



PRISM Quartet

Heritage/Evolution

Volume 1

featuring
Steve Lehman
Dave Liebman
Rudresh Mahanthappa
Greg Osby
Tim Ries
Miguel Zenón

PRISM Quartet **Heritage/Evolution**



- 1 I Will Not Apologize For My Tone Tonight 16:37**
Composed in 2014 by Rudresh Mahanthappa
PRISM Quartet with Rudresh Mahanthappa, alto
Recorded April 13, 2014 in Brooklyn, NY at The Bunker Studio
Aaron Nevezie, engineer
Published by Mahanthappa Music (BMI)
- 2 The Missing Piece 9:34**
Composed in 1999; arranged in 2014 by Miguel Zenón
PRISM Quartet with Miguel Zenón, alto
Recorded May 10, 2014 in Brooklyn, NY at The Bunker Studio
Aaron Nevezie, engineer
Published by Mazenon Music (BMI)
- 3 X Marks the Square 12:01**
Composed in 2014 by Miguel Zenón
PRISM Quartet with Tim Ries, tenor; Miguel Zenón, alto and percussion
Recorded May 10, 2014 in Brooklyn, NY at The Bunker Studio
Aaron Nevezie, engineer
Published by Mazenon Music (BMI)
- 4 Name Day 15:22**
Composed in 2014 by Tim Ries
PRISM Quartet with Tim Ries, tenor and Miguel Zenón, alto
Recorded May 10, 2014 in Brooklyn, NY at The Bunker Studio
Aaron Nevezie, engineer
Published by Rieses Pieses (BMI)

15 Places at the Same Time

- 1 Line/Texture 3:21**
- 2 Gesture/Rhythm 4:16**
- 3 Solo 1:50**
- 4 Radical Alignment 3:31**
- 5 Afterlife 3:18**

Composed in 2014 by Steve Lehman

PRISM Quartet with Steve Lehman, alto

Recorded April 13, 2014 in Brooklyn, NY at The Bunker Studio

Aaron Nevezie, engineer

Published by Density Music (BMI)

- 6 Covenant of Voices 17:12**

Composed in 2014 by Greg Osby

PRISM Quartet with Dave Liebman, soprano and Greg Osby, alto

Recorded June 12, 2014 in Philadelphia, PA at Milkboy Studio

Karl Petersen, engineer

Published by Daigoro Music (SESAC)

- 7 Trajectory 20:23**

Composed in 2014 by Dave Liebman

PRISM Quartet with Dave Liebman, soprano and Greg Osby, alto

Recorded June 11, 2014 in Philadelphia, PA at Milkboy Studio

Karl Petersen, engineer

Published by Liebstone Music (BMI)



PRISM Quartet **Heritage/Evolution**

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8 Dear Lord 5:06

Composed in 1965 by John Coltrane; arranged in 2014 by Dave Liebman

PRISM Quartet with Dave Liebman, soprano and Greg Osby, alto

Recorded live on June 11, 2014 at World Cafe Live in Philadelphia, PA

Ray Pirre, engineer



PRISM Quartet *Heritage/Evolution*

You'll notice this collection of pieces is not simply called *Heritage/Evolution*. It's called *Heritage/Evolution, Volume 1*. That "1" is a statement of intent: this is not a one-time project, but the first step in a major new initiative by the PRISM Quartet. Building on their own thirty-year heritage, PRISM's series of musical explorations documents an instrument and performance practice that continues to evolve.

That evolution has followed a typical Darwinian path—where superior developments spread, and often replace older ones. Adolphe Sax’s most successful invention (and really, his *only* successful invention) has proven to be so versatile and adaptable that it has spread well beyond Europe. The past century and a half has seen the evolution of traditions of saxophone playing in India, in West Africa, in the Balkans, and in Latin America. Now, in this first group of *Heritage/Evolution* works, PRISM has commissioned composer/sax players who refer not only to those world music traditions, but to electronic music too.

