

ANTHOLOGY

Contemporary music
for saxophones

ANTHONY BROWN



ANTHOLOGY

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|----|--|-------|
| | Julian Argüelles | |
| 1. | Sonata For Two Saxophones
Anthony Brown, Carl Raven | 10:20 |
| | Andy Scott | |
| 2. | Anthology
Anthony Brown | 9:00 |
| | Graham Ross | |
| 3. | Caged Bird
Anthony Brown, Ben Powell | 9:34 |
| | Larry Goves | |
| 4. | The Two From Rastibon Could Start a Hailstorm
Anthony Brown, Carl Raven, Larry Goves | 14:31 |
| | Steve Jackson | |
| 5. | III
Anthony Brown, Dan Brew | 6:27 |
| | Gary Carpenter | |
| 6. | Everything Is Connected
Anthony Brown, Grant Russell | 12:33 |
| | Meriel Price | |
| 7. | Where The Mind Goes I – Distance | 1:53 |
| 8. | Where The Mind Goes II – Close | 3:30 |
| 9. | Where The Mind Goes III – Remembering
Anthony Brown, Louise Stevens | 2:47 |

Total playing time 70:35

THE MUSIC

The modern saxophonist must be incredibly versatile, fluent in so many subtle variations of style, nuances and genre, able to inflect and imply, positively superimpose so many styles, emotions, thoughts and feelings onto the music that they programme. This extraordinary recording adds to the growing legacy of commissioned new music that is shaping the evolution and development of the contemporary saxophone here in the UK, pushing the boundaries, reacting to the constantly changing musical landscape, drawing on influences from a range of genres that almost renders categorisation worthless.

All of the composers featured here are well-known to the performer, and he to them. As a consequence, each is writing not for simply for saxophone, but for Anthony himself, and this collective body of new work has as a result created a deeply personal statement, which tells us as much about the performer as it does about the instrument itself.

Through recordings such as this extraordinary debut from Anthony, this master instrumentalist has truly found a way to bring together all of the influences that have shaped the saxophone's development thus far, with these sounds and styles coalescing into an almost limitless palette of colour used to express the thoughts, feelings and emotions of the performer. Respectfully acknowledging the traditions and conventions of the classical saxophone whilst striving to find a new, contemporary voice, this recording adds to and challenges these conventions. Drawing intelligently on a much wider range of sounds, refusing to allow the music to ever simply follow a previously trodden path, Anthony imbues every note, every gesture and phrase, with well chosen and confident musical ideas that assert his vision for the instrument.

The vast compositional landscape displayed across this recording allows us as listeners to also connect with a subtler narrative, to question how the thoughts of the performer, as well as the intentions of the composer, influence and shape our reactions to, and connections with, the performances captured here. As with all truly captivating instrumental performances, it should surely be the performer, not the instrument itself, that we are drawn to - and this sparkling and engaging anthology transcends the stunning instrumental performance, presenting a brave and deeply personal statement by this virtuoso musician, one which communicates on so many different levels. A virtuoso tour de force.

Sonata for two Saxophones:

This three movement sonata comes from the dazzlingly creative mind of one of the world's leading saxophone improvisers and composers, and from the very start we hear his distinctive language and style. Part 1 is playful and dance-like, with beautifully balanced playing from both performers - the two lines spinning effortlessly around each other like birds in flight, interweaving so seamlessly that we are never really sure which player is which. Part 2 takes us back in time to a world of two-part inventions, with mutually supportive lines creating an interplay that draws the listener in, tapping into a darker, more soulful narrative. Part 3 effortlessly emerges from the middle movement with a light, bubbling energy providing the rhythmic impetus that propels this sparkling music forward. At first exploratory, then more confidently spinning lines around one other, the writing creates a dazzling, fizzing energy that drives the piece forward in ever more virtuosic writing until slowly the music comes to rest back at the point where it all began, but leaving us somehow changed and enriched by the journey.

Anthology:

A brilliantly paced and crafted soundscape that gives the performer a vivid and dramatic array of colours to paint with. From the haunting opening bars we are drawn into the piece through fragmented lines, haunting lyricism and bursts of sporadic energy, hinting at what is to come - an unsettled state, encouraging the performer to create a sense of perpetual

motion, imperceptibly building in tempo, range and extremes of technique. Using his intimate knowledge of the inner workings of the instrument, the composer sets technical and musical challenges that create a captivating sense of journey, drawing the listener in as the piece builds towards a climax, before allowing us a reflective, almost ethereal moment of calm to decompress at the end of this virtuosic solo piece.

Caged Bird:

From the first notes of this piece, there is a tangible, almost symbiotic relationship between piano and saxophone, with both instruments almost dancing around each other. At times the music is atmospheric, haunting and enticing, with a confident and assured use of time, space and colour from a composer fully in control of his sound world. The music has a restless energy, echoing the six verses of the poem that it draws its inspiration from. There is a sense that, as the title suggests, the saxophone is struggling to fly free from its cage, stretching its musical wings, testing itself against the restraints of the harmonic language, at times striving to soar above the piano, at others reluctantly, frustratedly fighting against captivity, before finally resigning to its fate, and slowly, inexorably, returning to the ground.

CAGED BIRD takes its title from the poem of the same name by the American poet and civil rights activist Maya Angelou (1928–2014). I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings was published in 1969.

