

## ABSTRACT

### FILM D'ART AND SAINT-SAËNS: PIONEERS IN CREATING ART THROUGH SILENT FILM AND MUSIC

By

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Film d'Art, the French production company responsible for the development of Henri Lavédan's *L'Assassinat du Duc de Guise*, demonstrated a forward-thinking vision for film and music. Through their innovations, the company combined many elements of cinematography with new standards for quality productions. This project report will investigate the goals of Film d'Art and its unusually high ambitions, standard music practices in the silent film era, the issues revolving around the instrumentation to Saint-Saëns' score to Henri Lavédan's *L'Assassinat de Duc de Guise*, and the performance of my arrangement in a graduate recital.



FILM D'ART AND SAINT-SAËNS: PIONEERS IN CREATING  
ART THROUGH SILENT FILM AND MUSIC

A PROJECT REPORT

Presented to the Bob Cole Conservatory of Music

California State University, Long Beach

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Music

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I would like to share my appreciation for my wonderful family. I could not have done this without your dedication in my growth as a person and musician. A musician is not a regular person and despite the seemingly obscure things I have said when you listen to music with me, your love and faith in me never wavered. Although I may sometimes sound crazy when I speak, your head nod of support to everything I have said and done has meant the world to me.

To my fabulous teacher, Helen Goode-Castro, I would like to say thank you. My time with you has been one of the best experiences I have ever had. Your knowledge and expertise in clarinet has inspired me to go beyond that of which I ever thought I was capable.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

The art of filmmaking has progressed so much that it is difficult for many to remember a time when the majority of films did not use computer graphics to tell a story. In fact, many cannot remember a time when computers were not used at all in any process of producing films, much less a time where color was not possible and technological advances were incapable of synchronizing sound to moving pictures.

The advent of cinema came as a surprise, much like photography, hitting the world like a hurricane. In a time where technological advances were flourishing, many took the opportunity to profit from early film making, but few wished to create a new medium of art. The most influential organization to achieve and set many precedents of filmmaking, including the first original score, was Film d'Art in Neuilly, France. This project report will investigate the goals of Film d'Art and its unusually high ambitions, standard music practices in the silent film era, the issues revolving around the instrumentation to Saint-Saëns' score to Henri Lavédan's *L'Assassinat de Duc de Guise* (1908), and the performance of my arrangement in a graduate recital.

## CHAPTER 2

### FILM D'ART

#### Nickelodeons

Before the establishment of Film d'Art (1908), there were four major figures in the development of cinema: Louis Lumière, Léon Gaumont, George Méliès, and Charles and Emile Pathé.<sup>1</sup> Of these influential businessmen, Pathé benefited the most from cinema by "exploiting the cheap costs of early film production, establishing the first worldwide network of film distributing, taking advantage of the proliferating American nickelodeons and monopolizing the French fêtes foraines."<sup>2</sup> *Fêtes foraines* is the French term for fairgrounds, most similar to a carnival- or fair-like setting where, amongst a variety of activities, film exhibitions took place. The nickelodeons Richard Abel referred to were early forms of small theaters in the United States, their name reflecting the price of admission. These nickelodeons were so versatile, they could be easily set up from restaurants and storefronts, the simple conversion allowing many businesses to double in their purpose.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Richard Abel, *The Ciné Goes to Town: French Cinema 1896-1914* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 10.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 22.

<sup>3</sup> Tim Anderson, "Reforming Jackass Music': The Problematic Aesthetics of Early American Film Music Accompaniment," *Cinema Journal* 37, no. 1 (Autumn 1997), 6. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1225687> (accessed October 15, 2013).



With a large increase of nickelodeons between 1905 and 1910, the only standard that had to be met in these early forms of cinema were the strict fire codes.<sup>4</sup> The lack of regulations gave business entrepreneurs the freedom to get into a new market. This freedom, however, created a lot of competition, forcing entrepreneurs to become creative in their presentation of these films, both inside and outside of the nickelodeons to attract patrons. Some common practices included people shouting at the entrance, jugglers, and musicians. To further distinguish one nickelodeon from another, owners hired musicians to accompany the silent films.