The opening salvo from PRISM is a collaboration with the New York-based composer Rudresh Mahanthappa, whose piece *I Will Not Apologize for My Tone Tonight* is built on two parallel structures: one is a viral YouTube video featuring Phil Davison, who ran for the Republican nomination for Treasurer of Stark County, Ohio in 2010. “His speech is nothing short of insane and unintentionally hilarious,” Mahanthappa notes. His own composition reflects “the spirit of spontaneity while also following the arc of Davison’s speech in all of its erratic emotion, unrequited valor, and heartfelt (yet possibly misplaced) sincerity.” But that only tells half the story, for *I Will Not Apologize for My Tone Tonight* also follows the form of South Indian classical music, where a slow “alap” section leads into the faster composed section, the song or “kriti.” The opening of the piece features Mahanthappa soloing over a drone which eventually blooms into slow moving chords. This leads to a faster, songlike melody that is then varied, elaborated, and fragmented. A squall of disputation among the saxes is silenced by a solo that seems to owe as much to the Carnatic sax master Kadri Gopalnath as it does to Marshall Allen (the longtime sax player in Sun Ra’s Arkestra). And at the end,

the ensemble returns to the main song melody—a move common to the playbooks of both jazz bands and Indian classical musicians.

With its quicksilver shifts from South Indian-style ornaments and inflections to jazzy harmonies and bluesy smears, Mahanthappa's piece offers an extraordinary and elegant blurring of the Carnatic and the post-bop traditions. Miguel Zenón does something similar with one of his two works here. His genial, playful work called *X Marks The Square* begins and ends with him playing Afro-Caribbean percussion under a syncopated melody in the saxes. Once Zenón picks up his own sax, he forms a sextet with PRISM and fellow composer Tim Ries. Following a numeric grid (or "square") that the composer worked from, the six lines begin weaving in and out in a way that blurs the distinction between soloist and accompanist. Even the "solo" near the end finds itself being echoed by the others.

Zenón is also represented by an earlier work, the only composition in this collection not specifically written for *Heritage/Evolution*. *The Missing Piece* is a ballad, in an ABA song form. A series of rich, slowly rocking chords supports a simple, lyrical melody. "It's built around the idea of having a rubato melody over a more rhythmically-consistent groove," he explains.

Tim Ries and Miguel Zenón also team up in Ries's piece called *Name Day*. Ries, a former PRISM member, has toured the world with the Rolling Stones and issued several albums of world music. This explains the highly embellished, exotic opening solo in *Name Day*, and an early passage with a strong bassline under sturdy rhythmic chords: it may not be rock, but it is certainly the work of someone who knows rock. The main influence here

though is the music of Hungary. “Since 2002,” he says, “I’ve travelled to Hungary several times a year to work with the East Gipsy Band and pianist Kalman Olah, among other musicians. My love of Hungarian folk music, Roma music, and the music of 20th century composer Béla Bartók, which itself is rooted in Hungarian folk music, served as inspiration for my PRISM Quartet commission.”

The Bartók influence can be heard in the quartal harmonies (i.e., built around the interval of the fourth) in much of the accompaniment, especially the chordal passages. And near the end, the texture opens out into something quieter, reminiscent of Bartók’s so-called *nachtmusik* (“night music”—like the slow movement of the *Concerto for Orchestra*, for example).

Steve Lehman’s *15 Places At The Same Time* makes the most subtly daring use of PRISM yet: in the course of a series of short miniatures, Lehman and PRISM produce sounds more often associated with electronics, sound effects, and percussion. Lehman, who has long worked at the intersection of improvisation and electronics, calls for rustling, whistling textures at the start. Later striking moments include a series of chords played with a reverb effect (*without* an actual reverb device—a real feat of rhythmic and breath control), and a solo that recalls the sounds of traditional Japanese music. At the heart of *15 Places at the Same Time* is an exploration of the boundaries between genres and between the performance practices of various traditions; Lehman adds that this work is reinforced by the idea of “improvisation as a creative practice situated at the threshold of structure and disorder, individuality and community, understanding and mystification, and the known and the unknown.” (You might add “acoustic and electronic”

to that series of dichotomies.)

