A man in a blue suit and light blue shirt is holding a gold saxophone. He is looking directly at the camera. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

# PRISM Quartet

## People's Emergency Center

Music for Saxophones by Matthew Levy

featuring

Tim Ries

Rudresh Mahanthappa

Jason Moran

Ben Monder

Jay Anderson

Bill Stewart

François Zayas

**PRISM Quartet** **People's Emergency Center**

**DISC 1**

**Under the Sun**

**1 Awakening** 4:57

**2 Lonely Pairs** 3:21

**3 Judgment** 6:08

Jason Moran, piano; François Zayas, percussion; Richard Belcastro, sitar (Judgment only); PRISM Quartet: Timothy McAllister, soprano; Zachary Shemon, alto; Matthew Levy, tenor, xylophone, and thumb piano; Taimur Sullivan, baritone/bass

Recorded in 2013 at Brooklyn Recording Studios: Andy Taub, engineer

Ovation Sounds: Evan Richey, engineer

The Bunker: Pat Noonan, engineer

Retro City Studios: Dave Barbaree and Ray Pirre, engineers

**4 Lyric** 15:18

PRISM Quartet: Timothy McAllister, soprano; Zachary Shemon, alto; Matthew Levy, tenor; Taimur Sullivan, baritone

Recorded in 2011 at Retro City Studios:

Dave Barbaree and Ray Pirre, engineers



## Music for Saxophones by Matthew Levy

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### Been There

5 People's Emergency Center 12:53

6 Gymnopedie 2:32

Tim Ries, soprano (People's Emergency Center only); Ben Monder, guitar;  
Jay Anderson, bass (People's Emergency Center only); Bill Stewart, drums;  
PRISM Quartet: Matthew Levy, tenor; Taimur Sullivan, alto/baritone;  
Timothy McAllister, baritone; Zachary Shemon, baritone

Recorded in 2013 at Whitewater Productions: John White, engineer

Ovation Sounds: Evan Richey, engineer

Retro City Studios: Ray Pirre, engineer

Sine Studios: Matt Teacher and Mike Lawson, engineers



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**DISC 2**

**Serial Mood**

**1 Reflection** 8:12

**2 Refraction** 11:52

Tim Ries, soprano; Rudresh Mahanthappa, alto (Reflection only); Ben Monder, guitar; Jay Anderson, bass; Bill Stewart, drums; PRISM Quartet: Timothy McAllister, alto; Zachary Shemon, alto; Matthew Levy, tenor; Taimur Sullivan, baritone

Recorded in 2013 at Whitewater Productions: John White, engineer  
Retro City Studios: Ray Pirre, engineer

**3 Brown Eyes** 5:17

Tim Ries, soprano; Ben Monder, guitar; Jay Anderson, bass; Bill Stewart, drums; PRISM Quartet: Timothy McAllister, alto; Zachary Shemon, alto; Matthew Levy, tenor; Taimur Sullivan, baritone

Recorded in 2013 at Whitewater Productions: John White, engineer

**4 Mr. Bobs and Lori Ann** 8:36

Tim Ries, soprano; Ben Monder, guitar; Bill Stewart, drums; PRISM Quartet: Timothy McAllister, alto; Zachary Shemon, alto; Matthew Levy, tenor; Taimur Sullivan, baritone

Recorded in 2013 at Whitewater Productions: John White, engineer  
Retro City Studios: Ray Pirre, engineer

**5 Beneath 2:51**

PRISM Quartet: Timothy McAllister, soprano; Zachary Shemon; alto;  
Matthew Levy, tenor; Taimur Sullivan, baritone/bass

**6 Above 5:32**

PRISM Quartet: Timothy McAllister, soprano; Zachary Shemon, alto;  
Matthew Levy, tenor; Taimur Sullivan, baritone

