

CHANNEL CROSSINGS

CCS 9896



New Century Saxophone Quartet

Main Street USA



Gould Gershwin Bernstein

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New Century
Saxophone Quartet
Main Street USA
New York, NY

Main Street USA

New Century Saxophone Quartet

Michael Stephenson, soprano saxophone
James Boatman, alto saxophone
Steven Pollock, tenor saxophone
Brad Hubbard, baritone saxophone
Steve Hirkman, percussion



all arrangements by James Boatman

Morton Gould (1913-1996)

1	Pavane (1938)	3.17
2	Main Street Walz (1978)	2.06
3	Main Street March (1978)	1.54

George Gershwin (1898-1937) Selections from Porgy and Bess Suite (1935)

4	Clara, Clara	2.11
5	Oh, I Got Plenty O'Nuttin'	1.12
6	Bess, You is My Woman Now	2.48
7	Oh, I Can't Sit Down	1.29
8	It Ain't Necessarily So	2.58
9	Summertime	2.39
10	There's A Boat dat's Leavin' For New York	2.00
11	Oh Lawd, I'm On My Way	1.30

George Gershwin (1898 - 1937)

12	Promenade (1936)	3.07
13	Three Quarter Blues	0.59
14	Merry Andrew (1928)	1.09

Leonard Bernstein (1918 - 1990) Selections from West Side Story (1957)

15	I Feel Pretty	2.58
16	Balcony Scene (Tonight)	6.08
17	Cha-Cha/Meeting Scene/Jump	3.10
18	One Hand, One Heart	4.15
19	Cee, Officer Krupke	2.00
20	Scherzo	2.12
21	Somewhere	4.15

Total time 55.32

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Production & Distribution

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Recording dates: November 1995

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ADD. EDITING
COVER PHOTO
COVER DESIGN
LINER NOTES
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TECHNICAL INFORMATION

MICROPHONES

ANALOGUE TO DIGITAL CONVERTER
SPEAKERSYSTEMS

RECORDING LOCATION
RECORDING DATES

Bruel & Kjaer 4003 Rens Heijnis
omnidirectional
DCS 900C
Celestion & AKG K1000
Headphones
Renswoude, The Netherlands
November 1996

As the only Saxophone quartet to win First Prize of the Concert Artists Guild New York Competition in its forty-five year history, the **New Century Saxophone Quartet** is an irresistible and electrifying ensemble that is opening new doors on the concert scene. New Century's acclaimed New York debut at Carnegie Hall's Weill Recital Hall was described by the New York Post as a "virtuostic display of dexterity and keen ensemble work" and that "the players handled all the music with panache." As the first Saxophone quartet to be presented at the Ambassador Auditorium in Los Angeles, New Century prompted the Los Angeles Times to report that with their "damn-the-torpedoes ambition" the ensemble is a "crusading unit, spreading the gospel" and that "They made believers here." Other engagements include their debuts in Chicago at the Pick-Staiger Concert Hall, Atlanta's Spivey Concert Hall, in Boston at Symphony Hall and the Gardner Museum, and in Juneau, Alaska. New Century was also the first Saxophone quartet to be presented at La Huaca del Complejo Atlapa in Panama City, Panama. In 1995 the ensemble played in Washington D.C. where they performed privately for President Clinton in the East Room of the White House.

The New Century Saxophone Quartet has also appeared on television and radio across the United States including features on National Public Radio's Performance Today, the Voice of America, and North Carolina Public TV. In 1995 the group was the artists in residence for On Air at WUNC in Chapel Hill, North Carolina, a program sponsored by the Concert Artists Guild. Outside of the US, Panamanian TV aired a documentary and a live performance while in The Netherlands, Dutch radio presented New Century live from the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam.

New Century's first recording for Channel Classics, *Drastic Measures* (CCS 5994), won critical acclaim from *Fanfare Magazine* which wrote that they "combine great technique and elegant musicianship with a wonderful sense of chamber music" and that it is an "enjoyable release, nicely recorded and impressively performed."

The New Century Saxophone Quartet is a grant recipient of Chamber Music America and the National Endowment for the Arts.