The motion picture experience in the early 1900s differs greatly from the twenty-first century. Motion pictures in the past were short in comparison to films of the present, the longest films lasting only a few minutes; for this reason, multiple motion pictures were shown. As the films were silent, musicians were hired to project the emotions expressed on the screen to obtain an appropriate emotional response from the audience. The number of musicians used at any given nickelodeon ranged from one performer on the piano to a quartet of instrumentalists who doubled with their voices. If the owner was financially capable, the number of musicians could be even larger. Due to the individual tastes of a variety of performers and the stylistic preferences of audiences determined by their region, inappropriate music was played frequently. It evoked feelings contrary to what the director had intended. For example, it may have been found to be comical to the audience and musicians to play slapstick music in a romantic scene. Without the ability to control the music, directors and the film industry may not have had the art of their work realized fully.

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<sup>4</sup> Anderson, "Reforming Jackass Music," 5-6.

## White Collar Patronage

Since 1895, Pathé's business of Pathé-Frères had been constantly evolving since establishing their shop in Vincennes, France. By 1906, they had a large stake, along with Gaumont, in the three aspects of filmmaking: production; distribution; and exhibition of films.<sup>5</sup> Many smaller firms saw an opportunity to define and shape the production, distribution, or exhibition of film, one of these new firms, established by Pathé, called Film d'Art. Film d'Art was founded by the Lafittes brothers<sup>6</sup> in February of 1908, though it was not officially announced until May of 1908.<sup>7</sup> The purpose of Film d'Art was to produce films that would attract the patronage of bourgeois and white collar audiences in order to further legitimize the film industry. Film d'Art released their first historical drama titled *L'Assassinat du Duc de Guise* directed by Henri Lavédan on November 17, 1908. The premiere for this film was highly successful. The movie is acknowledged by many musicologists to have the first original score, which was written by the French composer Camille Saint-Saëns. According to Marks, the problem with this view is that the term "original score" had an ambiguous meaning where composers and arrangers may have combined both new and old music.<sup>8</sup> However, the act of playing music during a

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<sup>5</sup> Abel, *The Ciné Goes to Town*, 37.

<sup>6</sup> Ian Christie, "Forms 1890-1930: The Shifting Boundaries of Art and Industry," in *The French Cinema Book*, ed. by Michael Temple and Michael Witt (London: British Film Institute, 2004), 56.

<sup>7</sup> Abel, *The Ciné Goes to Town*, 39. Although Abel specifically names Paul Lafittes and does not mention any siblings.

<sup>8</sup> Martin Miller Marks, *Music and the Silent Film: Context and Case Studies* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 6.

silent film was not a new idea; Cecil Hepworth traveled with his sister and showed short films using an experimental film projector that he modified by attaching a lantern to which allowed him a means to project films.<sup>9</sup> The most popular of these showings was a short film that combined both film and slides of photographs titled *The Storm*. Hepworth described the show as the sea and sky on a clear day, the clouds becoming increasingly menacing as it turned into a storm; all the while, the intensity of the piano accompaniment, performed by Hepworth's sister on the piano, matched the energy of the images displayed using selected works by, "Schumann, I think,"<sup>10</sup> and possibly some improvisations to transition to other composers' works which would support Marks's statements.

Regardless of the technicalities, Film d'Art was well on its way to meeting its goals of legitimizing cinema. Their filmography included *L'Assassinat du Duc de Guise* (1908) and *Le Retour d'Ulysse* (1909) co-directed by Charles Le Bargy and André Calmettes, *La Tosca* (1909) directed by Le Bargy, and *Le Baiser de Judas* (1909), co-directed by Calmettes and Armand Bour.<sup>11</sup> By 1909, although Film d'Art was two hundred thousand francs in debt; they had moved from producing historical dramas to dramas and operas. Their money troubles increased in part due to the fact that *La Tosca* had to be filmed twice because Sarah Bernhardt, the main actress, refused to release the

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<sup>9</sup> Cecil Hepworth, *Came the Dawn: Memories of a Film Pioneer* (London: Phoenix House Limited, 1951), 30-31.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 31.