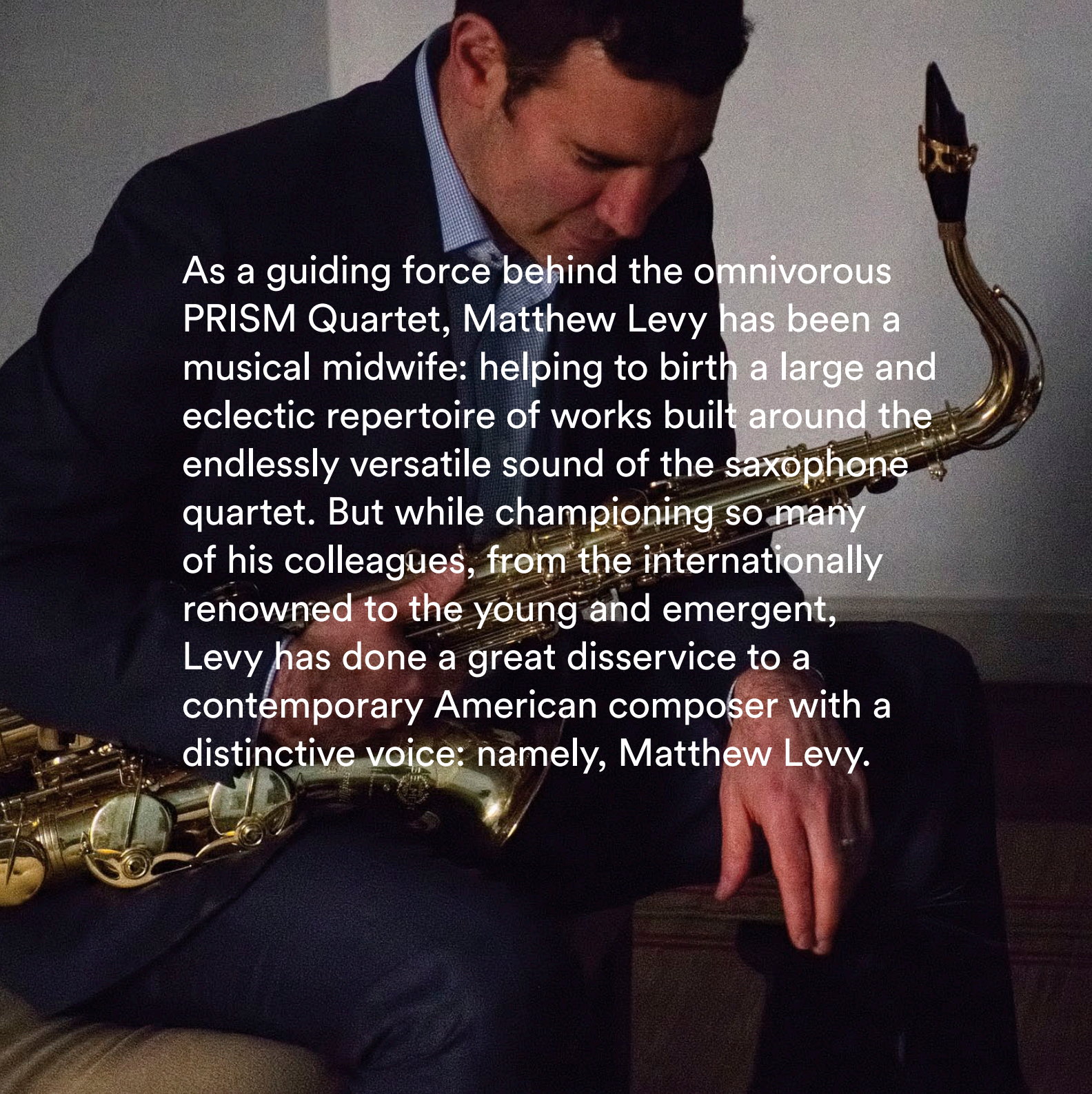
Beneath and Above recorded in 2013 at Whitewater Productions:

John White, engineer

Retro City Studios: Dave Barbaree and Ray Pirre, engineers





A man in a dark suit and light blue shirt is seated, playing a golden saxophone. He is looking down at the instrument with a focused expression. The background is a plain, light-colored wall. The lighting is soft, highlighting the man's face and the metallic sheen of the saxophone.

As a guiding force behind the omnivorous PRISM Quartet, Matthew Levy has been a musical midwife: helping to birth a large and eclectic repertoire of works built around the endlessly versatile sound of the saxophone quartet. But while championing so many of his colleagues, from the internationally renowned to the young and emergent, Levy has done a great disservice to a contemporary American composer with a distinctive voice: namely, Matthew Levy.