Another world music tradition colors the dark-hued, even moonlit piece *Covenant of Voices*, by Greg Osby. In this sextet, David Liebman and PRISM join Osby in a piece that he describes as being “remotely inspired by the lilting textures, tension, tight harmonies and indirect resolutions that are trademarks of the Bulgarian Women’s Choir.” For the many fans of the Bulgarian State Radio And Television Female Vocal Choir, as they were officially known, this piece is not based on the earthy, intricate rhythms of songs like “Erghen Diado,” but rather the haunted, nocturnal world of songs like “Kalimankou Denkou,” with its keening solo and almost diaphanous accompanying ensemble. Even as the mood changes from noir-ish to more rhythmic, Osby deploys the six voices in unusual forms of counterpoint. Solos can stand out from and in contrast to the ensemble, or play the role of *primus inter pares*, unspooling material that seems to grow out of the overall texture.

This idea of playing with interacting voices, with splitting the group up into its component parts, is central to David Liebman’s *Trajectory* as well, scored for the same six saxophonists. Conversation and rhetoric are the order of the day. There are duos where the two lines flow along their separate but harmonious ways, and there is an argument when too many voices get involved later in the piece. “This openness and spontaneity is akin to what jazz musicians do all the time,” Liebman points out, “the success of which depends upon the musician’s responses to each other in combination with the written music itself.” *Trajectory* is thus a piece as much about listening as

it is about being heard.

Liebman also offers a lovely, affecting coda to this first edition of *Heritage/Evolution*: an arrangement of John Coltrane's *Dear Lord*. Essentially a beautiful, hymn-like chorale with a melody that has an unexpected taste of Ennio Morricone's film music to it, *Dear Lord* is, as Liebman neatly puts it, "a kind of benediction to the dense music being played at this performance."

Heritage/Evolution, Volume 1 promises that there will be a second volume, at least. And it implies that the evolution of the saxophone will continue. As evolutionary biologists have pointed out, these things don't just happen; there's usually an outside agency (climate change, the introduction of a new species into the ecology, etc.) that provokes big evolutionary moments. For the sax, the PRISM Quartet has been and still is one of those agents, tirelessly exploring the possibilities of this most versatile instrument.

