

# ROSE CITY TRIO

**Sarah Roberts, saxophone. Micah Bell, trumpet.  
Elena Daughtery, piano.**

## Program Notes by Jackson Harmeyer

In modern jazz, saxophone and trumpet are often the two lead instruments in smaller combos. Think of Charlie Parker and Dizzy Gillespie. Or, Parker and Miles Davis. Or, Davis and John Coltrane. Or, Branford and Wynton Marsalis. Backing these melody instruments is the rhythm section which most commonly consists of piano, bass, and drums. The pianists Bill Evans, Herbie Hancock, and Kenny Kirkland have all been frequent collaborators with the aforementioned saxophonists and trumpeters. The point is: saxophone, trumpet, and piano is a common instrumentation in jazz, but, in classical music, it is almost never heard. We should, therefore, count ourselves lucky to encounter this combination through this evening's performance by the Rose City Trio. Based in Tyler, Texas—"The Rose Capital of World"—this trio includes saxophonist Sarah Roberts, trumpeter Micah Bell, and pianist Elena Daughtery. Elen is an old friend of the Sugarmill Music Festival: she played in the first iteration of the Rosalie Piano Trio at our inaugural festival in 2016. It is great to have her back three years later, and we are thrilled that she can bring with her fresh musicians from her new life in Tyler who have not played at our festival before.

The first work the Rose City Trio performs, *Nightscapes*, is by the ensemble's trumpeter, **Micah Bell**; it is a world premiere at our festival. Bell is a freelance composer active in the Dallas-Fort Worth area where is chief arranger for the Imperial Brass, a versatile brass collective. He plays trumpet in this ensemble and also in a jazz quintet. Bell writes of *Nightscapes*, "Night means different things to different people and evokes certain emotions depending on the person. This piece is meant to convey those emotions. It runs the gamut from serene and peaceful to what could possibly be considered sadness and chaos." *Nightscapes* is the perfect way to begin our Friday evening concert which, year after year, starts in daylight but ends in darkness. Later this evening be sure to watch the shadows play on the pitched roof of the sugarmill! Next, we hear the Concerto for alto saxophone, trumpet, and string orchestra by French composer, **Jean Rivier (1896-1987)**. Rivier was one of

several notable French composers, outside of *Les Six*, who also came into their artistic maturity in the interwar years. Others include Jacques Ibert, Eugène Bozza, and the slightly younger Jean Françaix. At least in the United States, these composers all seem to be remembered primarily for their idiomatic writing for wind instruments. Like the composers of *Les Six*, their music can be considered "post-impressionist" in its renewed emphasis on formal and harmonic clarity. Rivier was a significant pedagogue, teaching composition at the Paris Conservatoire for nearly two decades from 1948 to 1966 (his successor was Olivier Messiaen), and a composer of over two hundred works. Composed in 1954, the Concerto is in three movements according to the Classical fast-slow-fast pattern; its string part is played in piano reduction.

The Chicago-based composer and conductor **James M. Stephenson (born 1969)** is, like Jean Rivier, incredibly prolific. His catalogue includes a concerto and sonata for nearly every orchestral instrument; he has also composed three symphonies and a wealth of chamber music. Rhythmic momentum and colorful scoring are essential for him as is his connection to past masters while also writing music which communicates to modern audiences. His concerto for saxophone, trumpet, and orchestra, *Cousins*, was composed in 2007 and premiered that summer at the Interlochen Center for the Arts in Michigan. It was commissioned by conductor Jung-Ho Pak to be performed by soloists Branford Marsalis, saxophone, his cousin, Rodney Marsalis, trumpet, and Interlochen's World Youth Symphony Orchestra. *Cousins*, a one-movement work, infuses its classical soundscape with jazz, especially in the saxophone part written for Branford—one of contemporary jazz's leading musicians. The saxophonist is even given the option to improvise their own cadenza. This feature, meant as a nod to the privileged place of improvisation in jazz, also harkens back to the early history of the concerto genre. The final work on this evening's program, *Afro*, is by the Cuban-born composer, saxophonist, and clarinetist, **Paquito D'Rivera (born 1957)**.

**1948).** D'Rivera is a musician who defies genre boundaries, equally celebrated for his playing of Afro-Cuban jazz as he is for his classical compositions. His classical background includes training at the Havana Conservatory of Music and participation in the Cuban National Symphony; he was also a founding member of the *Orquesta Cubana de Musica Moderna* which he directed for two years. With pianist Chucho Valdés, he was the co-founder of Irakere, a band combining jazz, rock, and classical idioms with the traditional music of Cuba. He has also played with Dizzy Gillespie, the jazz trumpeter who first popularized Afro-Cuban jazz in the United States.

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**About Jackson.** Jackson Harmeyer graduated with his Master of Music in Music History and Literature from the University of Louisville in May 2019 upon the completion of his thesis, “Liminal Aesthetics: Perspectives on Harmony and Timbre in the Music of Olivier Messiaen, Tristan Murail, and Kaija Saariaho.” He has shared this pioneering research through presentations given at the American Musicological Society South-Central Chapter’s annual meetings in Asheville, NC and Sewanee, TN and at the University of Tennessee Contemporary Music Festival in Knoxville, TN. During his studies in Louisville, he was the recipient of the Gerhard Herz Music History Scholarship and was employed at the Dwight D. Anderson Memorial Music Library where he did archival work for the unique Grawemeyer Collection which houses scores, recordings, and documentation for over five thousand entries by the world’s leading contemporary composers. Previously, Jackson graduated *summa cum laude* from the Louisiana Scholars’ College in Natchitoches, LA. Then, from 2014 to 2016, Jackson served as director of the successful chamber music series, Abendmusik Alexandria. He has remained a concert annotator and organizer, co-directing the annual Sugarmill Music Festival. The scholarly writings he has produced for this festival have even attracted the attention of the Louisiana Endowment for the Humanities. Aside from his studies, he is a composer, choral singer, and award-winning nature photographer.

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