

Dan Willis

"Willis is a horn master." -Downbeat Magazine

"Dan Willis' evocative mix of smarts, skill, wit, adventure, and swing - as both composer and improviser - can make for compelling listening." -Newark Star-Ledger

One of New York City's most versatile woodwind specialists, Dan Willis can be heard both on Broadway in such musicals as West Side Story (where he currently plays eight instruments) and in Manhattan's finest jazz venues. Known around NYC music circles as a reed doubler, Willis masterfully genre hops between jazz, classical, free improvisation, rock and pop on an astounding 11 different wind instruments. Willis has performed and/or recorded alongside Michael Brecker (with his Grammy Award-winning ensemble Quindectet), Wynton Marsalis, Elton John, Ray Charles, Bono, Liza Minnelli, Don Henley, Rob Thomas and many others. The Satie Project II follows his four previously released recordings: Dan Willis Quartet, Hand To Mouth, Velvet Gentlemen, and The Satie Project.



Dan Willis and Velvet Gentlemen - The Satie Project II

CD release performance at New York's legendary jazz club, Birdland: Nov. 29th, 2012. 5-7pm
315 west 44th st. NY., NY. (212)-581-3080

On his latest recording, The Satie Project II, Willis continues his project of newly arranged material based on compositions originally written by Erik Satie. The Satie Project II displays Willis's admiration for Satie's breath-taking body of work with singular contemporary classical and jazz takes on Satie's "Gnossienne #3, #4, #5, #6, and #7," "Pieces Froides I, II, and III," and three versions of "Vexations."

Gnossienne #7

Oboe lead woodwind quartet. While the piece was intended to be played calmly and quietly there is an underlying urgency that I wanted to explore as a Drum and Bass vehicle. Featuring the soprano solo voice the melody is stated as it is written with very little improvisation until the end while soaring above the band comprised of distorted guitar with WAH EFX, two Whurlizer keyboards (Distorted and Dry), Electric Bass and Drums.

Gnossienne #6

This is a Jazz Country and Western adaptation featuring a "slap" bass solo by Kermit Driscoll. The ever shifting tonality of the chordal structure lends itself to some exciting Accordion and Electric Guitar accompaniment interplay behind each soloist. The final solo is by Internationally acclaimed Bulgarian Violinist, Entcho Todorov. The Gnossiennes were inspired by Satie's exposure to music from other countries when he visited the World Fair in Paris 1888 and the piece is, therefore, somewhat reminiscent of an imaginary buggy ride through that Fair.

Pieces Froides I

Each "cold" piece is essentially based on a single idea which is stated at the beginning weaving through it's arpeggiated accompaniment with a little alteration in each composition. This first in a set of three compositions inspired this duo arrangement for Marimba (Pablo Rieppi) and Tenor Saxophone.

Vexations Alternate 1

This is an improvised jazz arrangement of the composition Vexations. The melody is stated twice and also at a much faster tempo than is usually performed continuing with a collective improvisation reworking the motivic elements of the piece. The hauntingly slow melody is now transformed into a playful uptempo collective improvisation.

Gnossienne #5

This majestic piece arranged for the Oboe, Double Bass (Richard Sosinsky), and Electric Guitar, is while seemingly effortless for the piano, presents huge hurdles for the Oboe hovering in the 3rd and 4th octaves of the instrument.



12 Platt Place, Huntington, NY 11743
www.daywooddrive.com

Brian McKenna tel: 917.748.4337
brian@daywooddrive.com

James Miceli tel: 516.316.8250
james@daywooddrive.com



Stop and listen.

Gnossienne #3

The melody is performed on a chinese folk instrument called the Ehru and is later joined by the soprano sax. This early form of the violin has only two strings but has a hopeful yet mourning quality that is inherent in many Satie compositions. The Spoken word text performed by Dan are Satie's own performance notes that he never wanted the listener to know about as it was to be a secret between Satie and the performer. Here the text is included in order to give the listener some insight into the creative mind of Satie. The woodwind choir is comprised of Hiririchi (Japanese Double reed instrument given to Dan by the late saxophone Great Michael Brecker), Yokobue (Japanese transverse flute), Duduk, Zurna, (Armenian double reed instruments) and Chinese flute.

