



Interlochen

ARTS ACADEMY

Interlochen, Michigan
29th Program of the 64th Year

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GUEST ARTIST RECITAL

Cerus Quartet

Roberto Campa, soprano saxophone
Laura Ramsay, alto saxophone
Kyle Kato, tenor saxophone
Samuel Dishon, baritone saxophone

Wednesday, October 15, 2025 5:30pm, Dendrinos Chapel/Recital Hall

Pequeña Czarda (1949)..... Pedro Iturralde
(1929-2020)

Saxophone Quartet in B-flat Major, Op. 109 (1932) Alexander Glazunov
(1865-1936)

Allegro

Canzona variée

Variation I

Variation II

Variation III - A la Schumann

Variation IV - A la Chopin

Variation V - Scherzo

Finale

Michelangelo '70 (1970)..... Astor Piazzolla (1921-1992)
arr. Michael Chapa

Sólo el misterio (2021) Joan Pérez-Villegas
(b. 1994)

Toccata, Op. 39 (1887) Cecile Chaminade (1857-1944)
arr. Roberto Campa

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PROGRAM NOTES

Pedro Iturralde (1929-2020) was a Spanish woodwind artist, composer, and professor known for pioneering flamenco jazz. He led his own quartet at the W. Jazz Club in Madrid, where he blended traditional Spanish styles with jazz. His innovative work eventually brought him to the Blue Note label and made him a leader in the Spanish jazz scene. *Pequeña Czarda* (meaning "little dance"), written in 1949 when Iturralde was 20, serves to showcase the virtuosity found in traditional folk music. The music constantly moves between lyricism and intense technical passages, emulating a folk musician's ability to employ a wide birth of styles in a short time. Full of charm and excitement, this piece is a fan favorite.

Alexander Glazunov (1865-1936) was a pivotal figure in the late-romantic period. His music served as a bridge between Tchaikovsky's lyrical style and Rimsky-Korsakov's rich orchestration. Glazunov is most notably known for his eight symphonic works, alongside ballets, concertos, and chamber music. One of the first substantial works for the saxophone quartet, Glazunov's *Saxophone Quartet in B-flat Major* serves as a standard of the saxophone quartet's repertoire. The first movement takes a sonata form, utilizing elegant lines and rich harmonic textures. The second movement presents a lyrical theme that evolves through a series of variations, each highlighting different members of the ensemble. The later variations recall the Romantic sound worlds of Schumann and Chopin, with expressive phrasing and delicate articulations. The piece concludes with a grand finale filled with conversational lines passed through the ensemble.

Ástor Piazzolla (1921-1992) was a revolutionary Argentinian composer most well-known for creating *tango nuevo*, a genre that allowed for the diffusion of tango from dance clubs to concert halls worldwide. His music fused the feeling of traditional tango with classical compositional techniques, such as dissonance, counterpoint, and meter shifts. He studied classical music with Alberto Ginastera and, later, in Paris with Nadia Boulanger, who pushed for him to embrace the tango as his unique voice. His group, the Quinteto Tango Nuevo, featured the bandoneón, alongside violin, piano, guitar, and bass. Piazzolla's vast body of over 3,000 works remains sought out and performed by accomplished musicians across genres, including jazz, classical, and rock. *Michelangelo '70* is an exciting work that highlights the tango nuevo style. Named after a Buenos Aires cafe where Piazzolla's quintet used to play in the 70s, the piece is centered on a relentless three-note theme that almost sounds like it could be the soundtrack of a heist or car chase in an action movie.