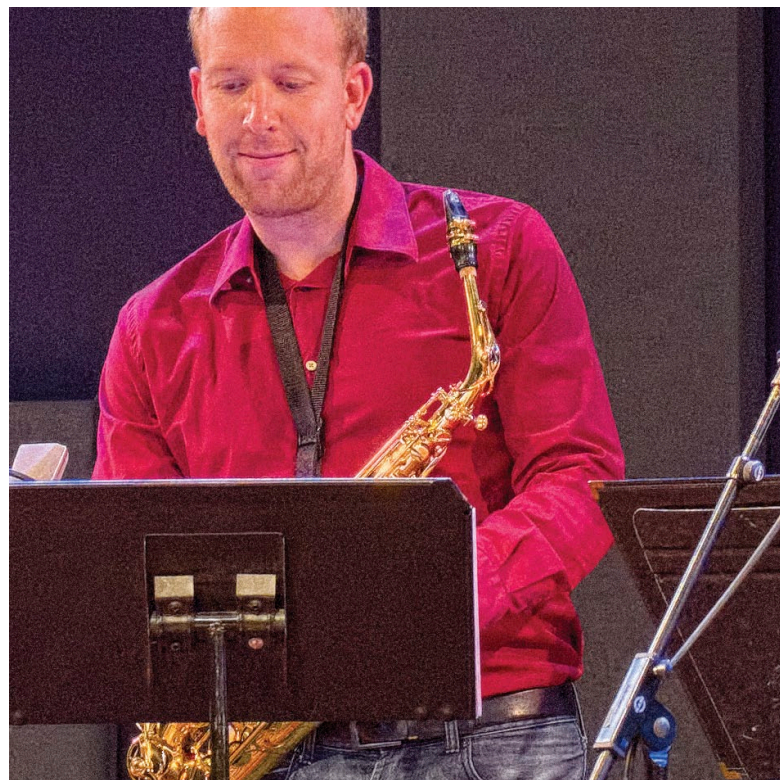
John Schaefer

Intriguing programs of great beauty and breadth have distinguished the PRISM Quartet as one of America's foremost chamber ensembles. Two-time winners of the Chamber Music America/ASCAP Award for Adventurous Programming, PRISM has been presented by Carnegie Hall, the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, and as soloists with the Detroit Symphony and Cleveland Orchestra. Champions of new music, PRISM has commissioned over 200 works, many by Pulitzer Prize-winning composers, including William Bolcom, Jennifer Higdon, Zhou Long, and Bernard Rands. PRISM has collaborated with an eclectic range of artists, including Ethel, Talujon, Music From China, Inti-Illimani, The Crossing, the New York Consort of Viols, Nai-Ni Chen Dance Company, Miro Dance Theatre, and top jazz artists, including guitarist Ben Monder, bass player Jay Anderson, and drummers Bill Stewart, Gerald Cleaver, and John Riley. PRISM's discography includes thirteen recordings on the Albany, Innova, Koch, Naxos, New Dynamic, and New Focus labels. PRISM may also be heard on the soundtrack of the film *Two Plus One*, composed by Quartet member Matthew Levy, and has been featured in the theme music to the weekly PBS news magazine "NOW."

prismquartet.com



Clockwise, from top right: Taimur Sullivan, Zachary Shemon, Timothy McAllister, Matthew Levy



Steve Lehman Described as “one of the transforming figures of early 21st century jazz” by *The Guardian* (UK) and as “a quietly dazzling saxophonist” by *The New York Times*, Fulbright scholar Steve Lehman is the first composer to integrate jazz and Spectral music, a form of classical music in which the physics of sound inform compositional decisions. His 2009 recording, *Travail, Transformation & Flow*, was chosen as the #1 Jazz Album of the year by *The New York Times*. In 2014 he received a Doris Duke Performing Artist Award. stevelehman.com

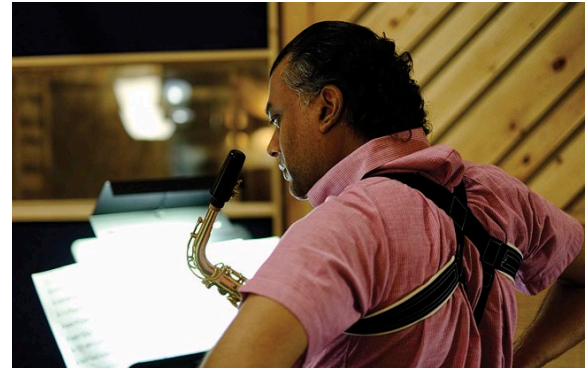
Dave Liebman's career has spanned over four decades, beginning in the 1970s as the saxophonist/flautist of both the Elvin Jones and Miles Davis groups, and continuing as a leader of his own ensembles, including Quest and Saxophone Summit. *DownBeat's* 2011 soprano saxophonist of the year, he is an NEA Master of Jazz whose discography of nearly 350 records “defines unpredictability, incorporating his fascination with the worlds of jazz, rock, ethnic and contemporary classical music” (*Washington Post*). daveliebman.com

Rudresh Mahanthappa is one of today's most innovative jazz composers and performers, fusing jazz and the culture of his Indian ancestry to break new musical ground. *DownBeat's* alto saxophonist of the year for the past three years, he was the recipient of a Guggenheim Fellowship and the coveted Doris Duke Performing Artist Award. He leads several groups, including Samdhi and the Indo-Pak Coalition, and has collaborated with Bunky Green, Jack DeJohnette, and Kadri Gopalnath. rudreshm.com

