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Symphony Tacoma presents

# Saxophone Fusion

Saturday, May 15, 2021 | 7:30 pm

**Sarah Ioannides**, conductor

**James Carter**, saxophone

***La création du monde, op 81a***

Milhaud

- I. Ouverture
- II. Le Chaos avant la creation
- III. La Naissance de la flore et de la faune
- IV. La Naissance de l'homme et de la femme
- V. Le printemps ou l'apaisement

*Multimedia by Brad McCombs & Sarah Ioannides*  
*Artwork from Cincinnati Museum of Art*

***Caribbean Rhapsody***

Roberto Sierra

*Multimedia by Sarah Ioannides*  
*Artwork by Andy and Nico Bueso*

***Oblivion***

Piazzolla

Video produced by Sarah Ioannides

Original performance date: April 20, 2019, Pantages Theater, Tacoma WA

PERFORMANCE SPONSORS



## ABOUT THE MUSIC

### **Darius Milhaud (1892-1974)**

#### ***La création du monde* (1922-23)**

Darius Milhaud was a key modernist French composer, conductor and educator. He studied at the Paris Conservatory where he met *Les Six* members Arthur Honegger and Germaine Tailleferre. Milhaud wrote an immense catalog of music ranging from symphonies, sonatas and suites, to film and children's music. His works are diverse in style and approach, and he was especially drawn to the sounds and styles of the Americas. Milhaud's openness to foreign influences operates outside the values of *Les Six* and truly speaks to his unique style of composing.

While on a concert tour in the U.S., Milhaud heard authentic jazz on the streets of Harlem for the first time. Inspired, he composed *La création du monde*. Originally the piece was commissioned by the Ballets Suedois for a work that portrayed the creation of the world based on African folk mythology. Its premiere in 1923 was much more of a *succès de scandale* rather than a true success. The ballet costumes worked well visually but were difficult to dance in, being too heavy and inflexible to move freely. Since then, *La création du monde* has taken its place in the concert hall as an influential and innovative masterpiece of Milhaud's.

Obviously, *La création du monde* is heavily influenced by jazz. Even in its chamber ensemble style instrumentation, the influence shines through. The use of saxophone to replace violas, the inclusion of piano, and the soloistic treatment of the instruments evoke the sound of jazz bands. The incorporation of blues notes and melodies, syncopations, riffs and ensemble textures are very stylized with neoclassical and other modernist traits. The piece blends ingenuity with freshness and variety, yet keeps a clear and logical form of writing.

### **Roberto Sierra (1953 - )**

#### ***Caribbean Rhapsody* (2010)**

Roberto Sierra is a contemporary composer who studied in Europe with György Ligeti from 1979-1982. Sierra rose to prominence in 1987 when the Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra performed his first major orchestral composition, *Júbilo*, at Carnegie Hall. His works, including *Fandangos*, have been a part of many leading orchestras' repertoire. Now a professor of composition at Cornell University,

many of Sierra's compositions draw from his proud Puerto Rican heritage. He had this to say about his inspiration for *Caribbean Rhapsody*:

"Growing up in Puerto Rico I remember watching TV and hearing at noon bands that played popular music. The sound of the saxophone was ubiquitous, thus becoming an integral part of my early musical memories. Nevertheless, the instrument did not find its way into my work until much later.

"When I first heard James Carter perform, a whole new set of possibilities opened up in my creative mind; I realized that his extraordinary gifts as musician and improviser would be fertile ground for the collaboration that culminated in the writing of *Caribbean Rhapsody*. I think that what I write is expression that comes from my soul, and a reflection of my own life experiences. *Caribbean Rhapsody* is my Caribbean chronicle. First a sensual bolero, reminiscent of many tropical dances late at night, followed by the sounds of Latin jazz and salsa.

"This rhapsody not only recalls memories of tropical colors and sounds, but also exposes the pulse of life—the life that I knew growing up in Puerto Rico."

### **Astor Piazzolla (1921-1992)**

#### ***Oblivion* (1982)**

Similar to the way that the Viennese classicists elevated the minuet from a courtly dance to an artistic form, Piazzolla likewise elevated the tango from the Argentine dancehalls to the international concert hall. Using the unlikely virtuosic vehicle of the bandoneon (a kind of concertina popular in Argentina and Uruguay), Piazzolla also included instruments not typical to the folkloric tango tradition. This novel instrumentation, coupled with jazz-like improvisations, gave his tango compositions a fresh sound. Dubbed *nuevo tango*, this would become the defining sound and style of his career.

Piazzolla created *Oblivion* in 1982. Featured in the 1984 Italian film 'Enrico IV' ('Henry IV'), it has been described as "haunting" and "atmospheric" and is considered to be one of his more traditional and less 'jazzy' compositions.

## ABOUT THE ARTIST



**James Carter, saxophone**  
An artist long intrigued by contrasts and hybrids, James Carter resists comfortable categorization. “You have to be totally comfortable wherever,” he says. “I feel that music equals life; that’s the way my teacher always taught me. You just can’t go

through life and experience it fully with a set of blinders on. I think there’s tremendous beauty in cross-pollinations of music and influences.”

In many ways, weaving together divergent impulses is at the heart of Mr. Carter’s music. Like the late tenor sax titan Ben Webster, he’s given to furious, high velocity solos, but is just as likely to wax sentimental, using his big, bruising tone to tenderly caress a comely melody.

Born in Detroit, Mr. Carter learned to play saxophone at age 11 and was considered a

prodigy. In 1986 at the age of 17, he began touring with Wynton Marsalias. He has been prominent as a performer and recording artist on the jazz scene since the late 1980s, playing saxophones, flute and clarinets.

*Caribbean Rhapsody* is the result of a decade-long collaboration between Mr. Carter and classical composer Roberto Sierra. The 2011 recording of the piece featured Mr. Carter along with his cousin Regina Carter on violin and a string quintet. Sierra was “curious to see the combination of James and Regina improvising together and also on two different instruments—the sax, basically from the jazz tradition, and the violin, the quintessential orchestral instrument.

“What immediately struck me was that he played with total command and mastery of the instrument. James is the Paganini of the saxophone. He and the instrument are one.”

GORDON THOMAS HONEYWELL<sup>LLP</sup>

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