<sup>11</sup> Philippe Rège, *Encyclopedia of the French Film Directors* (Lanham: Scarecrow Press, 2010), 165-66.

original; this was a major financial hardship.<sup>12</sup> Lafittes was replaced as head of production of Film d'Art in the summer of 1909 and a new director tried to cut back on costs by using lesser known actors.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Abel, *The Ciné Goes to Town: French Cinema 1896-1914*, 39.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 40.

CHAPTER 3  
SILENT FILM PRACTICES

Part of a Show

Many sources mention that silent films started off as acts, often including other performances in the theaters. Some of these acts had contortionists, illustrated songs, and various other vaudeville entertainments.<sup>14</sup> It was necessary to have a variety in the programming of these shows in order for the theaters to keep their patrons returning week to week, the duration of any given act depending on its success with the audience.<sup>15</sup> Altman discusses how “[moving pictures] could serve as a convenient buffer between acts requiring the full stage,” explaining how performances were programmed in a manner in which smaller acts preceded and followed larger acts, utilizing the stage in front of the curtain while the larger act was being prepared by the stage crew, maximizing efficiency while simultaneously minimizing static pauses between acts.<sup>16</sup> One of the first to implement the use of moving picture technology, the Cinématographe, as a spectacle for entertainment was Georges Méliès. Méliès supplemented his magic shows by recording transformation views, or trick shots, earning him the title of being one of the

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<sup>14</sup> Rick Altman, *Silent Film Sound*, edited by John Belton (New York: Columbia University, 2004), 181.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 99.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

first to tell a narrative where cuts in a scene gave the illusion of traveling through time.<sup>17</sup> As moving pictures won popularity, they underwent the most drastic transformations since the industry.

#### Reactions to *L'Assassinat du Duc de Guise*

On the night of *L'Assassinat du Duc de Guise*'s premier, there were two other acts programmed, both of which used live musicians. The Société d'art advertised this show as "Visions d'Art," also presenting two other films entitled *Le Secret de Myrto* and *L'Empreinte*, the music composed by Gaston Berardi and LeBorne, respectively.<sup>18</sup> Although the music for *L'Assassinat du Duc de Guise* was regarded a "masterpiece of symphonic music" at the premier on November 16, 1908 in France by reviewer Adolphe Brisson,<sup>19</sup> the film quickly fell out of favor from the public. With the many advancements in film shortly after the premier, Lavédan's *L'Assassinat du Duc de Guise* was criticized for its dated qualities, specifically for the incongruous posture of the actors unique to the Comédie Française. Additionally, Harding criticized the film's lead actor, Charles Le Bargy, also its director, saying Le Bargy forgot to direct his cast.<sup>20</sup> The film was thought to have little worth even though the aim for Film d'Art was to produce high quality films in order to receive the patronage of the elite class. The film nor the score

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<sup>17</sup> Richard Abel, "People 1890-1930: The Men and Women Who Made French Cinema," in *The French Cinema Book*, edited by Michael Temple and Michael Witt (London: British Film Institute, 2004), 20. No information on the directors of these acts.

<sup>18</sup> James Wierzbicki, *Film Music: A History* (New York: Routledge, 2009), 41.

<sup>19</sup> Marks, *Music and the Silent Film*, 51.

