

A Faculty Recital
featuring

Ensemble du Bout du Monde

Noa Mick, soprano saxophone
Simone Castria, alto saxophone
Salvatore Castellano, tenor saxophone
Don-Paul Kahl, baritone saxophone

Liminality

works by Ianni, Minakakis, Janmohammadi,
Xenakis, Luc, Czernowin, and Tzortzis

Sunday, October 19, 2025
8:00 p.m.
Plimpton Shattuck Black Box Theatre

PROGRAM

Iannis Xenakis
(1922-2001)

XAS (1987)

Maria-Eugenia Luc
(b. 1958)

***Zeruan* (2020)**
Boston premiere

Davide Ianni

Estuaries of Selves
World premiere

Stratis Minakakis

Thalassografia–Small Nepenthean
Boston premiere

Intermission

Chaya Czernowin
(b. 1957)

Irrational

Nima Janmohammadi

Light is a veil
World premiere

Nicolas Tzortzis
(b. 1978)

***Lumineux* (2017)**
Boston premiere

Xenakis XAS

Composed in 1987, *XAS* was commissioned by the Rascher Saxophone Quartet.. The title itself is an anagram of “SAX”: the S—the only asymmetrical letter—is reversed to form a mirror image. It also playfully references the composer’s own name, XenAkiS, by highlighting its outermost letters and its central A. Since Xenakis had never before written for the saxophone, embedding part of his name into the title while reversing the name of the instrument’s inventor can be read as an appropriation—claiming the saxophone for his own musical language. This work would remain his only composition for the instrument, as a projected concerto was never realized.

Despite the quartet’s modest instrumentation, *XAS* radiates power combined with an almost abrasive intensity. Extended techniques appear only sparingly: a few quarter tones and simple multiphonics punctuate the score. For the most part, Xenakis avoids the range of timbral and attack-based effects commonly associated with the instrument, leaving such choices largely to the performers. Instead, he pushes the saxophones beyond their conventional limits, employing an extraordinarily extended high tessitura: up to a minor sixth above the soprano’s range, a minor ninth for the alto and tenor, and even an eleventh for the baritone. In the decades since its premiere, *XAS* has become one of the most compelling works for saxophone quartet. Many consider it the first “serious” piece for the medium by a major composer, at a time when the quartet was often dismissed as trivial or even in poor taste, much like the brass quintet once was. The saxophone had long been confined to popular music and jazz by most twentieth- and nineteenth-century composers. Xenakis’s bold nonconformism helped redefine the ensemble’s artistic potential and sparked the growth of its repertoire. Since the publication of *XAS*, composers such as Donatoni, Cage, Dufourt, and Aperghis have enriched the saxophone quartet literature, each exploring the vast and still-evolving possibilities of this dynamic chamber formation.

— *Serge Bertocchi, edited by Don-Paul Kahl*

Luc Zeruan

Zeruan (Basque for “In heaven”), completed in 2020, is dedicated to the saxophone quartet Ensemble du Bout du Monde. In this work, María Eugenia Luc explores the unique sonic potential of the saxophone with the aim of shaping an initial conceptual idea: the sky as infinite, an unfathomable space of unlimited possibilities.

The piece opens with a recurring pattern built from three contrasting timbral gestures: a short, low attack (tongue ram) in the lower instruments of the quartet, a high sustained soprano note that gradually dissolves into a *bisbigliando*, and an aeolic sound on the baritone saxophone. This pattern reappears in various transformations throughout the first part of the work. Over time, its elements detach from one another, evolving into independent layers of percussive sounds (slap, tongue ram, key strokes), harmonic textures (*bisbigliando*, trills, tremolos, multiphonics, arpeggios), and breath-based effects.

Zeruan thus unfolds through a process of deconstruction, breaking apart the initial pattern so that each component gains autonomy and develops a distinct identity. After a brief yet forceful baritone cadence—an improvised creation by Don-

Paul Kahl of the quartet, based on a pattern suggested by the composer — the score concludes with an expansive coda in which noise once again takes center stage.

– Mikel Chamizo, edited by Don-Paul Kahl

Ianni *Estuaries of Selves*

aestu-/arium tidal inlet.

A scored valley engulfed.

Impulses dissolved, scattered - sediment remade.

