

For Immediate Release

Contact: Concerto Engagements

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a w a r d e d g r a n t s t o c o m m i s s i o n
s t e v e n m a c k e y

n e w c o n c e r t o g r o s s o f o r s a x o p h o n e q u a r t e t
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The **PRISM Saxophone Quartet**, hailed as “**exciting and virtuosic**” by the *New York Times* and two-time winners of the Chamber Music America/ASCAP Award for Adventurous Programming, has been awarded grants from the **Rockefeller Foundation**, the **Presser Foundation**, **Meet the Composer** and the **National Endowment for the Arts** to commission a new concerto grosso for saxophone quartet and orchestra by the renowned American composer **Steven Mackey**. The new work, which will represent Mackey’s third concerto grosso and his first work for saxophone quartet, will be approximately 25 minutes in length and is to be premiered during the **2005-06 season**. PRISM is now offering engagements for co-premieres of Mackey’s concerto through Judy Valenti of Zajonc/Valenti Management at 800-650-8742.

t h e c o l l a b o r a t i o n

Steven Mackey’s work demonstrates a fascination with and respect for American vernacular culture and fuses a stunning breadth of musical influences. Mackey’s idiom, a multi-layered world of rhythm and sonority, draws its expanded harmonic palette from western art music, its wit and vivacity from the imaginative transformation of popular music elements. His many commissions to date—among them works for the Chicago and San Francisco Symphonies, the Los Angeles Philharmonic, the Kronos Quartet, the Borromeo String Quartet, Bill Frisell and Joey Baron, and cellist Fred Sherry—blend classical forms with innovative sonic textures. Mackey’s orchestral works display consummate skill in their handling of instrumental color and texture. Of the world premiere of *Tilt* by the American Composers Orchestra in 1992, Tim Page of *Newsday* wrote: “One was reminded of a radio caught between frequencies: timbres bang and shimmer, there are arpeggios and teasing references to musical cliches, and despite some occasional violent fortissimos, the mood throughout is lithe, subtle and more than a little playful. Anything can happen—and most of it does.”

The PRISM Quartet’s choice to commission Mackey was based on their shared ground of stylistic versatility and exploration. PRISM’s members have been praised for their ability to “move effortlessly between styles” (*Philadelphia Inquirer*). Dedicated to establishing the saxophone as a serious concert instrument while embracing its rich history in jazz and vernacular culture, PRISM looks forward to a series of co-premieres of this new commission as a significant contribution to both the orchestra and saxophone repertoire by an internationally recognized American composer.

The Mackey commission builds on the PRISM Quartet's previous success in presenting a concerto grosso by Pulitzer Prize winner William Bolcom. Since the world premiere of Bolcom's Concerto Grosso with the Detroit Symphony Orchestra in October 2000, PRISM has performed the work to critical acclaim and packed houses with 17 orchestras, including the Cleveland and Dallas Symphony Orchestras.

t o p a r t i c i p a t e

Engagements to perform the co-premiere of Mackey's new concerto grosso with the PRISM Quartet can be secured through Judy Valenti of Zajonc/Valenti Management at 800-650-8742. The work will be available for programming starting in September 2004. Because the PRISM Quartet is a roster artist of Pennsylvania Performing Arts on Tour (PennPAT), orchestras in the ten-state mid-Atlantic region (Delaware, Maryland, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Virginia, West Virginia, Washington DC and the US Virgin Islands) are eligible to apply for grants to fund up to 50% of PRISM's artist fees. For more information, visit www.pennpat.org, or contact Katie West, Director of Pennsylvania Performing Arts on Tour at 215-496-9424.

b i o g r a p h i e s

Intriguing programs of great beauty and breadth have distinguished the **PRISM Quartet** as one of America's foremost chamber ensembles. Chosen by *Musical America* as "Outstanding Young Artists" and winners of the Chamber Music America/ASCAP Award for Adventurous Programming and the Fischhoff National Chamber Music Competition, PRISM has performed on *Entertainment Tonight* and National Public Radio and in Alice Tully Hall with the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center. In 1995, PRISM toured Latin America under the auspices of the United States Information Agency. Most recently, PRISM has been presented as soloists with 17 orchestras nationwide, including the Cleveland, Dallas and Detroit Symphony Orchestras, performing William Bolcom's *Concerto Grosso*, commissioned by the Quartet in 2000. Founded in 1984, the PRISM Quartet has served as Artists-in-Residence at Settlement Music School and the Free Library of Philadelphia since 1994. PRISM has recorded for Koch International Classics and Innova and may be heard weekly in the featured music to the new PBS series, "NOW with Bill Moyers."

Steven Mackey (b. 1956) has established himself as one of the most gifted and original American composers to emerge during the 1990s. His early training in performance was as a classical and electric guitarist and Baroque lutenist. His studies culminated in a Ph.D. in composition from Brandeis University. Mackey is now Professor of Music at Princeton University, where he has been a member of the faculty since 1985.

As a composer, Mackey has been honored by numerous awards including a Guggenheim Fellowship, a Charles Ives Scholarship from the American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters, two awards from the Kennedy Center for the performing arts and in 1995 he was given the Stoeger Proze for Chamber Music by the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center. His *Indigenous Instruments* was selected to represent the U.S. at the International Rostrum of Composers in Paris in 1990. Mackey has been the composer in residence at numerous music festivals and will be the featured composer at the 2003 Holland festival in Amsterdam. Among his commissions are works for the Chicago and San Francisco Symphonies, the Los Angeles Philharmonic, the Kronos Quartet, the Koussevitzky Music Foundation in the Library of Congress, the Fromm Foundation, the Borromeo String Quartet, Bill Frisell and Joey Baron, and cellist Fred Sherry. Mackey's monodrama, *Ravenshead* for tenor/actor (Rinde Eckert) and electro-acoustic band/ensemble (the Paul Drescher Ensemble), has been performed nearly one hundred times and is available on CD. In a year-end wrap up of cultural events, USA today crowned the work "Best New Opera of 1998."

Over the past decade Mackey has increased his performance activities. Since 1998, he has performed *Deal* for guitar and large chamber ensemble many times throughout Europe and the U.S. In April 2000, he gave the premiere of *Tuck and Roll*, a concerto for electric guitar and orchestra, with Michael Tilson Thomas and the

New World Symphony with subsequent performances in San Francisco at the American Mavericks Festival. In 2002, Mackey will tour Europe with The British ensemble Psappha in an all Mackey program.

In September of 2001, BMG/RCA released Mackey's first orchestral disc with the New World Symphony conducted by Michael Tilson Thomas called Tuck and Roll. The disc includes *Tuck and Roll*, *Eating Greens*, and *Lost and Found*. The Brentano Quartet recorded a CD of Mackey's string quartet music for Arabesque Records in 2002. His music is published by Boosey & Hawkes.

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