****Pieces Froides III**

Another from the "cold" piece trio of compositions, the arrangement expands our Sax and percussion duet to include Marimba, Vibes, Pitched Gongs, (Pablo Rieppi) Electronic Wind Instrument (Dan), and Electric Bass (Mark Vanderpoel). The addition of the vibes and pitched gongs adds to the meditative nature of the piece. The EWI and Electric Bass bring out the growing and expansive nature of the accompaniment starting from the EWI's smaller than a spec entrance to the sub bass octaves of Mark Vanderpoel.

Vexations Alternate 2

This is a 2nd performance of our collective improvisation on the theme Vexations. This takes the listener to another point of view of this jagged and persisting melody.

Gnossienne #4

This orchestration of oddly combined folk and western instruments comes from Dan's own experience of performing at the Yokohama Exotic Showcase in 1998 paralleling Satie's own worlds fair experience. The mix of the different generations of double and single reed instruments combining with the guitar tremolo and delay effects create a mystical world with sudden joyous moments from the reed choir.

Gnossienne #2

This is a feature for the B3 Organ. There is a Rubato statement of the melody by the sax with fills by the accordion. Settling into a slow Blues 12/8 feel. Organ continues soloing behind the more loosely stated melody, giving way to a three way solo between Guitar, B3 and Sax culminating in a collective dismantling by the entire ensemble.

***Pieces Froides II**

Revisiting the Soprano Saxophone and Double Bass duo, (Richard Sosinsky) this piece is one of Dan's personal favorites. The arpeggiated bass accompaniment gives the image of some kind of a climb, or a journey on a torrent sea. The melody offers these elongated peeks and valleys all stemming from the initial motif. There is a beautiful dance of strength and delicate nuance.

Vexations

This 8 bar composition was not discovered until after Satie's death. The instructions were to perform this melody 840 times. This took John Cage and 11 other pianist over 18 hours to perform in NYC on September 9, 1963. This arrangement features a sample of the opening reed trio performing the piece 840 times (13 hours) but compressed into the space of 4 minutes. The result is a sound effect that layers the composition in two radically different tempi transitioning into the free improvisation between Drum and Sax harmonized by the EWI. This build to the tenor solo section. The solo changes for this section expand each beat from the melody 800% to 8 measures long. This is in the true cubist spirit, looking at a subject simultaneously from several different perspectives.

Dan Willis- Piccolo, Oboe, English Horn, Clarinet, Bass Clarinet, Contra Bass Clarinet, Soprano, Tenor, and Baritone Saxophones, Duduk, Zurna, Chinese Flute, Hiririchi, Yokobue, EWI

*Richard Sosinsky- Double Bass

Todd Low- Ehru

Enchtco Todorov- Violin

**Mark Vanderpoel- Electric Bass

Pablo Rieppi- Marimba, Vibraphone, Pitched Gongs

Pete McCann- Electric Guitar

Ron Oswanski- Accordion, B3 Organ, Wurlitzer

Kermit Driscoll- Electric and Acoustic Bass

John Hollenbeck- Drums

Special thanks to Sam Zambito and Matt Traum for their amazing EWI sounds and knowledge.

All Arrangements and orchestrations by Dan Willis, Wieloszynski Music (ASCAP)

Dan Willis deftly redefines what it means to be a horn player performing in the New York music scene in 2012. His virtuosity on a staggering list of reed instruments and his restless curiosity to explore classical, jazz, rock, pop and new music have afforded Willis the insight to tackle the works of Erik Satie in a creative and unconventional manner. Not easily pigeonholed as simply a classical or jazz artist, Willis openly engages music with no guidelines or restrictions in an effort to discover new ways of presenting his distinguished brand of original music.



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