

## **PROGRAM NOTES: “Short Stories”**

"Short Stories" is a collection of 6 movements for saxophone quartet, which are flexible in both the order and number in which they can be performed. The piece was written with the idea that a group could tailor their performance according to their venue and the duration they might like to fill on a concert. While being composer-in-residence with the Prism Saxophone Quartet, I had the chance to see how the demands for repertoire change greatly from concert to concert: through school programs with young students, to college-age classical musicians, to formal recitals. So, when I sat down to write a work for the Ancia, Black Swamp, Resounding Winds, and Sax 4th Avenue quartets, I wanted a work with as much diversity in the characters of the movements as possible and I wanted the groups to have freedom in their choices of movements. As a result, there are 6 movements, 3 of which are slow and 3 of which are fast, each telling a different story:

"Summer's Eve" - I had in mind the idyllic summer evening where folks are out sitting on their porches in swings and rocking chairs, listening to the sounds of summer: crickets and children at play, with soft evening breezes. I wanted to capture the essence and the magic of an ideal summer's eve.

"Lullaby" - This movement was originally written as a work for mezzo, flute, and piano, but I kept hearing it as a saxophone quartet in my head. It is a lullaby whose lyrical qualities seem to lend itself to the saxophone very well.

"Coyote Nights" - Many years ago, I took a trip out West, camping out in 8 different National Parks; one of those parks was Arches, in Utah. It is an unusual place where it becomes totally dark at night, with large looming rocks, a million stars above, and with the sound of wild coyotes crying in the night. That crying is peaceful reminder that we are visitors.

"Chase" - A fast movement with much energy and tension, this is a running game that could be through any street, anywhere; where pursuers and prey sometimes come very close to catching up with each other, and when they do, they rough and tumble before sprinting off again.

"Stomp & Dance" – This movement speaks for itself.

"Splashing the Canvas" – Inspired by Jackson Pollock, an artist who splashes paint upon a canvas in a wild and uncontrolled manner, building up layers and constantly changing the resulting structure. Through this piece, many ideas are presented and are thrown about and layered. At the beginning of the movement it takes longer for the ideas to be stated, but as the piece progresses, the themes come back quicker and quicker as if the canvas were building into thick layers of overlapping ideas and becoming more complex.

"Short Stories" was commissioned by the Ancia, Black Swamp, Resounding Winds, and Sax 4th Avenue Quartets, with a grant from the American Composers Forum, underwritten by the Jerome Foundation, with additional funding from the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts.

--Jennifer Higdon