*People's Emergency Center* is a chance for PRISM to finally focus on Levy's own music, which draws freely—and often surprisingly—from classical, jazz, world, and rock traditions. The album begins with a particularly instructive example. *Under The Sun* is a three-part suite scored for a saxophone choir, piano, percussion, and, in its third and final movement, the Indian sitar. In the opening movement, “Awakening,” a keyboard/percussion groove serves as the engine driving the rustle and hubbub of a... what? Are those birds taking flight and singing? Or is it the sound of the urban jungle yawning and stretching to life? Either way, the winds are overdubbed to form choirs of Philip Glass-style intensity, streaked through with jagged flashes of piano. With its striking collision of American Minimalism, the rhythms of Latin and African music, and the improvisation of jazz, “Awakening” is a major statement of intent at the start of the album.

What happens next neatly encapsulates Levy's penchant for surprise, as “Lonely Pairs” offers what is essentially a piano cadenza for the redoubtable Jason Moran—but instead of a brilliant, bravura showpiece, Levy gives us a dark, brooding moment of reflection. That reflection leads to “Judgment,” which, as Levy explains, is meant “not in a biblical sense, but as introspection and understanding.” This movement reverses course, starting with fugitive wisps of percussion and multiphonics—multiple notes played on a single horn, much like overtone singing—from the saxes, and eventually rebuilding the wind choirs and the rockin' groove of the first movement.

“Lyric” opens with a slowly unwinding baritone sax solo, a soliloquy punctuated by multiphonics and percussive slap-tonguing, a pizzicato (plucked string) effect. Gradually the other instruments enter, and a questing melody seems

## 8 PRISM Quartet **People's Emergency Center**

to grow out of and then withdraw back into the shimmer of overtones. Levy's voracious musical appetite apparently includes the French "Spectralists," composers like Gerard Grisey and Tristan Murail, who create deeply-hued textures by analyzing the component parts of each sound and making those parts explicit, either by "splitting" the sound so that one or more of its overtones are audible, or reinforcing those harmonic components with other instruments. Working with this so-called "harmonic series" quickly moves the music out of standard Western tuning, and there are moments in "Lyric" that are both beautiful and unsettling—take, for example, the almost metallic ringing sound of the sax choir that ends the piece, a sign of mourning for the composer's mother, Mae Levy (1926–2002), in whose memory the work was composed.

*Been There* is the name of a documentary film that Levy scored, about the People's Emergency Center in his hometown of Philadelphia. The first of the two movements, also called "People's Emergency Center," is an urgent, at times even anxious work. It features a sinuous electric guitar solo by Ben Monder as well as individual turns by Levy on tenor and former PRISM member Tim Ries on soprano sax. Ries, who has traveled the globe with the Rolling Stones and often incorporates world music traditions into his own music, has been strongly influenced by Roma (gypsy) music, and his solos and playing are, Levy says, "central to many of the compositions on this disc."

Jazzy and urban, "People's Emergency Center" expertly conveys the uncertainty and the inner strength of the young women, most of them homeless, who are the subject of the documentary. A saucy vamp in the second part of the piece suggests the possibility of unexpected moments of grace and levity,



before an ambiguous ending.

The second part of *Been There* is called “Gymnopedie,” and was inspired by and named after the “Three Gymnopedies” that Frenchman Erik Satie wrote in the 1880s. Clear and simple and elegant, they were written as an antidote to a classical music scene that had grown ever more bombastic and self-important. Levy’s “Gymnopedie” (the word appears to have been Satie’s own creation) is essentially a ballad for tenor sax with guitar, three bari saxes, and drums.

*Serial Mood* is a punning title: here, Levy manages to combine the twelve-tone technique of Arnold Schoenberg, whose early 20th century experiments set music free of the constraints of tonality, with the strongly tone-centered modes of classical Greek music. (For those of you keeping score at home, he uses the Phrygian and Lydian modes.) The first part, “Reflection,” features the New York-based sax player and composer Rudresh Mahanthappa, whose alto solo is full of movement and quicksilver changes of tone color, over a backdrop of softly roiling saxes and some rather insistent bass, courtesy of Jay Anderson.