<sup>20</sup> James Harding, *Saint-Saëns and His Circle* (London: Chapman & Hall, 1965), 204.

remained in the public's attention for long. The United States premier on February 17, 1909 was a truncated version of the film without Saint-Saëns' score.<sup>21</sup>

### Score Cues

Martin Miller Marks has studied extensively and has written an in depth analysis of Saint-Saëns' score for *L'Assassinat du Duc de Guise* in *Music for the Silent Film*. The music for *L'Assassinat du Duc de Guise* loosely used leitmotifs to describe a particular emotion or feeling rather than a specific character. In the score, Saint-Saëns wrote cues such as "l'annonce" to indicate when the music should line up with entitles, specifically the slide with the title of the film. Although not mentioned in any scholarly sources, I venture to say that the climatic point in the Introduction, indicated by the only forte, is meant to line up to the slide that displays "Musique de Camille Saint-Saëns," releasing the tension with a syncopated pattern that transitions into the first scene. With occasional indications such as, "Entrée du Duc," "Entrée du Page," and "l'Assassinat," few other cues are given in the score. The rest of the piece relies on the conductor to line up the music to the motions on the screen. For many, it is fairly obvious where the music lines up; the ending of the second movement syncs with the last footsteps of the King, and the flourishing movements in the music imitate the struggle the Duke puts up as he is stabbed to death by the King's men. The video for *L'Assassinat du Duc de Guise* appeared in February 2012 via Ruey Yen,<sup>22</sup> creating my interest in performing this piece live.

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<sup>21</sup> Marks, "Saint-Saëns and Silent Film / Sound Film and Saint-Saëns," 360.

<sup>22</sup> Camille Saint-Saëns, "L'Assassinat du Duc de Guise Muziek Instituut MultiMedia - MMM," YouTube, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=io4Weec8Crk&feature=youtu.be> (accessed November 2012).

## CHAPTER 4

### SAINT-SAËNS' *L'ASSASSINAT DU DUC DE GUISE*

#### Instrumentation

Robin Cox, a former faculty member at the Bob Cole Conservatory of Music and my former professor of Seminar in Musical Analysis, asked me, through email correspondence after submittal of my final paper on *L'Assassinat du Duc de Guise*, if I was interested in performing the work as a project for his organization Iridian Arts.<sup>23</sup> I obliged with great excitement and had begun trying to find the music through a vendor. When searching for parts and a score were unsuccessful, a brief exchange of emails with clarinetist Rémi Lerner of the Ensemble Musique Oblique confirmed that *L'Assassinat de Duc de Guise* was indeed only available through Durand for rental. The "rental only" nature of this work may be a contributing factor to the lack of multiple professional recordings available for purchase.<sup>24</sup>

With the performance taking place as part of a series through an organization called Iridian Arts, founded by Robin Cox, aiming to “supporting creation and presentation of adventurous music and multimedia performance,”<sup>25</sup> I volunteered to

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<sup>23</sup> Robin Cox, e-mail messages, December 17, 2012.

<sup>24</sup> Rémi Lerner, e-mail message, December 18, 2012.

<sup>25</sup> Robin Cox, "Iridian Arts," Iridian Arts, Inc., <http://www.iridianarts.com/index.html> (accessed July 27, 2014).



arrange *L'Assassinat du Duc de Guise* for myself and my colleagues referencing the piano reduction available on International Music Score Library Project and the recording by Ensemble Musique Oblique.<sup>26</sup>

On April 21, 2013, Iridian Arts held a concert titled *Sounds Like Video*, which featured four performances of live musicians with videos displayed behind the performers. The final piece, and the largest ensemble, featured *L'Assassinat du Duc de Guise*. This arrangement was written for a string quartet, my wind quintet called The Other Quintet, a pianist, and conductor. The purpose of this instrumentation was to keep it as close to Saint-Saëns' original score while compensating for a lack of harmonium. There were many difficulties surrounding this project, mainly copyright and the lack of available arrangements of this piece.

