



Akropolis Reed Quintet | Ball State University

Program Listing

Marc Mellits (b.1966) – *Splinter* (2014)

Scarlet Oak
Sugar Maple
Linden
Black Ash
Cherry
River Birch
Weeping Willow
Red Pine

Omar Thomas (b.1984) – *Moods and Attitudes* (2023)

I. Blues shuffle kerkluffle
II. Swan song, so long
III. Bebop, won't stop

- Intermission -

Willem Jeths (b.1959) – *Maktub* (2013)

George Gershwin (1898-1937) – *An American in Paris* (1928) arr. Raaf Hekkema

Program Notes

Splinter

Splinter, by Chicago-based composer Marc Mellits, is probably the most performed work of the reed quintet repertoire. Composed in 2014, Mellits delivers a work suitable for introducing the reed quintet to ears which may never have heard it before. *Splinter* is comprised of short "miniatures," each with their own personality. Combined, they each express unique emotional qualities through hocketing rhythms and colorful orchestrations. Mellits often composes for amplified acoustic instruments, including percussion, piano, and strings. Rhythmic drive and development is a major component to his music, but does not overshadow his use of elongated phrases, subtle and effective harmonic motion, and beautiful textural creations.

Moods and Attitudes

Commissioned by the Akropolis Reed Quintet with support from the National Endowment for the Arts, *Moods and Attitudes* contains three distinct movements which ask the quintet to perform acrobatic music of many styles from the mind of one of today's leading jazz composers, Omar Thomas. The invitation from Akropolis for Mr Thomas' first classical chamber work comes as the quintet continues its decade-plus journey combining classical and jazz music into unique, and often undefinable, new musical works.

The first movement is a blues shuffle with some significant contemporary alterations. The second movement is a heavily-mournful early/mid 20th century jazz ballad in the style of one of the composer's heroes, Billy Strayhorn. The closing movement appropriately chooses the bebop era for an exciting ending.

Maktub

The word "maktub" appears throughout the international best-selling book, *The Alchemist*, by Brazilian Author Paulo Coelho, and is the inspiration for Dutch composer's Willem Jeths' reed quintet composition. "Maktub" is first used in *The Alchemist* by a crystal merchant, who, when giving advice to the book's main character, Santiago, introduces to Santiago the idea of his "personal legend," or Maktub. Maktub means, "it is written," and becomes the subject of Santiago's journey throughout the book to discover his personal legend. Maktub is the concert's most meditative composition. Rather than specific images, Jeths paints a landscape in one, through-composed movement that allows the listener to fill in their own images and ideas, considering the meaning of "Maktub" and their own personal legend. *The Alchemist* asks the timeless and basic question, "are we in control of the events in our lives, or are they written by fate?" In the novel, Santiago encounters circumstances which make it plain to him that the universe is conspiring so that he can achieve his personal legend, but he also makes key choices along the way.

An American in Paris

In *An American in Paris*, Gershwin aimed to create one of his more serious works despite his natural affinity for frivolity. He consulted Ravel about this conundrum, who wisely instructed that if Gershwin was making more money than Ravel (which he was), he shouldn't change how he writes his music. He sought advice from Nadia Boulanger, the great teacher of Aaron Copland and others. She also wisely suggested to Gershwin try to be no one but Gershwin. And so, using complex motivic development which is constantly modulating and changing form, Gershwin manages to create his most accessible, but simultaneously most complex piece of music. Among the challenges Dutch saxophonist Raaf Hekkema faced in arranging the work was how to convey these ideas with only 5 instruments. Hekkema brilliantly takes a smaller color palette and combines the instruments to create more textural possibilities than the listener could ever predict. In ways, while Gershwin's orchestration maximizes the orchestra's capabilities, the listener might find Gershwin's ideas even easier to deduce in the chamber music format. The continually repeating and evolving motives make for a challenging but thrilling performance which Akropolis is delighted to bring to the stage.