

Saxophonist Jacob Swanson at Gowanda's Historic Hollywood Theater

by Mike Telin



Since the Pandemic forced the shutdown of many performance venues, musicians have sought out ways of using their art to give something back to their communities. During November, saxophonist Jacob Swanson, returned to his hometown of Gowanda, New York, to record a recital at the town's Historic Hollywood Theater that will be streamed until January 13, 2021 as a fundraiser for the historic venue — click [here](#) for details. And as we have come to expect from Swanson, his performances of music for saxophone alone or adapted for saxophone alone are in a word, stellar.

Bookended by music of Bach, Swanson opens his 70-minute recital with the composer's first *Cello Suite* played on baritone sax. Swanson immediately grabs your attention with his smooth, even tone, and agile technique in the opening Prelude. The Courante is especially beautiful and Swanson's take on the concluding Gigue is pure fun. The saxophonist is in his element when playing soprano sax, and his affection for that instrument, and the music of Bach, is in full evidence during the *Partita* for Solo Flute. Throughout, Swanson's crystalline sound is mesmerizing, and his stylish playing — especially in the Bourrée angloise — leaves you wanting more.

If you prefer music from more recent times, the recital includes superb performances of Alois Hába's engaging *Partita* (alto), Marc Mellits whimsical *Frost* (tenor), and Tristan Keuris' beguiling *Canzone* (alto). Swanson's program also features music by Gowanda native Nathan Hall. "The Balcony" (soprano) — part of the composer's larger installation

work *Elevator Music* — is a musical and technical tightrope walk which Swanson thoroughly enjoys.

Throughout the video, Swanson offers his insights into the lives of the composers and their music — not too much, just enough. However, what makes these performances more than a sonic experience is the accompanying videography by Jill Swanson, Sarah Marchitelli, and Jacob Swanson himself. The spectacular visual journey beautifully captures the architectural grandeur of the Historic Hollywood Theater.

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