Greg Osby Saxophonist, composer, producer, educator, and 2012 Pew Fellow Greg Osby has made an indelible mark on contemporary jazz over the past 20 years. Described by *The New York Times* as “a pacesetter” who composes work that is “intricately coiled,” he has performed with Herbie Hancock, Dizzy Gillespie, Jack DeJohnette, and Andrew Hill and released 15 solo recordings on Blue Note before founding his own Inner Circle label, a platform for today’s brightest artists. gregosby.com

Tim Ries Hailed by *The New York Times* as “a singular talent, a player’s player,” Tim Ries is a versatile and thoughtful saxophonist and composer whose collaborators have included Phil Woods, Tom Harrell, Al Foster, John Patitucci, Danilo Perez, Red Garland, Badal Roy, Maria Schneider, Chris Potter, Donald Byrd, Stevie Wonder, Paul Simon, and Sheryl Crow. A former member of PRISM (1993–2001), he has released eight recordings as a leader, and currently tours with Jack DeJohnette and the Rolling Stones. timries.com

Miguel Zenón Multiple Grammy nominee and Guggenheim and MacArthur Fellow Miguel Zenón is widely considered one of the most influential saxophonists of his generation. He studied classical saxophone in his native Puerto Rico before developing a unique voice as a composer/conceptualist whose work blends Latin American folkloric music and jazz. A founding member of the acclaimed SF JAZZ Collective, he has released six recordings as a leader, including the Grammy nominated *Alma Adentro* (2011). miguelzenon.com





Top: Rudresh Mahanthappa; bottom: Steve Lehman



Tim Ries



Miguel Zenón







Dave Liebman



Greg Osby

Executive Producer; Editing/Mixing: Matthew Levy
Mastering: Katsuhiko Naito and Matthew Levy
Liner Notes: John Schaefer
Photography, Design, and Layout: fluxism.com

I Will Not Apologize For My Tone Tonight produced by Rudresh Mahanthappa and PRISM; *X Marks the Square* and *The Missing Piece* produced by Miguel Zenón and PRISM; *Name Day* produced by Tim Ries and PRISM; *15 Places at the Same Time* produced by Steve Lehman and PRISM; *Covenant of Voices* produced by Greg Osby and PRISM; *Trajectory* and *Dear Lord* produced by Dave Liebman and PRISM.

The PRISM Quartet performs exclusively on Selmer saxophones.

Steve Lehman performs exclusively on Selmer saxophones.

Dave Liebman plays Keilwerth Liebman Signature soprano saxophones, LeBayle mouthpieces, Silverstein ligatures, and Alexander Superial reeds.

Rudresh Mahanthappa is a Yamaha artist, performs exclusively on Vandoren reeds, and appears courtesy of ACT Music+Vision.

Greg Osby plays P. Mauriat saxophones, MacSax mouthpieces, Alexander Superial reeds, and appears courtesy of Inner Circle Music.

Tim Ries plays Francois Louis mouthpieces, ligatures and reeds, Virtuoso tenor saxophones, RS Berkeley alto saxophones, and appears courtesy of Tames Records.

Miguel Zenón plays Rico Jazz Select reeds exclusively.

All compositions (except *The Missing Piece* and *Dear Lord*) were commissioned with generous support from The Pew Center for Arts & Heritage. *I Will Not Apologize for My Tone Tonight* and *X Marks the Square* were commissioned with additional support from The Presser Foundation.

This recording was made possible with support from:

