

## American Jazz Concertos

### 1 Rhapsody in Blue (1924) [16:35]

George Gershwin  
original jazz orchestra version  
D.D. Jackson *piano*  
Robert Spring *clarinet*

### 2 Concerto for Clarinet (1948) [16:09]

Aaron Copland  
Robert Spring *clarinet*

### 3 Rahsaan and Stuff (2001) [19:42]

Oliver Lake  
World Saxophone Quartet  
[ Oliver Lake, David Murray,  
Hamiet Bluiett, Bruce Williams ]

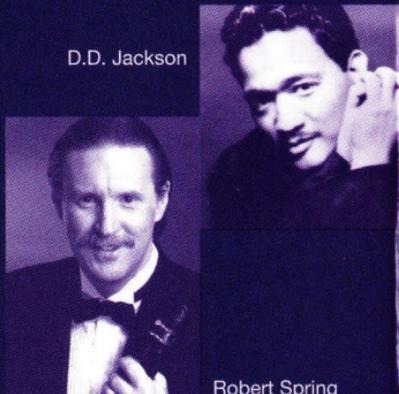
## credits

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Producers: Timothy Russell and Samuel Pilafian  
Recording Engineer: Clarke Rigsby  
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Program Notes: Steven Ledbetter  
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World Saxophone Quartet



D.D. Jackson

Robert Spring

## WORKS BY

AARON COPLAND OLIVER LAKE  
AND GEORGE GERSHWIN

## American Jazz Concertos

■ Including Rhapsody in Blue

FEATURING ARTISTS  
WORLD SAXOPHONE QUARTET  
D.D. JACKSON ROBERT SPRING

## ProMusica Chamber Orchestra

music director/conductor Timothy Russell  
artists D.D. Jackson ■ Robert Spring ■ World Saxophone Quartet

## Rhapsody in Blue

GEORGE GERSHWIN (1898-1937)

A perpetual debate of the 1920s revolved around the question of whether jazz was good music – or even music at all! Most established musicians, with their European training, were utterly blind to the merits or possibilities of jazz, and their views were certainly tainted by racism, conscious or subliminal. The man most responsible for making jazz respectable to white audiences was Paul Whiteman, who was not so much a dedicated jazzman himself as a musician who wanted to use whatever was new in the world of popular music. His encouragement of "symphonic jazz" produced the first concert success by George Gershwin, *Rhapsody in Blue*. And that success in turn began to set Gershwin thinking of working in larger forms and led to such works as the *Concerto in F*, *An American in Paris*, and *Porgy and Bess*.

Whiteman planned a concert for New York's Aeolian Hall to celebrate the *rapprochement* between symphonic music and jazz. Gershwin had vaguely agreed to write a piece for it, but no date had been set. Suddenly on January 3, 1924, George was playing pool with Buddy DeSylva (of the songwriting team DeSylva, Brown and Henderson) while his brother Ira was reading the *Herald Tribune* when he suddenly came across an announcement of Whiteman's concert, "An Experiment in Modern Music," to be given in New York's Aeolian Hall on February 12.

Whiteman's concert would involve a committee of judges whose task it would be to pass on the question, "What is American music?" (Ironically – but typically for the time – not one of the judges was American! They included pianist-composer Sergei Rachmaninoff, violinists Jascha Heifetz and Efrem Zimbalist, and singer Alma Gluck.) Time was so short that Gershwin accepted Whiteman's offer to have his arranger, Ferde Grofé, orchestrate the piece for Whiteman's ensemble. Gershwin left a number of the solo piano spots blank, to be improvised in the performance (Whiteman's score simply said, "wait for nod.")

At the time, Gershwin was busily putting the finishing touches on a show called *Sweet Little Devil*, due to open on January 21. What became the *Rhapsody in Blue* took shape in his mind as he was traveling to Boston for the show's out-of-town tryout.

It was on the train, with its steely rhythms, its rattle-ty bang that is often so stimulating to a composer...