Percussionist **Steve Kirkman** joins the New Century Saxophone Quartet for the first time on this recording. Kirkman, as well as the members of New Century, attended the North Carolina School of the Arts in Winston-Salem, N.C. where he received both his Bachelor and Master of Music Degrees. Steve's wide range of performing experiences and his many diverse musical strengths fit nicely with New Century's philosophy of versatility. Equally at home performing with symphony orchestra, jazz quartet or Broadway pit orchestra, he has seen the world through concert tours of West Side Story, appearances with Dallas Brass, show drumming for Princess Cruises and backing artists such as Joe Williams, Perry Como and Shirley Caesar. When not touring, he teaches at Limestone College and Winston-Salem State University.

PHOTO DON HUNSTEIN





Main Street USA

Since the Saxophone Quartet literature is somewhat limited and is not well known, the New Century Saxophone Quartet often turns to arrangements in order to round-out their repertoire. Usually this means works written before the Saxophone's invention in the 1840's by the Belgian inventor Adolphe Sax. With the more frequent use of the Saxophone in the 20'th Century, especially in America, it was natural for me to turn to three of my most admired composers: **Morton Gould**, **George Gershwin**, and **Leonard Bernstein**. Another logical reason for choosing these three was that they all used Saxophones in their compositions - including those on this disc. *West Side Story* is scored for the entire modern Saxophone family: Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Baritone and Bass! The music chosen also satisfies a request of NCSQ fans - that we perform some music they know with tunes that continue to play in their heads long after the concert is over.

Most often one hears 'Hollywood' or 'jazzed-up' versions of the music on this disc. In contrast, I set out not to merely reduce these works for Saxophone quartet, but also to preserve the original flavor and feel of the music. This turned out to be quite a challenge, not only for me as arranger, but for the performers as well. To retain an 'orchestral' quality and to cover all of the parts, the individual instruments are stretched well beyond their usual quartet roles. Additionally, each performer is required to play beyond what has been the standard range of their instruments both in pitch and sensitivity. An added but welcome intricacy was the use of percussion. The percussionist does not comp, but plays from a part which closely follows the style of the original music and is integral to the arrangements.

Written in 1938 for a radio series he was conducting, the *Pavana* is the middle movement from Morton Gould's «American Symphonette No.2» and is probably his best-known work. Mr. Gould told me that, "At the time words like *dinette* and *kitchenette* were being used so I called my little symphony a symphonette." This arrangement was one of the first that I did for this disc and has become a favorite of NCSQ audiences.

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The *Main Street Waltz* and *Main Street March* were suggested to me by Mr. Gould to compliment his «Pavane» and are from the film *World War I*. The *Waltz* depicts a prewar, peaceful America, with cars and a happy-go-lucky public filling the streets. The joining of the soprano Saxophone with the glockenspiel results in a wonderfully light and cheerful feel. Complete with a street parade's cymbals and drums, the rousing *March* portrays America preparing to enter the conflict; albeit with naivete about the true horrors of the war. Fragments of «Over There» optimistically appear throughout the *March*. Although Mr. Gould heard New Century perform the «Pavane», we did not have the opportunity to play the other two for him before his death on February 21, 1996. As his Pulitzer Prize and the music recorded here attests, he certainly achieved his goal that "a composer should have something to say to even a taxicab driver." We title this CD *Main Street USA* in tribute to Morton's dedication to American music.

Straight from Tin-Pan Alley, George Gershwin's seldom heard *Three-Quarter Blues* and *Merry Andrew* were written in the 1920's. In the Blues, also known as the Irish Waltz, the vibraphone can be heard which, with the Saxophones, creates a beautiful shimmering effect. One can't help bouncing along with Merry Andrew which was used as a dance number in the 1928 show *Rosalie*.

Promenade was composed in 1936, just two years before Gould's *Pavane*, and may be familiar to Astaire-Rogers fans as *Walking the Dog* from 'Shall We Dance' - one of Gershwin's last Hollywood films and the last he was to see before his early death.

