

THE JAZZ GALLERY *presents:*
Large Ensemble Commissions 2008 - 2009

JOHN ELLIS

the **SIREN**
SIREN

Featuring
MILES GRIFFITH, GRETCHEN PARLATO
& THE DREAMSCAPES ENSEMBLE
with a libretto by **ANDY BRAGEN**

MAY 29 - MAY 30, 2009

The Jazz Gallery: An International Jazz Cultural Center
290 Hudson Street, New York, NY 10013 212.242.1063
www.jazzgallery.org

The Jazz Gallery Large Ensemble Commissions Series is made possible with support from the Jerome Foundation, the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs and the Mary Flagler Cary Charitable Trust, with additional funds from the New York State Council on the Arts and Meet the Composer.



THE JAZZ GALLERY

Large Ensemble Commissions Series — 2008-2009

The Jazz Gallery's Large Ensemble Commissions Series 2008-2009 continues with two nights of performance by John Ellis, who will premiere *The Ice Siren*: a through-composed musical narrative piece, a "jazz opera" in development, written in collaboration with playwright Andy Bragen.

Mr. Ellis will rely on the talents of the following players:

John Ellis - saxophones/woodwinds
Hiroko Taguchi - violin
Olivier Manchon - violin
Corrina Albright - viola
Christopher Hoffman - cello
Tim Collins - vibes
Mike Moreno - guitar
Marcus Rojas - tuba
Daniel Freedman - percussion
Miles Griffith - voice
Gretchen Parlato - voice
Daniel Barnidge - conductor

ABOUT THE SERIES

The big band idiom is iconic and historically pivotal in jazz. It is also a living tradition, able to absorb and express the full range of modernist concerns of a new generation of jazz composers and arrangers. With this series, The Jazz Gallery seeks to underscore the continuing vitality of the big band idea, which has never ceased evolving but has faced considerable economic disadvantages for many decades. In facilitating the premiere of these new extended works, The Jazz Gallery deepens its commitment not only to the artists themselves, but also to America's indispensable art form, jazz.

Our first Large Ensemble series, in 2007, featured 10 different groups led by some of the most forward-thinking talents of our day. This year we have launched our second wave. Our slate of featured artists thus far: *Darcy James Argue*, *Josh Roseman*, *Pedro Giraudo*, *Gregg August*, *David Binney*, *Jason Lindner*, *John Ellis*. The series will conclude in early June with a showcase of new material by *Sherisse Rogers*.

ABOUT THE COMPOSER(S)

Born and raised in the rural "tobacco country" of North Carolina, now living in New York, saxophonist and composer John Ellis has brought a body of rich Southern folkloric material into his writing, leavening it with a finely wrought jazz sensibility. This is apparent on his recordings *Roots*, *Branches and Leaves*, *One Foot In The Swamp*, *By a Thread* and most recently, the sousaphone-driven *Dance Like There's No Tomorrow*. Ellis has spent significant periods of time in the musical cauldron of New Orleans. He has studied and performed with Ellis Marsalis, toured extensively in Singapore and other Far Eastern ports of call and worked as a member of bands lead by drummer Jason Marsalis, bassist Todd Sickafoose, guitarist Charlie Hunter and R&B sensation Bilal Oliver. He took second place in the 2002 Thelonious Monk International Saxophone Competition, but he also regularly displays his talents on melodic, bass clarinet, ocarina and Wurlitzer.

ANDY BRAGEN, a native New Yorker, was the 2008-2009 Tennessee Williams Fellow at Sewanee: The University of the South. Other honors include the Clubbed Thumb Biennial Commission, a Jerome Fellowship, a New Voices Fellowship from Ensemble Studio Theatre, a Dramatists Guild Fellowship, and residencies at Millay Colony and Blue Mountain Center. *The Hairy Dutchman*, commissioned by the University of Rochester, was produced there in April 2009. Other plays and translations have been seen and heard at numerous theatres in New York and elsewhere, including Performance Space 122, The Guthrie Theatre, Queens Theatre in the Park, Ars Nova, Rattlestick, LAByrinth, The Playwrights Center, EST, Repertorio Español, Soho Think Tank, Page 73 Productions, NYU's hotINK Festival, The Illusion Theatre, The Aurora Theatre and the Lark Theatre. More information is available at www.andybragen.com.

ABOUT THE MUSIC

The Ice Siren is an hour-long composition with music by John Ellis and libretto by playwright Andy Bragen. The piece features an 11-piece ensemble including two singers. This is Ellis and Bragen's second collaboration — the first, *Dreamscapes*, had its premiere at the Jazz Gallery during the venue's Composers Series II in December 2007. A single composition, largely sung through, *The Ice Siren* draws on traditions in jazz, opera and theatre. Taking inspiration from horror films, nightmares, puppetry and animated films, it is scary, romantic and sometimes quite funny.

In *The Ice Siren*, a young man visits his dead lover's crypt and is lured down into it by an ethereal voice. Once in the crypt he discovers a moonlit frozen lake, and again he is drawn forward, as if in a dream, toward the mysterious voice, which may or may not belong to his dead lover. The siren claims her victim, seducing him and wrapping him up with ice, so that they may freeze together, for eternity.

- I. Graveyard Visit
- II. Heaven or Hell
- III. Melusina's Siren Song
- IV. She Shows her Face
- V. Little Man
- VI. Cold
- VII. Entombed in Ice



Be sure to consult our schedule for the remaining dates in our Large Ensemble Commissions Series. There are two sets each night, 9:00 & 10:30. General Admission is \$15 per set, Gallery members pay \$10. The Jazz Gallery: An International Jazz Cultural Center 290 Hudson Street, New York, NY 10013 212.242.1063 www.jazzgallery.org

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