And there I suddenly heard – and even saw on paper – the complete construction of the rhapsody, from beginning to end. No new themes came to me, but I worked on the thematic material already in mind and tried to conceive the composition as a whole. I heard it as a sort of musical kaleidoscope of America – of our vast melting pot, of our unduplicated national pep, of our blues, our metropolitan madness. By the time I reached Boston, I had a definite plot of the piece, as distinguished from its actual substance.

Later, at a party in New York, Gershwin was improvising on the piano – as he invariably did at social gatherings – when, as he later said, "I heard myself playing a theme that must have been haunting me inside, seeking outlet. [It] oozed out of my fingers." Ira, who was becoming not only Gershwin's closest collaborator on the lyrics, but also his best listener, encouraged him to use this theme as the lyrical climax of the work, a real contrast to the jazziness of the opening. The famous opening clarinet glissando actually predated the rest of the composition. Whiteman's clarinetist Ross Gorman had developed the trick of playing a two-octave upward glissando, something that had been believed impossible before. Gershwin had already been captivated by this sound, which was familiar from the Jewish klezmer tradition. He had attempted to notate it in one of his sketchbooks, and early on he thought of it as the perfect opening for the work.

Gershwin's piece is a free-form rhapsody, playing with the ambivalence between major and minor, with choices of notes called "blue" from their use in the traditional singing style of the blues. The prevalence of "blue" notes and the rhapsodic ground plan of the work suggested to Ira the title that George gratefully accepted: *Rhapsody in Blue*, the first word redolent of the European tradition, the remainder instantly evocative of modern America.

Gershwin began the manuscript on January 7 and finished it about the 25th; Grofé orchestrated directly from the manuscript and finished on February 4. At the concert, eight days later, the glittering audience included just about every musical dignitary in New York that week. But it was overlong, and as it dragged on and on, it looked as if it would be a flop. *Rhapsody in Blue* came next-to-last on the program, and the audience was restive. Gershwin strode out to the piano and nodded to Whiteman; the performance began with Ross Gorman's clarinet "wail." The effect was electrifying. This was something really new, and everyone recognized it at once. The audience response at the end was rapturous. *Rhapsody in Blue* has remained the most frequently performed of comparable contemporary scores, despite persistent criticisms of its loose structure. When critic Irving Kolodin asked Gershwin a decade later whether he didn't think he could improve it, he replied, "I don't know; people seemed to like it the way it was, so I left it that way."

## Clarinet Concerto

AARON COPLAND (1900-1990)

Early in his career Copland had adopted some of the rhythmic elements and characteristic sonorities of jazz in order to sound more "American." In such works as *Music for the Theatre* of 1925 he translated the "feel" of the popular stage of the day – vaudeville and charming "book" musicals with great songs and brainless plots – into a tasty concert piece that challenged the symphony orchestras called upon to play it, because almost all of the musicians were Europeans of the old school with no feeling for the syncopations of American popular music.

During the '30s, Copland found other ways of creating an American sound, mostly through the employment of folk songs and fragments in his popular ballets *Billy the Kid*, *Rodeo*, and *Appalachian Spring*. But he returned quite naturally to his jazzy licks when writing a piece for a great jazz musician, clarinetist Benny Goodman. After making his mark as a jazzman, Goodman began to take an interest in classical music as well, playing the Mozart concerto and other standard repertory works for his instrument. When he decided to commission a new piece, he wanted the best composer available; various musical advisors were unanimous in suggesting Copland.

Copland, an inveterate traveler, began the score in Rio de Janeiro late in 1947, but he finished it while teaching at Tanglewood during the summer of 1948. Goodman found it a challenge, especially in the lively syncopated parts, which move in ways rather different from the jazz he was accustomed to. But his loving performance (and the superb recording he made) quickly established the concerto as a popular modern favorite.

Structurally, the work is simplicity itself: two movements (slow, then fast) linked by a solo cadenza. The first movement is graceful and songful, cast in broad but gentle musical arches. The cadenza introduces some jazzy elements that are then fully exploited in the faster second movement.