The second half, “Refraction,” rides on a fierce post-bop groove, but the texture clears out in the middle to allow a couple of notable solos by Ben Monder and Tim Ries, and a particularly biting tenor solo from Matthew Levy himself. The full ensemble returns for a big finish.

“Brown Eyes” is another excerpt from Levy’s score for the documentary *Been There*. It begins as a wistful, nocturnal ballad for soprano sax (Tim Ries again) over a guitar (Ben Monder), whose sound in this piece is remarkably similar to a Fender Rhodes piano. Ries and Monder performed the work at Matthew Levy’s wedding, and Levy says they played it so beautifully that he was moved

to make a new arrangement for this recording, featuring PRISM and employing a lovely, Duke Ellington-inspired sax ensemble in second half. Here the mood changes to something more comforting, and romantic.

The jaunty “Mr. Bobs and Lori Ann” has all the finger-poppin’ gum-smackin’ attitude of the veteran *a cappella* group The BOBS. (Spelled “all caps” because their name stands for “Best Of BreedS.”) Like The BOBS’ own songs—which draw on early rock’n’roll, Tin Pan Alley, and even Schubert *lieder*—Levy’s piece buttresses its sense of fun with an intricate and clever arrangement. (The group has to negotiate a few tricky passages along the way). The melody is essentially a song without words, built around a classic doo-wop sound—even down to the modulation two-thirds of the way through. “Ideally,” Levy explains, “the players should have their hair slicked back.”

The album concludes with two more works written just for PRISM. “Beneath” is series of drones with eerie, atmospheric multiphonics, scored for saxophone quintet (Taimur Sullivan handles both baritone and bass saxes here). If the work has an almost electronic texture, there’s a reason for that: “Beneath” is essentially a tape collage. Levy made an audio library of sounds from each member of the ensemble, and then put together this introspective, ambient work as a kind of mirror-image to its live-performance companion piece, “Above.”

