

Classical saxophonists Jake & Sarah to open LCCC Signature Series October 13

by Mike Telin



Although the saxophone is not commonly thought of as a classical instrument — most tend to think of it as a jazz and rock instrument — the classical saxophonists Jake Swanson and Sarah Marchitelli like to remind people that it was the classical romantic music scene of the mid-1800's where the instrument was born.

On Monday, October 13 at 7:30 pm in the Studio Theatre in the Stocker Center for the Arts, [Jake & Sarah](#) will return to

Northeast Ohio to open the 2014-15 season of Lorain County Community College's Signature Series.

The saxophone was invented in 1840 by the Belgian instrument maker Adolphe Sax, who wanted to create an instrument that would, as Swanson explained during a conference call, “marry the power of brass instruments with the flexibility and tonal pallet of the human voice.” And although the instrument's roots may be in classical music, “the saxophone is not a typical instrument for a classical chamber music concert,” Marchitelli added.

Swanson and Marchitelli agree that, on occasion, they are met with a certain degree of skepticism from presenters and audiences primarily because of a lack of familiarity with the classical saxophone. But for the most part they have been very lucky, especially in Cleveland where they have performed many times. “We have really grown to love the city. The audiences are not only so sophisticated, they are also so open to new things,” said Swanson.

Swanson and Marchitelli also agree that Monday's program does include a lot of less-familiar composers. “We do go to a lot of new music concerts and are always trying to find new little gems,” Swanson said. “We're so lucky to be living in the digital age because it is very easy to get in touch with composers. Slowly but surely over the past

four years, Sarah and I have been expanding our personal repertoire as well as the repertoire for saxophone duo.”

The digital age also makes it easier for composers to seek out performers. Jeffrey Mumford first contacted Sarah Marchitelli via e-mail at SUNY Ferdonia, where she serves as adjunct faculty. “I checked out his website and discovered that he was a great composer. I love his piece, *the milliner's fancy*, and look forward to performing it.”

The program also includes Scott Miller’s *Organum* which they describe as a piece that blends medieval organum chant with Stravinsky melodic motifs. “Daniel Knorr is an extremely structured and purposeful composer,” said Swanson, “We must have heard eight to ten pieces of his before we asked him to write something for us. We’ll begin the program with a great piece, *Ulterior Motives* by Andrew Cote.” Works by Paul Hindemith, Marc Mellits, Robert Beckstrom and Charles Wuorinen are also included.

The concert also feature a brand-new work, *By the sound of its voice*, by Peter Edwards, a British composer and Ligeti scholar living in Norway. The work combines the harmonies and melodies of Norwegian folk fiddle music with the rhythmic abandon of Boulez. Jake & Sarah will premiere the piece during a WCLV – Live from Keybank Studio performance on October 10 beginning at 2:00 pm.

When Jake Swanson and Sarah Marchitelli are not seeking out composers or immersing themselves in interesting collaborative projects, they are actively promoting the use of vintage saxophones. “Sarah and I both use vintage instruments from the 1930’s and they are modeled off the original Buescher design. They’re both Buescher Aristocrats, the soprano is from 1936 and both altos are from 1938. This style of instrument has not been produced for a very long time because saxophone makers moved into the direction of building instruments that produced sounds more suited for jazz and rock,” Swanson pointed out. “The vintage setup is more vocal and more flexible and the sound is darker and warmer.”

According to Swanson, a growing number of both classical and jazz players are finding an appreciation for the unique sonority that is produced by vintage instruments. “Players like Sonny Rawlins and Charlie Parker both played on these instruments. And yes, they’re still out there. It just takes a little bit of extra love to keep them playable, but it’s worth the effort.”

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