The Pew Center for Arts & Heritage

The National Endowment for the Arts

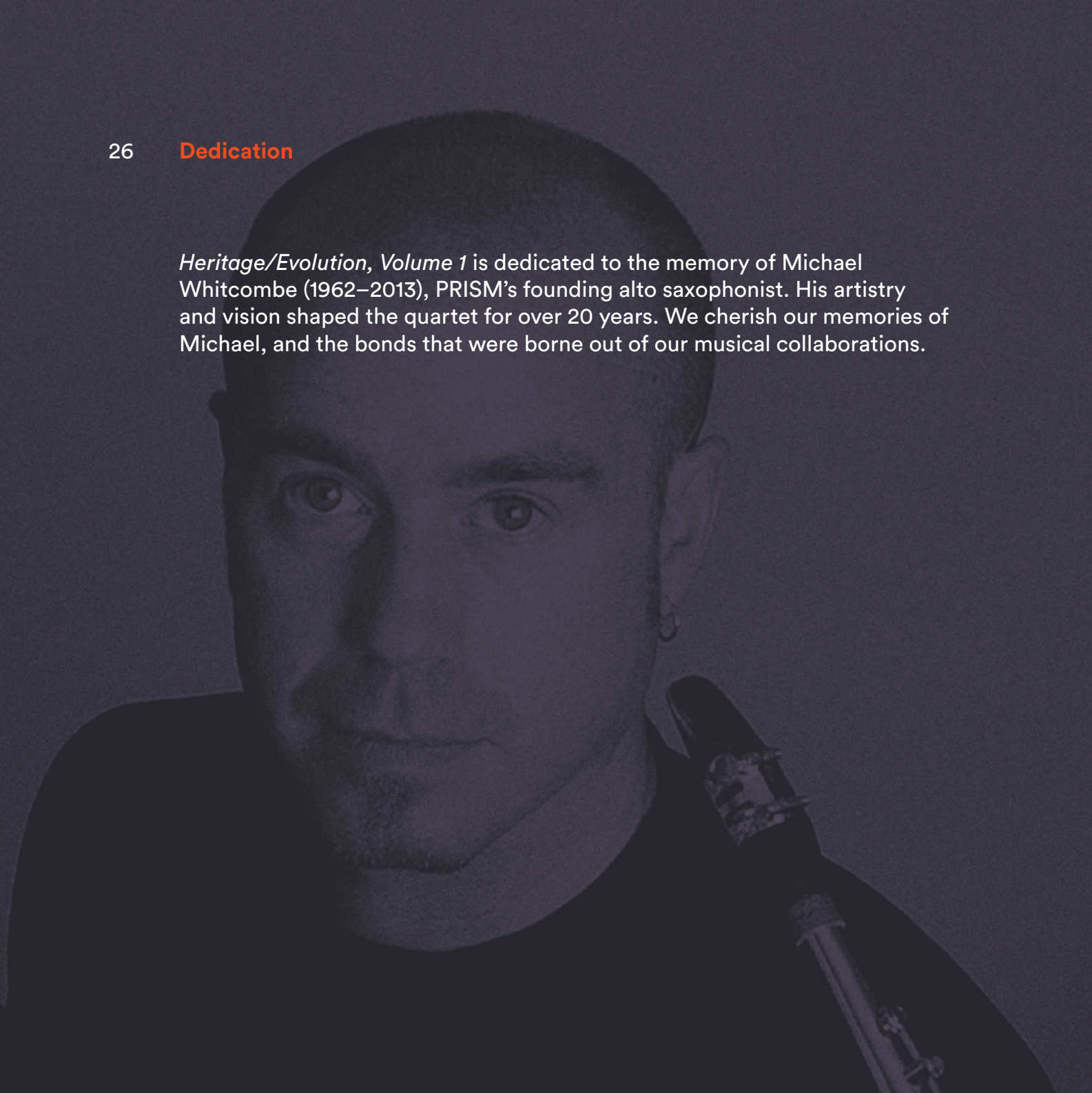
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The Musical Fund Society of Philadelphia



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Heritage/Evolution, Volume 1 is dedicated to the memory of Michael Whitcombe (1962–2013), PRISM’s founding alto saxophonist. His artistry and vision shaped the quartet for over 20 years. We cherish our memories of Michael, and the bonds that were borne out of our musical collaborations.

Thanks

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The PRISM Quartet thanks the institutions that funded this recording, as well as the many individual donors who support our creative work. Many thanks to Philip, Chris, and Steve at innova; and John Nuechterlein at the American Composer Forum for sharing it with the world.

Innova is supported by an endowment from the McKnight Foundation.
Director: Philip Blackburn; Manager: Chris Campbell;
Steve McPherson, PR *innova.mu*

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H/E¹