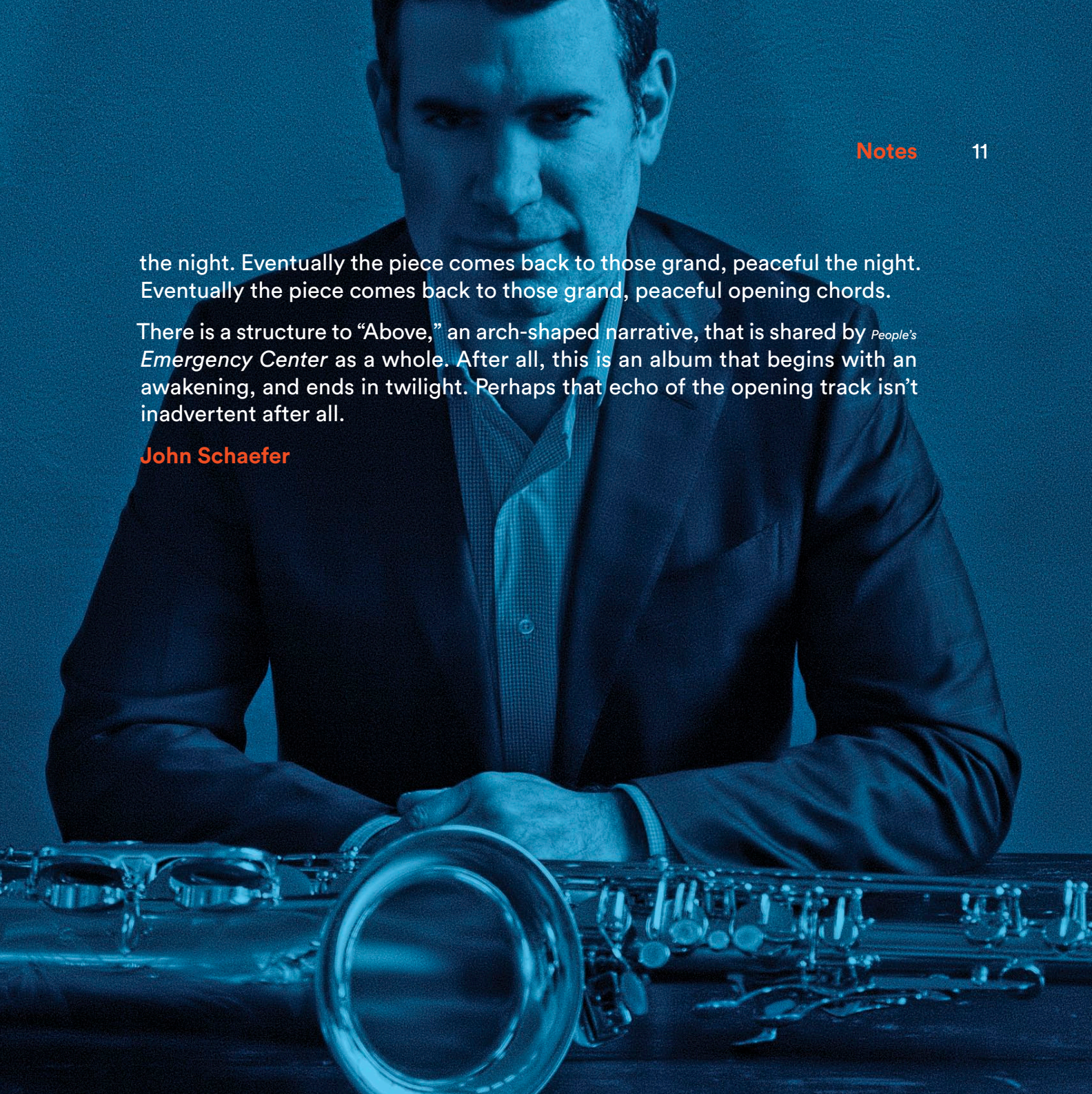
“Above” begins with a lovely series of chords, somehow reminiscent of both Baroque music and the 20th-century French composer Olivier Messiaen. Even a lone baritone sax stepping out of the ensemble doesn’t change the subdued colors and lyrical mood of the piece. A soprano sax soon joins in, and, in a perhaps inadvertent echo of the album’s opening work, suggests a bird singing in



the night. Eventually the piece comes back to those grand, peaceful the night. Eventually the piece comes back to those grand, peaceful opening chords.

There is a structure to “Above,” an arch-shaped narrative, that is shared by *People’s Emergency Center* as a whole. After all, this is an album that begins with an awakening, and ends in twilight. Perhaps that echo of the opening track isn’t inadvertent after all.

**John Schaefer**





Saxophonist, composer, curator, producer/engineer, arts consultant, and educator Matthew Levy has made an enduring contribution to contemporary music as co-founder and director of the PRISM Quartet, and as a collaborator with other artists and ensembles for the past 25 years. Praised by the *Saxophone Journal* as “a complete virtuoso of the tenor saxophone” and by *Classical Magazine* for “gorgeous and ethereal” compositions, his creative work has been supported by fellowships from the Independence Foundation and the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts, and grants from the National Endowment for the Arts, the Aaron Copland Fund, the American Composers Forum (Philadelphia Chapter), the Musical Fund Society of Philadelphia, and the Presser Foundation.

Matt holds three degrees from the University of Michigan, where he was a James B. Angell Scholar and recipient of the Lawrence Teal Award. His teachers have included saxophonists Donald Sinta, Laura Hunter, Odean Pope, and James Forger; music theorists Ellwood Derr, William Rothstein, and Robert Hatten; and composers William Albright, William Bolcom, Frank Ticheli, Fred Lerdahl, and Italo Taranta.

As a solo artist, Matt has commissioned and premiered works by many composers, including Paola Prestini, Renee Favand, and David Ludwig; collaborated with a host of choreographers and dance companies, among them Peter Sparling, Scrap Performance Group, and Group Motion Dance Theater; and appeared as a guest artist with numerous orchestras and ensembles, including the Detroit Symphony, counter)induction, and Dolce Suono. He has worked with concert pianists Matt Herskowitz, Charles Amramovic, and Robert Conway, and jazz artists Franck Amsallem, Ben Monder, Matt Wilson, Gerald



Cleaver, and John Riley. Matt has recorded for Deutsche Grammophon, Naxos, Grammavision, Innova, Albany, and Tdzaik.

