

A DUO CELEBRATION OF LIFE:

SIGURD M. RASCHER (1907-2001)

MUSIC/PERFORMING ARTS

KEYWORDS: LECTURE/RECITAL

AUTHORS:

LAWRENCE GWOZDZ
PROFESSOR OF SAXOPHONE
SCHOOL OF MUSIC
UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN MISSISSIPPI
HATTIESBURG, MS 39406-5081
E-MAIL: lgwozdz1201@comcast.net
PHONE: (601) 266-6934
FAX: (601) 266-4127

JONATHAN BERGERON
INSTRUCTOR OF SAXOPHONE
SCHOOL OF MUSIC
NORTHERN ARIZONA UNIVERSITY
FLAGSTAFF, AZ 86011
E-MAIL: jonathan.bergeron@nau.edu
PHONE: office: (928) 523-3166
FAX: (928) 523-5111

Submitted to the Hawaii International Conference on Arts and Humanities
January 12 -15, 2003
Sheraton Waikiki Hotel, Honolulu Hawaii, USA

The end of an era in saxophone history came on February 25th 2001, with the death of Sigurd M. Rascher at age 93. Rascher died in his home in Shushan, New York, a small town in eastern New York. Rascher was a "classical saxophonist" who refused to accept anything less than excellence in his playing, and teaching. Even into his 80s he continued to teach workshops on occasion to his devoted followers.

In 1939 Rascher arrived in the United States to perform with the New York Philharmonic under the baton of Sr. John Barbirolli in Carnegie Hall. On November 11th, 1939, Sigurd Rascher became the first saxophone soloist for the New York Philharmonic, a feat that occurred after more than 3,500 concerts given by the orchestra. He also performed with the Boston Symphony under the baton of Serge Koussevitsky. Rascher's concerts continued in Washington, D.C., Town Hall in New York City during the Spring of 1940. Mr. Rascher's last saxophone solo performance came in 1977.

Sigurd Rascher continued to offer seminars and workshops at institutions such as the Eastman School of Music in Rochester, Union College, Yale University, Georgia State University, and the University of Southern Mississippi, and the Academy of the Arts in Ochsenhausen.

Rascher's influence on the development of the literature for the saxophone was truly international. A man with a mission, he travelled the globe for nearly fifty years as a concert soloist with orchestras, bands, as well as a recitalist. During those years – and even during retirement – he was in frequent contact with composers who were encouraged to create new works for the instrument, motivated by his artistry. His inspiration resulted in a large percentage of the best music yet composed for the instrument, thus establishing the saxophone as a viable means of serious artistic expression.

Prior to his efforts, quality music for two saxophones was virtually nonexistent. Together with his daughter and duo-partner, Carina, Rascher initiated contacts with friends who had already composed solo works for him, asking for more gems that the father-daughter team could include on their tours of Europe and America. This program is a mere representation of some of these works that do not require accompaniment of the piano or orchestra.

To reveal the influence his career had on composers during his retirement, three works – those of von Koch, Hartley, and Maros – have been included. Through this fifty minute program, the variety of styles ranging from folk-music to contemporary minimalism takes the listener for a most enjoyable ride.

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LAWRENCE GWOZDZ & JONATHAN BERGERON, Saxophonists

P R O G R A M

Invocation and Dance (1960)	Warren Benson (b. 1924)
Three Flourishes (1961) Fanfares Somber Scherzo	John David Lamb (b. 1935)
Konzertstück für zwei Altsaxophone (1933) Lebhaft Maßig langsam Lebhaft	Paul Hindemith (1895-1963)
Birthday Music for Sigurd M. Rascher (1987) Allegro vivace Andantino espressivo (Variations on <i>G lādzens blomster</i>) Molto vivace	Erland von Koch (b. 1910)
Three American Folk Hymns (arr. 1987) Spring Hill Messiah Animation	arr. Walter Hartley (b. 1927)
Festeggiamento II (1996)	Miklós Maros (b. 1943)

LAWRENCE GWOZDZ, SAXOPHONIST

Born to Polish-American parents in Niagara Falls, New York, Lawrence Gwozdz has achieved an international reputation for his success in revealing the qualities inherent in the saxophone as intended originally by its inventor, Adolphe Sax.

Lawrence Gwozdz's concerts have included major cities in Asia, Europe and North America: Beijing, Chicago, Leipzig, London, Los Angeles, Montreal, New York, Prague, St. Louis, Trondheim, The U.S. Virgin Islands, Warsaw, Wroclaw, Xi'an, Zagreb, Zurich, and many others. His festival appearances – the Lutoslawski Festival, the Menuhin Festival, the International Chamber Music Festival of le Touquet, Spoleto USA, Thracia Summer, the Lutoslawski Festival - have received critical acclaim. European reviews declare, "Gwozdz is a most highly versed soloist" (*Neue Zürcher Nachrichten*), with "amazing technique and tonal beauty" (*Bündner Zeitung*). His performance with I Solisti di Zagreb inspired the press to write, "Gwozdz uses his instrument with superiority and virtuosity" (*Vjesnik*).