The Two From Rastibon Could Start A Hailstorm:

We are immediately transported to an other-worldly sonic landscape that plays with our perception of what is real, acoustic, saxophonic sound, and what is processed electronic effect - the decay of the bell textures is oddly reminiscent of the decay of the saxophone *diminuendi*, and the distortion effects mimic and challenge the multi-phonetic interplay between the two saxophones. The microtonal fluctuations cause our inner ear to question where the tonal centre lies, and the breath sounds that intersperse the sections offer a reassuring, almost comforting humanity, reminding us that there are wind instruments still alive and breathing amid the mechanical, alien sounds. The score tells us that in several sections of the piece the performers are reacting to specific text, that text speaking of seemingly abstract, often disturbing concepts, with the soloists using the rhythm and metre of the words to shape their phrasing - as listeners, do we feel this influence? Does it somehow transcend the instruments and invade our subconscious? It seems to me that each of us must find our own answers to the many questions that this deliberately unsettling piece poses.

The text for the piece is taken from the original screenplay for Antichrist by Lars Von Trier (2008).

III:

A fascinating interplay between the saxophone and electric guitar, enhanced and framed by an electronic soundscape that roots this dynamic

and inventive piece in a space, between musics - at times the saxophone is challenging the guitar, at times is subservient to it. There is a constant feeling of playful competition between the three forces at play here as they vie to create a sense of collective narrative. Again, there are some striking moments where the three disparate instrumental voices suddenly align with a sound, colour, effect or even energy where the listener loses the sense of who is playing, and the three voices become one. A curiosity that again has a slightly cinematic feel, which will I am sure evoke striking images in the listeners mind.

Everything is Connected:

Experienced and much loved contributor to the saxophone repertoire, with an impressive and significant output ranging from concerti to chamber and solo works, Gary brings his distinctive playful, rhythmic, idiomatic style to bear in this attractive pairing of tenor saxophone and double bass - we are minded of dark, smoky jazz clubs, perhaps the sinister underbelly of the city at night, certainly something broodingly cinematic. There are moments of rhythmic interplay that pitch the instruments against each other, juxtaposed with some haunting sonic interweaving, blending the string harmonics and saxophone flutter-tongue with consummate ease, connecting the extreme soundworlds of each instrument in unexpected and delightful ways. The almost hymn-like section that precedes the final Allegro is beautifully paced by both performers, crafting their individual sounds

in ways that blend and merge the instruments seamlessly. The final allegro sees the two partners exchanging ideas effortlessly, trading percussive slaps and sinuous tremolos, both jumping between leading and supportive roles, before joining together for a final evocative yet understated unison.

Where the Mind Goes:

Known for her theatrical, experimental performance work, Meriel Price presents us with three opportunities that question the internal monologue of the performers mind, trying to keep focus on the moment, but being deliberately distracted by external forces. Distance challenges the performer to attempt to maintain continuous air sounds through the saxophone whilst being distracted by offstage comments from another performer through headphones, and then moving to actual physical distractions such as tickling the players nose with a feather until the player is forced to stop playing altogether. Close challenges the performer to maintain a circular-breathed note whilst being tickled increasingly violently until performance is once again halted, followed by a further slightly uncomfortable minute of continued tickling after playing becomes impossible. Remembering then confronts the player with simply the threat of tickling, trying to illicit a remembered reaction without actual contact, before returning to distractions in headphones from offstage until the performer has to finally surrender to the external forces at hand.

An extraordinary, bold, important and personal debut recording that gives us a deeply personal insight into this highly creative performer. Anthony Brown, through his commissioning, curation and virtuosic performances on this recording, not only continues the creative legacy of honest, musically astute and sympathetically stylish and assured saxophone performance associated with the UK's finest exponents of this most evocative of instruments, but also cements his rightful place as a leading light in the continued advancement of the saxophone in the 21st century.

Notes © 2023 Rob Buckland

Rob Buckland has crafted a career around his primary work as a saxophonist that defies categorisation. Moving effortlessly between genres, he is in high demand as a classical soloist, chamber musician, contemporary specialist, improviser, arranger, composer, conductor and producer with an international reputation as an insightful and forward-thinking educator. (He is Professor of Saxophone at RNCM, Manchester). Renowned for a highly distinctive, original sound, combined with an open-minded approach to repertoire and performance styles, his work takes him around the globe in an astonishing variety of musical settings.

www.robuckland.com

ANTHONY BROWN

Described by The Times on his debut Purcell Room performance as an 'outstanding young saxophonist', multi-award winning, Manchester based saxophonist, Anthony Brown graduated from the Royal Northern College of Music with an International Artist Diploma in chamber music and a First Class Honours degree, attaining full marks in his final recital.

He has won awards from The Worshipful Company of Musicians, the Tillett Trust, Park Lane Group, Making Music and the Hattori Foundation, as well as first prize in the Haverhill Sinfonia Soloist Competition and the Bromsgrove International Young Musicians' Platform.

Anthony has performed extensively throughout the UK, including solo recitals at the Wigmore Hall and the Southbank Centre. He has performed with orchestras including the BBC

National Orchestra of Wales, BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra, BBC Philharmonic, Hallé, Opera North, Royal Northern Sinfonia and the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra. He features on a CD with the Choir of Clare College, Cambridge, and has performed live and recorded broadcasts as a soloist at the BBC Proms and also with Beats and Pieces Big Band on BBC Radio 3.

Anthony is a member of the Ferio Saxophone Quartet. They have recorded two albums together, one with pianist Timothy End (Evoke), and another with the Corvus Consort (Revoiced - music for saxophones and voices), two exciting projects that explore a varied range of repertoire and styles.

www.anthonymbrownsaxophone.com





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Recording dates:

Venue:

Engineer:

Artists:

November 2021 – January 2022

Hallé at St Michael's, Ancoats

Joe Riser

Anthony Brown (saxophones)

Carl Raven (saxophones)

Ben Powell (piano)

Larry Goves (electronics)

Dan Brew (electric guitar)

Grant Russell (double bass)

Louise Stevens (distractions)

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With thanks to Teresa, without whom this album would not have been possible.

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