Matt's compositional output has included works for orchestra, choir, musical theater, dance, jazz, and electronic music ensembles. He has scored four motion pictures, including PBS's *Diary of a City Priest* (starring David Morse), featured at the Sundance Film Festival. Matt has composed extensively for the PRISM Quartet; his music has been featured on PRISM's self-titled debut CD (1993, Koch International), as well as *Real Standard Time* (2000, innova) and *Dedication* (2011, innova), and broadcast by NPR, CBC, and Voice of America.

Matt has worked as a music instructor for much of his career, having served on the faculties of the universities of Pennsylvania (College House), Redlands, Michigan, and Toledo, Settlement Music School, and as a guest speaker for the Curtis Institute of Music's Community Artist Program, which provides gifted students with the opportunity to develop entrepreneurial skills.

Matt's professional life continues to span a range of cultural interests and disciplines. He maintains a post-production recording studio, and an arts consulting practice. From 2000–2011, he directed the Philadelphia Music Project, an Artistic Initiative of The Pew Center for Arts & Heritage, where he oversaw the program's grant-making, edited its annual magazine, and curated seminars, symposia, and book lectures.

[matthewlevymusic.com](http://matthewlevymusic.com)

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 performed in Carnegie Hall on the Making Music Series, in Alice Tully Hall with the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, and throughout Latin America and China under the auspices of USIA and USArtists International, respectively. PRISM has also been presented to critical acclaim as soloists with the Detroit Symphony and Cleveland Orchestra, and conducted residencies at the nation's leading conservatories, including the Curtis Institute of Music and the Oberlin Conservatory.

Champions of new music, PRISM has commissioned over 150 works, many by internationally celebrated composers, including Pulitzer Prize-winners William Bolcom, Jennifer Higdon, Zhou Long, and Bernard Rands; Guggenheim Fellows William Albright, Martin Bresnick, Chen Yi, Lee Hyla, and Steven Mackey; MacArthur Fellows Bright Sheng and Miguel Zenón; and jazz masters Rudresh Mahanthappa, Greg Osby, David Liebman, and Steve Lehman. In 1997, PRISM initiated its own concert series in Philadelphia and New York City, presenting the newest compositions created for their ensemble by composers from around the world. The series has featured an eclectic range of guest artists, including Ethel, Talujon, Music From China, Miro Dance Theatre, Cantori New York, and top jazz artists, including guitarist Ben Monder, saxophonists Tim Ries and Rick Margitza, and drummers Gerald Cleaver, Mark Ferber, and John Riley. PRISM has also joined forces with the New York Consort of Viols, Opera Colorado, and the Chilean rock band Inti-Illimani in touring engagements.

PRISM's discography is extensive, documenting more than sixty works com-



missioned by the Quartet on Albany, innova, Koch, Naxos, New Dynamic, and New Focus. PRISM may also be heard on the soundtrack of the film *Two Plus One*, by Emmy nominee Eugene Martin, scored by Quartet member Matthew Levy, and has been featured in the theme music to the weekly PBS news magazine “NOW.”

PRISM performs exclusively on Selmer saxophones and mouthpieces.  
[prismquartet.com](http://prismquartet.com)

PRISM is represented by Joanne Rile Artists Management.  
[joanner@rilearts.com](mailto:joanner@rilearts.com) · 215.885.6400 · [rilearts.com](http://rilearts.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 the PRISM Quartet (1993–2001), he has released eight recordings as a leader, and currently tours with the Rolling Stones and Jack DeJohnette. (timries.com)

### **Rudresh Mahanthappa**

Rudresh Mahanthappa is one of today’s most innovative 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)

### **Jason Moran**

*Rolling Stone* writes that pianist Jason Moran is “shaping up to be the most provocative thinker in current jazz.” His collaborators have included Wayne Shorter, Dave Holland, Joe Lovano, Greg Osby, Andrew Hill, Bunky Green, Sam Rivers, Lee Konitz, Paul Motian, and Chris Potter. The Blue Note Records artist has been the recipient of a MacArthur Fellowship, Playboy Jazz Artist of the Year award, *The New York Times*’ best album of the year, several awards from the Jazz Journalists Association, and top honors from The DownBeat Critics Poll. (jasonmoran.com)