Joan Pérez-Villegas (b. 1994) is a composer, percussionist, and arranger who writes music ranging from chamber to symphonic music, jazz orchestral music, music for dance and theatre, pop music, and traditional music. He composed his first ever saxophone quartet, *Sólo el Mistero* in 2021, dedicated to Spanish poet

and playwright Federico García Lorca, whose works were infused with the culture and art of his native origins—Andalusia and Granada. The three Spanish popular songs that serve as the basis of Pérez-Villegas' work are perfect examples of the sensual melodies and stirring rhythmic patterns emblematic of Andalusian music. In this setting for four saxophones, the composer makes skillful use of timbral modifications with the use of bisbigliando (timbral trills), quarter tones, as well as intentional instruction for the musicians to play in a "grotesque and out of tune" style. These effects all evoke the fiery passion of these melodies and the lyrics they represent. Each voice of the saxophone family takes one of the popular melodies and they become overlaid in the exciting finale section, competing for the listener's attention.

Cecile Chaminade (1857-1944) was a French pianist and composer who wrote over 200 compositions. A forgotten figure, she was one of the first women to achieve fame as a composer, winning the Legion of Honor in 1913. She was a genius of Romantic character pieces, however as the 20th century progressed, her compositions received the label of "salon music," or accessible music that was meant for the home. Unfortunately, by the time of her death, most of Chaminade's music had disappeared from the concert hall. The Toccata, Op. 39 is a virtuosic showstopper that features a stream of energetic 16th notes over a bubbly harmonic accompaniment. Although not extremely difficult for the piano, adapting it to saxophone quartet presents unique challenges including extreme ranges at varying dynamics. However, the saxophone also breathes new life in this short work. It becomes more exciting and dynamic, evoking scenes from 19th century France; from elegant high-class life to the tension experienced by the working class.

—Program Notes supplied by the Cerus Quartet

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Cerus Quartet

Emerging as one of the most compelling chamber ensembles of their generation, the Cerus Quartet is dedicated to showcasing the dynamic and versatile sound of the saxophone quartet. With a repertoire spanning contemporary compositions and transcriptions of classical masterworks, the quartet seeks to establish the saxophone quartet as a leading voice in 21st-century classical music. Their mission is driven by diverse, engaging programming and innovative visual elements that captivate audiences.

Cerus champions both new music and timeless repertoire. They have premiered works by Pulitzer Prize-winning composer Jennifer Higdon, Karalyn Schubring, and Joey Karz, with a significant commission by Ryan Lindveit debuting in 2025. Their unique programming approach—pairing newly commissioned works with transcriptions of classical mainstays—has not only earned them critical acclaim and competition success but has also shaped a distinctive ensemble sound,

allowing them to seamlessly adapt to a wide range of performance settings and musical styles.

The quartet was named the winner of the 2025 Concert Artist Guild Louis and Susan Meisel Competition. As part of that honor, Cerus was awarded the inaugural Bohemians Artist Residency and the Robert A. Levinson and Patricia S. Levinson Arts Achievement Award, offering tailored resources to accelerate their career development. Additional accolades include the Gold Medal in the 2025 Fischhoff Chamber Music Competition, First Prize in the 2024 MTNA National Chamber Music Competition, and First Prize with the Michigan Prize at the 2023 Briggs Chamber Music Competition.

Performing across the United States and internationally, Cerus recently appeared at the Walla Walla Chamber Music Festival, where they emphasized education and community engagement, presenting interactive workshops as well as community performances designed to inspire and connect with audiences of all ages and backgrounds. In the summer of 2025, the quartet participated in the IPR Sound Garden Project, bringing innovative performances to public and community spaces. They were also featured as concerto soloists with the University of Michigan Symphony Band Chamber Winds, performing Chen Yi's Ba Yin. Based in Ann Arbor, the ensemble is composed of Roberto Campa (soprano saxophone), Laura Ramsay (alto), Kyle Kato (tenor), and Samuel Dishon (baritone).

Their name draws from Greek mythology—Cerus was a wild bull transformed by the goddess Persephone, a story of chaos tamed into beauty. This myth mirrors the quartet's artistic vision: to reimagine the saxophone as a medium of beauty and expressive depth, deserving of a central role in 21st-century classical music.

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