## Rahsaan and Stuff

## OLIVER LAKE (b. 1942)

A quarter century ago, Oliver Lake was one of the founders of the World Saxophone Quartet, which was created almost by accident when four leading jazz saxophonists (David Murray, Julius Hemphill, Hamiet Bluiett, and Lake) were invited to do a show at New Orleans Southern University. They enjoyed the experience and decided to continue playing together. By the mid 1980s they were established as one of the premier small jazz combos around, and one of the most unusual. For listeners who are relatively unfamiliar with jazz, it is worth pointing out that one of the features of their work is that they improvise jointly (as opposed to the traditional technique of allowing one soloist at a time to step forward with an improvisation on the theme under discussion); this calls for extraordinary musicianship and sensitivity to the entire musical experience. The Quartet has recorded widely, and their repertoire includes their versions of familiar jazz tunes as well as a great deal of entirely original music, some of which was composed by Oliver Lake.

Lake was born in Marianna, Arkansas, in 1942 and took his bachelor's degree in music education from Lincoln University in Jefferson City, Missouri. But, as he says, echoing the views of probably every performing musician and certainly every composer, "A lot of my learning took place outside of that institution." He has been singularly active as a composer, writing not only for the quartet, but also for many other chamber and orchestral combinations. Only once previously has he written a work for the World Saxophone Quartet with orchestra; that was in 1988 for the Brooklyn Philharmonic, and the work was *Urban Art 2*. He is currently in his second year as composer-in-residence at Bloomfield College, in New Jersey, on a fellowship from Meet the Composer, New York.

In addition to being a very active composer and performer, Oliver Lake is a poet and (for lack of a better word) a performing artist of poetry. He recently performed his solo theater piece, *Matador of 1st and 1st* in New York, an hour-long combination of poetry reading and playing on saxophone and flute. One of his poems, "Separation," addresses his opposition to pigeonholing art into different styles, as if one is "better" than another. The entire text can be found on his website, [www.oliverlake.net](http://www.oliverlake.net).

As the title of Lake's new piece suggests, it is dedicated to Rahsaan Roland Kirk and Stuff Smith, two Ohio natives who were leading figures of jazz in the twentieth century. The work celebrates the fact that they were both improvisers, and is dedicated to their spirit and talent. The composer emphasizes that his piece is not in any way a pastiche of their work, and it does not use any of their riffs or musical ideas.

A work of this sort, blending jazz with the traditional concert orchestra, the two components – orchestra and saxophone quartet – play different roles. The players in the orchestra must have their parts fully conceived and written out in advance; the quartet, on the other hand, performs largely in on-the-spot improvisation, whether in its "solo" sections, or when playing with the orchestra. This means that some parts of the work remain fixed from performance to performance, while others may change considerably, depending upon the spirit and mood of the moment.

Oliver Lake points out that his new composition is not "a jazz piece per se, though there are elements of jazz in the piece." As with composers in any style or medium, he presents the work with its different moods, tempi, and sonorities to provide the variety and color that music offers us.

## ProMusica Chamber Orchestra

Timothy Russell, *Music Director*

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### Violin I

Yenn-Chwen Er  
*concertmaster*

Katie McLin  
*assistant concertmaster*

Ruth Stroud  
Pavana Baird  
James McCullough  
Rebecca Ansel

### Violin II

Robert Gillespie, *principal*  
Jonathan Swartz  
Laurel Butler  
Jane Snyder

### Viola

Mary Harris, *principal*  
Kay Slocum  
Lucy Firlie  
Heather Garner

### Cello

Marc Moskovitz, *principal*  
Cora Kuyvenhoven  
Margaret Barstow  
Benjamin Wensel