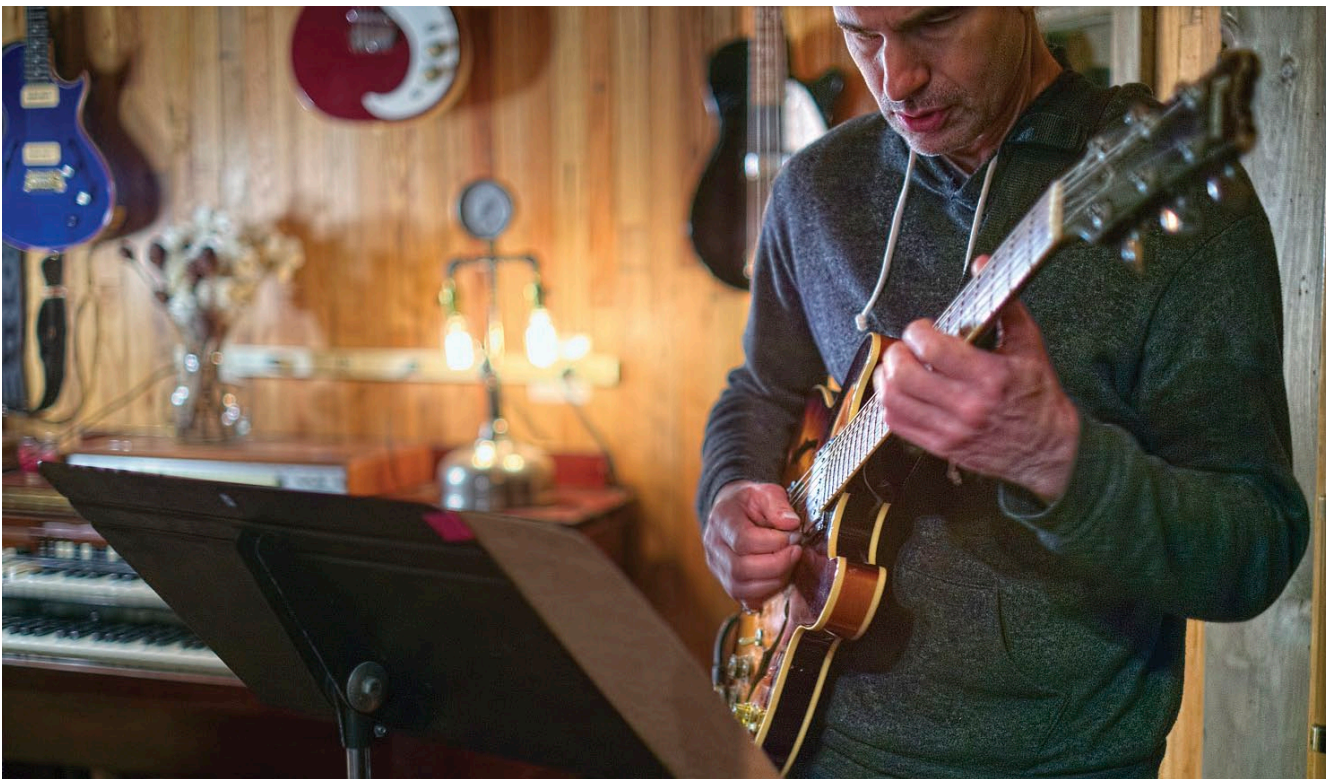
### Ben Monder

Ben Monder, a guitarist of “demigod stature” (*The New York Times*), has performed with Jack McDuff, Marc Johnson, Lee Konitz, George Garzone, Tim Berne, and Kenny Wheeler. He is a regular member of the Maria Schneider Jazz Orchestra and the Paul Motian Octet. He performs original music internationally with his own quartet, trio, and in a duo project with vocalist Theo Bleckmann. He has appeared on over 100 CDs as a sideman, and has released five as a leader. ([benmonder.com](http://benmonder.com))