Porgy and Bess is without a doubt Gershwin's most monumental work and I, like many others, have long been attracted to the numerous wonderful songs to come from this opera. While performing some of the opera on Kiawah Island (Kittiwah in the opera) and in Charleston, South Carolina, the desire to play this music more often heightened; and so I began to set some of my favorite songs for the New Century Saxophone Quartet. As I began arranging I couldn't help visualizing the scenes from the opera.

One can sense the calm following the storm in *Clara, Clara*. Rarely heard outside the opera it is a song of mourning for Clara who is feared lost in a hurricane. Porgy's nonchalant song *Oh, I Got Plenty O' Nuttin'* gleefully concludes with, "Got my gal, got my Lawd, got my song!" One of the most tender love duets written, *Bess, You is My Woman Now* is full of heartfelt romance; here 'sung' by the tenor and soprano Saxophones.

Although my stay near Catfish Row came 50 years after Gershwin's, I can nevertheless picture the residents gaily singing, *Oh, I Can't Sit Down*, on their way to picnic on Kittiwah Island. The merry-making is interrupted by Sporting Life, a dope dealer, who taunts with *It Ain't Necessarily So* ("De t'ings dat yo' li'ble to read in de Bible"), which is sort of a repeat-after-me type of sermon. One would be remiss for omitting *Summertime* from a collection of Porgy and Bess songs. It was difficult for me to give up the idea of playing this nostalgic lullaby myself, but the obvious choice was the soprano; the voice which

Gershwin had intended it for. It still amazes me that he could put so much of the Charleston atmosphere in such a short song; which by the way has no bridge or 'B' section. One can almost feel the sticky, tropical heat of a lazy summer evening on the South Carolina waterfront.

With the help of a little 'happy dust', the dope dealer has convinced Bess to go away with him and happily sings *There's A Boat Dat's Leavin' For New York*. When Porgy discovers that Bess has gone to New York he asks, "Where dat?". "It's way up North pas' de custom house." Porgy orders his goat cart and drives off singing *Oh Lawd, I'm On My Way* which concludes with music from «Bess, You is My Woman Now».

As with the other music on this CD, *West Side Story* is also a signature piece and is Leonard Bernstein's most famous work. When I heard Bernstein's 1985 recording I felt that I had finally heard this music as he had written it. And why not, with the maestro himself conducting! And so with the recording and the newly released score firmly in hand, I began on what became my most demanding task. Using the «Symphonic Dances» from *West Side Story* for orchestra as a guide, I set out to create a complete chamber music version for Saxophones and percussion without those cumbersome transitions so often found in medleys.

Beginning with *I Feel Pretty*, which opens Act II, the use of many of the auxiliary percussion instruments can be heard. Included are tambourine, castanets, triangle and glockenspiel. While they are used sparingly, they really add a light and 'pretty' touch. After a short introduction, the *Balcony Scene* begins with *Maria* which is shared by all of the Saxophones and then goes on to *Tonight*. A slower, more tender version of *Tonight* follows with the melody played in turn by tenor, soprano, and alto while the vibraphone plays underneath resembling the strings in an orchestra. A dance version of *Maria* is next in *Cha-Cha* which segues into the *Meeting Scene*; a slower version of the same tune. The tenor Saxophone ominously takes over and transitions to a «Paso Doble» which is interrupted (watch out for the police whistle!) by *Jump*, the jazziest of the dance numbers with it's out of sync bass line. The beautiful

love duet *One Hand, One Heart* is scored, like the original, for tenor and soprano. The homogeneous sound of the Saxophone quartet is enhanced here by the addition of the vibraphone which blends very nicely; almost like another Saxophone! To bring some lighthearted fun to this collection I couldn't do without *Gee, Officer Krupke*. WARNING - Listener beware of Krupke's police whistle! Although the NCSQ often uses Krupke as an encore in concert, we felt it belonged in it's rightful place for this recording. The *Scherzo* is from the dream scene in the «Ballet Sequence» where there is a lack of gangs and hostility. The light use of the Saxophones and the glockenspiel provide the dreamy landscape which is eventually shattered by the triangle, which like an alarm clock, brings