One of the most significant issues concerning *L'Assassinat du Duc de Guise*, amongst others surrounding silent films and their performance practices, is determining what the original instrumentation may have been. In the case of the United States premier for *L'Assassinat du Duc de Guise*, it is not clear if the original score was even performed with the film. Rick Altman states, “Don’t ask the *New York Dramatic Mirror* reviewer; he makes no mention of music whatsoever.”<sup>27</sup> In regards to the original instrumentation of the score, Dr. Roger Hickman mentions that Saint-Saëns wrote *L'Assassinat* for twelve instruments (string quintet, wind quintet, piano, and

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<sup>26</sup> Ensemble Musique Oblique, *Saint-Saëns: Le carnaval des animaux*, HMA 1951472, Harmonia Mundi (CD), 1993.

<sup>27</sup> Rick Altman, *Silent Film Sound*, Film Cultures Series, ed. by John Belton (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 8.

harmonium),<sup>28</sup> while Marks suggests the original instrumentation to have been “four woodwinds, piano, harmonium, and strings.”<sup>29</sup> Marks added in a note that Durand has a set of rental performance parts available only as a rental piece<sup>30</sup> in the instrumentation discussed by Dr. Hickman. To add further confusion, the *Bibliothèque nationale de France*, or BNF, sites an instrumentation that includes a string quintet, piano, and harmonium with no wind parts.<sup>31</sup> This instrumentation is also confirmed by James Harding who described the score as a suite for strings, piano and harmonium.<sup>32</sup>

The only recording of this work available for purchase is by a professional group called Ensemble Musique Oblique using the same instrumentation discussed by Dr. Hickman, including the harmonium on their CD titled *Saint-Saëns: Le Carnaval des animaux* under the label Harmonia Mundi in 1993.<sup>33</sup> Credit for this album is given strictly to Saint-Saëns with no mention of an arranger. With Ensemble Musique Oblique being a prominent figure in creating "unusual connections between works--causing the

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<sup>28</sup> Roger Hickman, *Reel Music: 100 Years of Film Music* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2006), 70.

<sup>29</sup> Marks, *Music and the Silent Film*, 51.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 253.

<sup>31</sup> Camille Saint-Saëns, “L’Assassinat du Duc de Guise. R 331,” *BnF catalogue générale*, <http://catalogue.bnf.fr/servlet/biblio?idNoeud=1&ID=43251748&SN1=0&SN2=0&host=catalogue> (accessed October 2012).

<sup>32</sup> James Harding, *Saint-Saëns and His Circle* (London: Chapman & Hall, 1965), 204.

<sup>33</sup> Ensemble Musique Oblique, *Saint-Saëns: Le Carnaval des animaux*, Harmonia Mundi, 1993.

[listener] to hear with a different ear,"<sup>34</sup> it may be assumed that this Durand edition of rental parts may be considered to be the defining set of original scores.

### Performances

As influential as *L'Assassinat du Duc de Guise* has been, there are few audio/video recordings and even less live performances. One performance of this work can be found on YouTube with what sounds like an old, early radio sounding string ensemble, piano and organ, closely resembling the instrumentation suggested by James Harding and the score housed at the *BnF*. In this video, the film plays while the ensemble is dubbed over; the sound synchronization seems to be a little displaced.<sup>35</sup> A live performance of *L'Assassinat* was performed at the Bard Summer Music Festival on Sunday, August 19, 2012 during their summer music festival *Saint-Saëns and his World*,<sup>36</sup> and Iridian Arts held their performance<sup>36</sup> on April 21, 2013 for their program titled *Sounds Like Video*.

The most recent performance of *L'Assassinat du Duc de Guise* was on Saturday, April 26, 2014 in Daniel Recital Hall at Bob Cole Conservatory of Music for my graduate recital. The recital program was based on a theme that focused on the role of music in

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<sup>34</sup> Ensemble Musique Oblique, "Ensemble Musique Oblique," <http://translate.google.com/translate?hl=en&sl=fr&u=http://www.oblique.org/&prev=/search%3Fq%3Densemble%2Bmusique%2Boblique%26client%3Dsafari%26rls%3Den> (accessed August 2014).