His debut in New York's Weill (Carnegie) Recital Hall was described in *Musical America* as an "extraordinary performance of contemporary music" with "the kind of timbre Adolphe Sax most likely had in mind ... always with subtlety and taste" (*The New York Concert Review*).

On television Gwozdz appeared with famed organist Diane Bish on *The Joy of Music*, and has performed concerti and recitals on radio for Public Radio International, Czech Radio-Prague, Croatian Radio, Minnesota Public Radio, and other networks.

His CDs – *Special Hand'ling* (Roméo Records), *Glazunov and von Koch, Concertos for Saxophone* (MMO), *An American Tribute to Sigurd Rascher* (Crystal Records), *Hurricane, Simply Gifts, Rascher International*, and *An American Concerto Tribute to Sigurd Rascher* with the Bohuslav Martinu Philharmonic (Albany Records) - have won high praise. *American Record Guide* wrote, "Superb saxophonist Lawrence Gwozdz has one of the finest alto saxophone sounds since his mentor, the legendary Sigurd Rascher. His tone and technical ability complement each other perfectly - luscious sound and immaculate technique ..." The reviewer in *Fanfare* wrote, "Lawrence Gwozdz is an extraordinary saxophonist, bringing out a tremendous range of colors and effects in his instrument. I absolutely guarantee that you will enjoy it."

Gwozdz is also known for his annotated translation of the German book *Das Saxophon* by Jaap Kool (Egon Pub., Baldock, England). Various composers - Samuel Adler, Stephen Dankner, Walter Hartley, Zdenek Lukas, Armand Russell, Randall Snyder, Robert Starer, Roger Vogel, John Worley, and others - have dedicated more than forty new works to him.

As Professor of Saxophone at the University of Southern Mississippi, he has established a studio with a worldwide reputation. His student soloists, quartets, and saxophone chamber orchestra perform in major cities, and are frequent winners of competitions. Having been born with spina bifida, Gwozdz is also an advocate for arts for the handicapped.

Gwozdz has studied saxophone with Ronald Tyree, Robert Fought, Laurence Wyman, and the renowned artists Sigurd Rascher and Jean-Marie Londeix.

JONATHAN BERGERON, SAXOPHONIST

Jonathan Bergeron joined the faculty of Northern Arizona University in the fall of 2000 where he teaches applied saxophone lessons, woodwind techniques, coaches saxophone quartets and directs the NAU Saxophone Ensemble.

Mr. Bergeron received a Master of Music degree in Saxophone Performance from The Florida State University and a Bachelor of Music Education degree from the University of Southern Mississippi. He is currently completing his Doctoral studies in Saxophone Performance at the Florida State University where he taught applied saxophone lessons and coached the FSU Saxophone Ensemble and saxophone quartets from 1996-2000. His teachers include Professor Patrick Meighan and Dr. Lawrence Gwozdz. He has also received coaching from the renowned artist Sigurd Rascher.

As a soloist, Mr. Bergeron has performed concerts throughout the United States and in countries such as Austria, Poland, and Ireland. Recent concerts have included the Witold Lutoslawski International Festival of Contemporary Music and the Czech-American Summer Music Institute. He was named national first runner-up in the 1998 Collegiate Artist Competition sponsored by the Music Teachers National Association and received first prize at the 1995 Monroe Concerto Competition in the wind instrument division. Mr. Bergeron has performed as soloist with the Tallahassee Symphony Orchestra, the Florida State University Wind Orchestra, the Florida State Wind Symphony, and the NAU Wind Symphony. Mr. Bergeron frequently performs with the NAU Faculty Chamber Series and is currently the principal saxophonist for the Flagstaff Symphony Orchestra.

As the soprano saxophonist in the *Sax-Chamber Quartet*, he was invited to perform at the 26th Annual "International Week 1999" in Graz, Austria. The quartet was only the third American chamber group invited to participate since 1974; previous ensembles represented the Eastman and Juilliard Schools of Music.

His *Sax-Chamber Quartet* was declared winners of the Music Teachers National Association Collegiate Chamber Competition (1998), the Carmel International Chamber Music Competition (1998), semifinalist in the Fischhoff Chamber Music Competition (1998), and third prize in the Coleman International Chamber Music Competition (1999).

Mr. Bergeron has also performed at the New Orleans Jazz Festival, the Jazz Times Convention, and the North American Saxophone Alliance Conference.