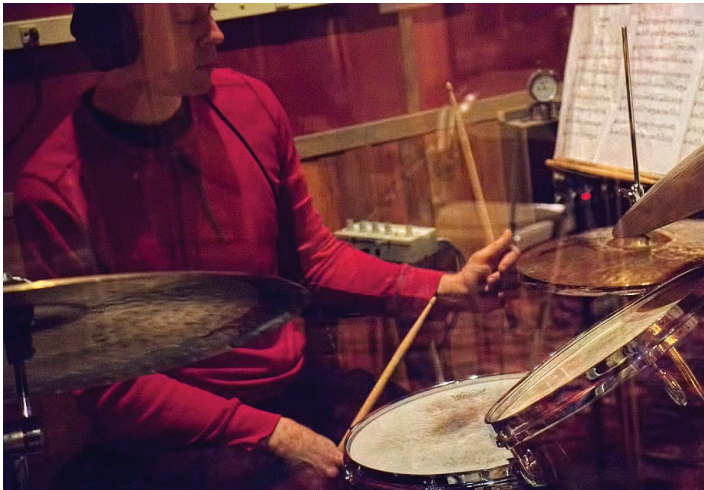
### Jay Anderson

Bassist/composer Jay Anderson is among the most versatile and respected jazz artists performing today. He has performed/recorded with Woody Herman, Michael Brecker, John Abercrombie, Dave Liebman, Maria Schneider, and John Scofield. His collaborators outside of jazz have included Oswaldo Golijov, Dawn Upshaw, Frank Zappa, Tom Waits, Chaka Khan, and Allen Ginsberg. He has been featured on over 300 recordings, four of which have received the Grammy Award. He teaches at the Manhattan School of Music and co-leads the group BANN. ([jayandersonbass.com](http://jayandersonbass.com))









### **Bill Stewart**

One of modern jazz's preeminent drummers, Bill Stewart began to make a name for himself on the New York scene in the later half of the 1980s. He first recorded with Scott Kreitzer and Maceo Parker before spending five years as a sideman with John Scofield. He has worked with Larry Goldings, Michael Brecker, James Brown, Ron McClure, Kevin Hays, Pat Metheny, George Garzone, Tim Hagans, Joe Lovano and Andy LaVergne. He has released three albums as a bandleader, one of which was among *The New York Times* "Top Ten" albums of the year.

### **François Zayas**

Born in Cuba, percussionist and composer François Zayas graduated from the Instituto Superior de Artes in 1998, where he later taught for five years. He was a member of the National Symphonic Orchestra of Cuba for 10 years while also collaborating with top jazz, hip hop, and rock artists. He moved to the USA in 2006, and currently resides in Philadelphia, where he leads his own quintet and performs frequently with singer Venissa Santí.

### **Richard Belcastro**

Sitarist/composer Richard Belcastro's work utilizes his instrument in non-traditional musical contexts, encourages the creation of new compositions for sitar, and refines musical notation for the instrument. ([rbelcastro.com](http://rbelcastro.com))





## 22 Credits and Support

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**Producer:** Matthew Levy

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**Mastering:** Katsu Naito

**Liner Notes:** John Schaefer

**Design:** [fluxism.com](http://fluxism.com)

**Photography:** [toiletwolf.com](http://toiletwolf.com)

Rudresh Mahanthappa appears courtesy of ACT Records.

Jason Moran appears courtesy of Blue Note Records.

Bill Stewart plays Zildjian cymbals, Gretsch drums, and Remo drumheads.

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**THE PRESSER FOUNDATION**



This recording is dedicated to my dear wife, Willa, for her encouragement and love. I'm deeply indebted to Taimur, Tim, and Zach, my brothers in PRISM, and to the amazing Tim (Ries), Ben, Bill, Jay, Rudresh, François, and Ricki for bringing my music to life with their stunning artistry. Special thanks to Bob Capanna, Jon and Prilla Rohrer, Walter and Nesta Spink, Donald and Sue Sinta, Jennifer Higdon, David Rakowski, David Laganella, William Bolcom, Sara Moyn, David Buchholz, David Poll, the Tasch family, Aleba Gartner, and Joe Weldon for their friendship and support—Matthew Levy

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