<sup>35</sup> Camille Saint-Saëns, "L'Assassinat du Duc de Guise Muziek Instituut MultiMedia - MMM," YouTube, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=io4Weec8Crk&feature=youtu.be> (accessed November 2012).

<sup>36</sup> Michael Miller, "The Bard Summer Music Festival 2012: Saint-Saëns and his World," New York Arts, [http://newyorkarts.net/2012/07/bard-music-festival-2012-saint-saens/#.U\\_qA6WK9KSM](http://newyorkarts.net/2012/07/bard-music-festival-2012-saint-saens/#.U_qA6WK9KSM) (accessed August 21, 2014).

collaboration with the visual arts. The first piece was a clarinet and piano adaptation of “La Traviata” by Donato Lovreglio from *Fantasia* on the opera by Verdi, reflecting the live performance of both music and theater. The second piece was John Adams’s *Gnarly Buttons*, which used unique harmonies and rhythm juxtapositions to evoke emotions in Adams’ life experiences, including his father’s Alzheimer’s, from the audience.<sup>37</sup>

The third piece was “Viktor’s Tale” by John Williams, refreshing the audience to the simple melody of the music following the main character from the film *The Terminal* directed by Steven Spielberg. The final piece, *L’Assassinat du Duc de Guise*, was performed live while the silent film recording was displayed on a screen behind the ensemble. The excitement of seeing this film in a manner similar to its premier gave the audience a unique experience from the past.

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<sup>37</sup> John Adams, “Gnarly Buttons,” <http://www.earbox.com/chamber-music/gnarly-buttons> (accessed February 2014).

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSION

Music is an art form that is driven from emotion. Even though the business aspect of the film industry sought to make profits, the artists in creating these moving pictures sought to make a connection with their audiences. This perspective still exists today and is the reason many choose to live the life of an artist. The availability and ease of access to film and the music industry breaks down the barriers of exclusivity to bourgeois audiences. Though silent film was an art form that existed over one hundred years ago, its spectacle of music and moving pictures remains in favor to audiences all around the world.

APPENDIX

ABRAHAM PEREZ: GRADUATE RECITAL PROGRAM

THE BOB COLE CONSERVATORY OF MUSIC AT  
CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, LONG BEACH  
AND THE COLLEGE OF THE ARTS

PROUDLY PRESENT

ABRAHAM PEREZ, clarinet

Bryan Pezzone, piano  
Kiyoe Matsuura, violin  
Jaclyn Kim, violin  
Joy Yi, viola  
Anthoni Polcari, cello  
Melissa Hulett, flute  
Spencer Klass, oboe  
Esteban Jimenez, horn  
Harmony Drumm, bassoon  
Mark Alpizar, conductor  
and CSULB Wind Symphony

in a Graduate Recital

April 26, 2014

1:00 p.m.

Gerald R. Daniel Recital Hall

This recital is presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of Music Degree in Instrumental Performance.

Abraham Perez is a student of Helen Goode-Castro and has studied with Dr. Michael Grego and Lawrence Hughes.

"La Traviata".....Donato Lovreglio  
Fantasia on the opera by Guiseppi Verdi (1841-1907)

Gnarly Buttons.....John Adams  
(b. 1947)

- I. The Perilous Shore
- II. Hoedown (Mad Cow)
- III. Put Your Loving Arms Around Me

Bryan Pezzone, piano

INTERMISSION

Viktor's Tale.....John Williams  
From the Motion Picture THE TERMINAL (b. 1932)

CSULB Wind Symphony

L'Assassinat du Duc de Guise.....Camille Saint-Saëns  
(1875-1921)

Kiyoe Matsuura, Jaclyn Kim — violin; Joy Yi — viola;  
Anthoni Polcari — cello; Melissa Hulett — flute; Spencer Klass — oboe; Abraham Perez  
— clarinet; Esteban Jimenez — horn;  
Harmony Drumm — bassoon; Barret Wilber — piano  
Mark Alpizar — conductor



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