, the Royal Welsh College of Music, Arts and Drama, Cardiff, Wales, Cité de la Musique et de la Danse, Strasbourg, France, and New York University-Abu Dhabi. She also remains active as a collaborative pianist, harpsichordist, church musician, group piano specialist, and teacher of adults. Active in MTNA, at present she chairs the Committee on Teaching Adults for NCKP.



Jaime Namminga, piano - tracks 02, 10

Jaime Namminga is an Assistant Professor of Music and coordinator of collaborative piano at Susquehanna University. Namminga performs regularly in recital with vocalists and instrumentalists and is in demand as a choral pianist and musical theatre vocal coach and piano conductor. Namminga holds degrees from the University of Sioux Falls, the University of North Carolina School of the Arts, and Arizona State University.

Acknowledgments:

Quiet Hearts - Music for Saxophone is dedicated to the creative spirits of the extraordinary musicians showcased in this recording all of whom have been immensely supportive of my artistic vision and in sharing their compositions and talents.

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