### Bass

Paul Robinson, *principal*  
Brigham Cooley

### Harp

Jeanne Norton, *principal*

### Flute

Katherine DeJongh, *principal*  
Katherine Borst Jones, *co-principal*

### Oboe

Donna Conaty, *principal*  
Melissa Stevens

### Clarinet

Robert Spring, *principal*  
Rebecca Rischin

### Bassoon

George Sakakeeny, *principal*  
Janis McKay

### Horn

Charles Waddell, *principal*  
Jocelyn Standley

### Trumpet

Thomas Battenberg, *principal*  
Alan Campbell

### Percussion

Michael LaMattina, *principal*

### Banjo

Paul Robinson

### Assisting Musicians

Tim Anderson, trombone  
Garnett Livingston, trombone  
Sam Pilafian, tuba  
Joseph Krygier, percussion  
Robert Breithaupt, percussion  
Nelson Harper, piano  
Dianne Frazer Cross, celeste  
James Hill, saxophone  
Eugene Marquis, saxophone  
Steve Genteline, saxophone

### Personnel Manager & Music Librarian

Thomas Battenberg



## Timothy Russell

**Timothy Russell** is one of America's most versatile conductors and foremost music educators. His 20 recordings, including two nominated for Grammy Awards, have been enthusiastically received by listeners and critics.

As ProMusica's co-founder and conductor for 24 seasons, Russell's achievements are remarkable and diverse. Under his leadership the orchestra continues to make significant strides in musical excellence, having earned an outstanding reputation for adventurous programming and energetic and exacting renditions of an extensive repertoire that covers more than 300 years of musical composition.

A Danforth Foundation Fellow, Russell regularly leads pre-concert talks and symposia, is involved in research and publication, and continues to be a featured speaker at music conferences and workshops. Russell has held academic appointments at The Ohio State University and the University of Rochester, including its Eastman School of Music as an Associate

Professor of Conducting and Ensembles. In the fall of 1993, he became Professor of Music and Director of Orchestras at Arizona State University, following nine seasons as Music Director and Conductor of The Naples Philharmonic in Florida.

Timothy and his wife, Jill, reside in Phoenix, Arizona, with their children, Kathryn and Geoffrey. They enjoy sports, travel and cooking.

## ProMusica Chamber Orchestra of Columbus, Ohio

**ProMusica Chamber Orchestra** inspires the hearts and stimulates the minds of people of all ages through the power of outstanding musical performances and educational programs. ProMusica presents the best of traditional chamber orchestra repertoire and strives to develop an understanding of and appreciation for contemporary American music.

The orchestra was founded in 1978 and has served as the resident orchestra of the historic Southern Theatre since 1998. ProMusica attracts exceptional musicians nationwide and benefits from the artistic direction of co-founder and music director, Timothy Russell. This combination of talents has led to ProMusica's reputation as one of the top chamber orchestras in the country.

Under Russell's direction, ProMusica has won eight national awards from the American Society of Composers, Authors, and Publishers (ASCAP) for adventurous programming, as well as awards from the Greater Columbus Arts Council and the Columbus Jewish Foundation. ProMusica is active in commissioning new works and has presented more than 80 premieres, including 30 commissions.

To ensure widespread and diverse audiences, ProMusica invites senior citizens to open rehearsals, travels to area schools for children's concerts, plans master classes with guest artists, and offers free youth concerts for underprivileged children and their families.

## World Saxophone Quartet

Oliver Lake, Julius Hemphill, David Murray and Hamiet Bluiett formed the World Saxophone Quartet in 1976. Sadly, Julius Hemphill died in 1995. The group's latest recording, *Requiem for Julius* includes John Purcell as the fourth "voice." James Hale writes "In the end, *Requiem* is more than just a simple remembrance of a former comrade-in-arms, it is a restatement of all that has made a band remarkable for almost 25 years." The group has 16 recordings to date.

Since its founding, the World Saxophone Quartet has always pushed the jazz envelope. This is not surprising considering the accomplishments of its members: Murray, Bluiett and Lake have all been at the vanguard of contemporary jazz for the past three decades. Over the next two decades, that band reached a level of popularity perhaps unprecedented by a free jazz ensemble. Its late-'80s albums of Ellington works and R&B tunes attracted an audience that otherwise might not have found its way to such an esoteric style.