Excess oxygen feeds, variations of salinity.

The sediment of settlement, a spawning place, clogging mouths and gills.

Ramifications of unplanned exiles unraveled by the tied,

Friction into mixture as our reasons collide.

Minakakis *Thalassografia–Small Nepenthean*

The title of Stratis Minakakis's *Thalassografia–Small Nepenthean* intertwines etymology, myth, and personal remembrance. "Thalassografia" translates as "sea-etching," evoking the constant motion of the waves, while "nepenthean" refers to the mythical flowers in Homeric poetry believed to banish grief (ne = away, penthos = sorrow). The work was composed in memory of Minakakis's aunt, who passed away from cancer in 2018, and draws upon Greek literary images of the sea as an agent of lethe, erasing sorrow and easing the burden of memory.

Throughout the piece, the music oscillates like the sea itself: calm and meditative in some passages, overwhelming and threatening in others, yet always charged with awe. Within nano-microtonal textures, listeners can trace hidden lamentation lines, inspired by Mediterranean singing practices ranging from northern Greece to Sicily, Corsica, and North Africa. These lines breathe an expressive, human voice into the soundscape, recalling traditions of vocal lament that blur the boundary between grief and consolation.

Alongside this imagery of waves and song runs another structural principle: genetic sequencing. Much of the musical material derives from intervallic "codes" that generate families of scales. While each sequence is unique, their similarity suggests shared DNA. In the fourth movement, this code deliberately degenerates: scales crystallize into chords, which then fracture into distorted remnants of the original material. This musical erosion—marked by heavy yet sustained accents—functions like a primitive script of mutation and eventual destruction, offering a final gesture of fragility and transformation.

With its fusion of myth, memory, and sound design, *Thalassografia–Small Nepenthean* invites us to hear the sea not only as a force of nature but also as a metaphor for remembrance, loss, and renewal.

– Don-Paul Kahl, based on texts by Stratis Minakakis

Czernowin *Irrational*

Originally conceived for Loadbang—a New York chamber ensemble of trumpet, clarinet, trombone, and piano—*Irrational* was later reimagined for saxophone quartet

at Czernowin's invitation with Ensemble du Bout du Monde. From its inception, the piece is a deliberate test: can an ensemble of distinct voices stay coherent under pressure, or will they fracture into chaotic fragments?

Using the four saxophones' unique timbres, *Irrational* unfolds as a constant negotiation between unity and fragmentation. At times the quartet coalesces into a single organism—breathing, trembling, shifting as one. At other moments it rips apart: individual lines sprawl into untamed gestures, splintering textures into jagged shards. The tension is always present: will they stay together, or break apart irreparably?

Czernowin's sonic world is resolutely modern yet punctuated by flashes of unexpected levity. Within dense, detailed layers lie hints of comic relief—sudden eruptions or absurd twists that shift the emotional balance, testing both the ensemble and the listener's expectations. The drama of *Irrational* lives in its constant brinkmanship: risk and reward are inseparable here. A fracture might lead to profound insight—or total collapse.

In performance, the quartet becomes more than instruments. They are bodies in tension, voices in flux. At every moment the question pulses: can the group hold? Or will the pressure yield a beautiful, volatile disintegration? — Don-Paul Kahl

Janmohammadi *Light is a veil*

Light falls, twelve days it was, night forgets it had a name. — Nima Janmohammadi

Tzortzis *Lumineux*

Written between July and September 2017 for the Ensemble du Bout du Monde, Nicolas Tzortzis's *Lumineux* grew out of a moment of profound personal upheaval. While the composer's official note highlights the influence of Georges Aperghis's *Signaux* and the work's exploration of multiphonics, the deeper story reveals a rawer emotional undercurrent. Composed in the aftermath of a painful breakup, *Lumineux* transforms private loss into an urgent, almost physical sound-world.

The title itself suggests radiance, but the light here is never uncomplicated. Instead, it fractures and refracts through multiphonics, extended tessituras, and razor-sharp rhythmic interplay. Textures surge forward with relentless intensity, then shatter into sudden silences. The music enacts a cycle of rising tension, escalation, and ultimate rupture—a sonic mirror of grief as it builds beneath the surface until breaking point.

