SCHOOL OF MUSIC

Presents

Michael Morrison, saxophone
Dr. Cecilia Kao, piano

October 29, 2026 | 7:00PM | PepsiCo Recital Hall

Program

Ballade (1938)
Henri Tomasi
(1901-1971)

Fantasia Concertante (1987)
Bernhard Heiden
(1910-2000)

Mother and Child (1943)
William Grant Still
(1895-1978)
Arr. Andy A. Peeks

Brilliant Blue (2012)
Till MacIvor Meyn
(b. 1970))
I. Freely and Naturally
II. (B.N.B)
III. With Energy

This recital is given in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a DMA in Saxophone Performance.
Michael Morrison is a student of Allen Cordingley.
The use of recording equipment or taking photographs is prohibited.
Please silence all electronic devices including watches, pagers, and phones.

RECITAL PROGRAM NOTES

Presented in performance order

Ballade (1938)

Henri Tomasi (1901-1971)

French composer and conductor Henri Tomasi was known for his colorful orchestration, expressive melodies, and ability to incorporate diverse musical influences into his compositions. Written in 1938, *Ballade* for alto saxophone and orchestra was premiered in 1939 by renowned saxophonist Marcel Mule. The composition draws inspiration from a poem by Suzanne Malard depicting a melancholy clown who struggles to conceal his sorrow while entertaining an audience.

The work unfolds as a musical narrative, contrasting moments of tenderness, humor, melancholy, and exuberance. Its lyrical opening introduces an introspective melody that reflects the clown's sadness and vulnerability. This atmosphere gives way to a lively, rhythmically energetic dance, suggesting the clown's outward attempts at amusement. A blues-influenced passage brings a darker emotional quality before the music returns to an increasingly animated conclusion.

Tomasi's writing highlights the saxophone's remarkable expressive range, from its warm, vocal qualities to its brilliant technical capabilities. Through contrasting musical styles and dramatic shifts in character, *Ballade* captures the tension between joy and sorrow, ultimately presenting the saxophone as both storyteller and virtuoso.

Fantasia Concertante (1987)

Bernhard Heiden (1910-2000)

German-born American composer Bernhard Heiden studied composition with Paul Hindemith before immigrating to the United States in 1935. His compositional style reflects Hindemith's influence through its emphasis on contrapuntal writing, rhythmic vitality, and carefully organized musical structures. Heiden made significant contributions to the classical saxophone repertoire, including his influential *Sonata for Alto Saxophone and Piano* (1937).

Composed in 1987, *Fantasia Concertante* for alto saxophone and winds demonstrates Heiden's mature compositional language and his understanding of the saxophone's expressive and technical capabilities. The work combines the freedom suggested by its title with the structural discipline characteristic of Heiden's music. Contrasting lyrical and rhythmically animated passages provide opportunities for the soloist to demonstrate both expressive sensitivity and technical command.

Throughout the composition, melodic ideas are developed through rhythmic variation, contrapuntal interaction, and changing musical textures. The relationship between the soloist and accompaniment creates a dialogue in which the saxophone moves between prominent melodic statements and more intricate musical exchanges. *Fantasia Concertante* combines modern harmonic language with clarity of form and expressive purpose.

Mother and Child (1943)

William Grant Still (1895-1978) -- Arr. Andy A. Peeks

Often referred to as the "Dean of African American Composers," William Grant Still played a pioneering role in American classical music. His compositions frequently combine European classical traditions with musical influences drawn from African American spirituals, blues, and other vernacular styles.

Mother and Child was originally composed in 1943 as the second movement of Still's *Suite for Violin and Piano*. The movement was inspired by a work of the same name by African American visual artist Sargent Claude Johnson, depicting the intimate relationship between a mother and her child. Still sought to translate the emotional warmth and tenderness of the artwork into music.

The composition features a flowing, lyrical melody supported by rich harmonies and gentle rhythmic motion. Its expressive character conveys feelings of affection, protection, and quiet reflection. Subtle shifts in harmony and melodic intensity add emotional depth while maintaining the work's overall sense of warmth and serenity.

In this arrangement by saxophonist Andy A. Peeks, the instrument's vocal qualities bring a distinctive character to Still's original melodic writing. *Mother and Child* offers a deeply personal musical portrait of love and human connection.

Brilliant Blue (2012)

Till MacIvor Meyn (b. 1970)

American composer Till MacIvor Meyn is Professor of Theory and Composition at Texas Christian University. His compositions encompass a wide variety of genres and frequently incorporate lyrical melodies, rhythmic energy, and influences from jazz and other contemporary musical traditions.

Composed in 2012 for alto saxophonist Joe Eckert and pianist Janet Pummill, *Brilliant Blue* is a three-movement work that explores the contrasting musical associations of its title. Meyn describes the color blue as suggesting both vitality and the more reflective qualities associated with jazz and melancholy.

The composition moves through contrasting musical characters, balancing expressive lyricism with rhythmic excitement and playful musical gestures. Jazz-influenced passages contribute a sense of spontaneity, while the interaction between saxophone and piano highlights the expressive versatility of both instruments. Moments of humor and unexpected musical references further distinguish Meyn's compositional voice. Throughout *Brilliant Blue*, Meyn combines accessible melodic writing with colorful harmonies and energetic rhythms. The result is a composition that celebrates the saxophone's ability to move naturally between classical and jazz-inspired musical expression, while exploring the many emotional shades suggested by the color blue.