Heard live, the quartet had always been, and still is, consistently exciting. All four members have developed highly individual careers as well – Murray, most of all. The durability of the group lays in the degree to which personal strengths are encouraged and exploited rather than subordinated.

## D. D. Jackson

Canadian-born, New York-based pianist/composer D.D. Jackson's new CD, *Sigame*, is an acoustic trio set. His solo piano CD ...so far was awarded the prestigious Canadian Juno Award for Best Contemporary (Instrumental) Jazz Album. Jackson was also named the 2000 Jazz Report Composer of the Year, and the 2000 Downbeat Critics Poll #1 Talent Deserving Wider Recognition for Piano.

Recent appearances for the 34-year-old Jackson include solo piano concerts in Berlin, Tel Aviv, Prague, Chicago, San Francisco, Italy and the JVC Jazzfest in Toronto; duo performances in the Yukon Territories; a duet with Hamiet Bluiett at Jazz at Lincoln Center recorded for National Public Radio broadcast; and appearances with James Carter's Electric Project in Europe, Boston and at New York's Blue Note.

Jackson received his Bachelor of Music with High Distinction in Classical Piano from Indiana University in 1989, and his Master of Music in Jazz from the Manhattan School of Music in 1991. He is also an avid internet fan and maintains his own, detailed website at [www.ddjackson.com](http://www.ddjackson.com).

## Robert Spring

Robert Spring is professor of clarinet at Arizona State University and immediate past-president of the International Clarinet Association. He has been described as "one of this country's most sensitive and talented clarinetists."

Spring's recordings include composer Joan Tower's works for clarinet, *Dragon's Tongue*, a CD of virtuoso music for clarinet and wind band, and *Tarantelle*, music that violinist Jascha Heifetz recorded on violin, performed on clarinet.

Spring attended the University of Michigan where he was awarded three degrees, including the Doctor of Musical Arts degree. He has performed with symphony orchestras and wind bands in the U.S., Canada, Europe, Asia and South America. He frequently serves as clinician and adjudicator and teaches on the faculties of several summer music festivals. Spring is also principal clarinet of the ProMusica Chamber Orchestra.

# American Jazz Concertos

■ Classical Jazz Greats

**American Jazz Concertos** features the award-winning ProMusica Chamber Orchestra of Columbus, Ohio and Music Director Timothy Russell in three collaborative works that meld popular jazz idioms with classical art music.

George Gershwin's beloved *Rhapsody in Blue* was written in 1924 as a jazz concerto for a formal jazz concert. D.D. Jackson, one of the world's dazzling jazz pianists, joins ProMusica in a fresh performance of the original jazz orchestra version.

Another American musical landmark is Aaron Copland's *Concerto for Clarinet*, written for Benny Goodman. Clarinet virtuoso Robert Spring "put all the Benny Goodman back into this piece, and then some... He and an equally inspired orchestra truly cooked in this performance, which brought cheers from the crowd," wrote critic, Barbara Zuck.

The CD concludes with the world premiere recording of Oliver Lake's new and intriguing creation, written for ProMusica and members of the renowned World Saxophone Quartet. Dedicated to Columbus native and saxophonist Rahsaan Roland Kirk and violinist Stuff Smith from Portsmouth, Ohio, this inventive composition bridges the modern jazz and classical music of the 21st century.

These three pieces portray a powerful American connection, as jazz meets the classics. ProMusica once again demonstrates its status as one of America's premier chamber orchestras, willing to crossover and willing to take risks. Enjoy!

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**3 Rahsaan and Stuff (2001) [19:42]**

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Total: [ 52:36 ]



RECORDS

[www.summitrecords.com](http://www.summitrecords.com)

File under: Gershwin, Copland or World Saxophone Quartet

[www.promusicacolumbus.org](http://www.promusicacolumbus.org)