This visceral quality is perhaps what makes the work so compelling. The saxophone quartet becomes both voice and vessel: sighing, screaming, shimmering with unresolved energy. Yet through the pain, *Lumineux* opens a path toward reflection. By casting intimate suffering into the realm of sound, Tzortzis offers a cathartic transformation. The piece is dedicated to the members of the Ensemble du Bout du Monde, who gave it its first voice in Athens, and to Georges Aperghis, whose inspiration provided a framework within which Tzortzis could channel something intensely personal into something that now resonates universally.

— Don-Paul Kahl, based on texts by Nicolas Tzortzis

The **Ensemble du Bout du Monde** (EBM) is an award-winning collective made up of four classically trained saxophonists from Israel, Italy, and the United States, living in Belgium, France, and Italy. As a contemporary ensemble, they are constantly searching to place art in unexpected and truly unique situations. Through the saxophone quartet, their tool to make art through music, they seek to create a paradigm shift in the contemporary concept of what this already versatile ensemble is.

Interested equally in breaking away from the classic view of a quartet, the ensemble members deem it necessary to collaborate in cross-cultural ways between the arts and other humanities. Formed, developed, and trained in France, EBM brings four disparate people and cultures together to envision a creative and innovative collective for which there exists no boundaries or limitations.

Currently, EBM is working through an Advanced Chamber Music Course at Orpheus Institute in Ghent, Belgium with members of the Ictus and Spectra Ensembles. This course bolsters their position in the Belgian music market and continues to train their distinct sound while curating particular programmes for Belgian audiences.

The Ensemble du Bout du Monde is an endorsed artist ensemble with the Henri Selmer Paris Company. They proudly perform on Henri Selmer Paris saxophones and mouthpieces, exclusively.

Upcoming NEC Composers' Concert

NEC Composers' Series: "Home"

Sophia Szokolay '19, '25 DMA, violin and Sid Richardson, co-curators

An exploration of cultural identity and belonging, shaped by the experiences of Migration and the quest for a sense of home in the midst of dissonance – works by Sam Wu, Marc Migó, Richardson, Mallia, Sanlıkol, Minakakis, and Gandolfi

Thursday, November 6, 2025 at 7:30 p.m., Jordan Hall

Other Upcoming Concerts at NEC

all programs subject to change

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Tuesday Night New Music

New music by NEC student composers, performed by their peers

Tuesday, October 21, 2025 at 8:00 p.m., Burnes Hall

Liederabend LXXVII, JJ Penna, curator

"Paris Visions: Guillaume Apollinaire and Ned Rorem"

Works by Francis Poulenc and Ned Rorem

Wednesday, October 22, 2025 at 6:00 p.m., Williams Hall

NEC Symphony, David Loebel, conductor

Tower Sixth Fanfare for the Uncommon Woman; Haydn Symphony No. 85, "La Reine";

Franck Symphony in D Minor

Wednesday, October 22, 2025 at 7:30 p.m., Jordan Hall

Perkin Opera Scenes

Thursday, October 23 & Friday, October 24, 2025 at 6:00 p.m.,

Plimpton Shattuck Black Box Theatre

NEC Chamber Singers, Erica J. Washburn, conductor

"Beyond Boundaries and Borders", works focusing on refugee issues and awareness, police brutality, victim recognition, and more by Shaw, von Bingen, Thompson, Curenton-Simpson, Bussewitz-Quarm, and Boulanger

Thursday, October 23, 2025 at 7:30 p.m., Jordan Hall

[nec]shivaree, Stephen Drury, artistic director

Terry Riley In C (performed in celebration of the composer's 90th birthday)

Sunday, October 26, 2025 at 8:00 p.m., Burnes Hall

Faculty Recital: Cameron Stowe

Monday, October 27, 2025 at 7:30 p.m., Jordan Hall

Faculty Recital: Borromeo String Quartet

Tuesday, October 28, 2025 at 7:30 p.m., Jordan Hall

NEC Philharmonia, Hugh Wolff, conductor

Bacewicz Overture; Shostakovich Piano Concerto No. 1;

Prokofiev Symphony No. 5 in B-flat Major, op. 100

Wednesday, October 29, 2025 at 7:30 p.m., Jordan Hall

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