

Ancia Saxophone Quartet Bio

When four world class Saxophone performers become friends and form a quartet, you have an explosion of energy, joy and deeply wonderful music-making – you have Ancia! – Libby Larsen

The Ancia Quartet rocks... I can't wait to hear the new recording! – Jennifer Higdon

Hailed by Chamber Music America as an ensemble which “approaches the commissioning and performing of new works as a special mission,” the Ancia Quartet (*AHN-chee-uh*) has been dedicated to expanding the saxophone repertoire for over thirty years. The quartet has shared its passion for new music with a diverse range of audiences around the world through performances filled with “energy, precision, and huge dynamic range” (Eugene Rousseau). The group’s unique ability to “create exquisite musical interpretations” have drawn commissions from an impressive array of contemporary composers, including such luminaries as Grammy Award-winner Libby Larsen, Pulitzer Prize- and two-time Grammy-winner Jennifer Higdon, and Pulitzer Prize-finalist Lei Liang.

Ancia places a high value on the “deeply collaborative” (*CMA*) nature of the commissioning process. The quartet has received a grant through the Alice M. Ditson Fund to complete their new CD, *Confluence*, which is being released on Albany Records. *Confluence* will feature the premier recording of Libby Larsen’s work of the same name commissioned by the quartet in 2015 and inspired by a shared concern for the environment. The quartet premiered the four-movement work, which depicts four endangered waterways from around the world, at the SaxOpen (World Saxophone Congress XVII) in Strasbourg, France later that year. To celebrate and discuss this exciting new work and its environmental theme, Ancia was featured live on *Performance Today* for a special Earth Day broadcast on National Public Radio. The CD will also feature works by Rutkowski, Ricker, Piazzolla, and Dodgion.

The group has continued to engage in collaborations with innovative composers and performers, most recently leading a consortium commission of a new work by Chris Rutkowski entitled “Changes.” Ancia has also worked closely alongside provocative Israeli composer Yehuda Yannay to push the members’ boundaries as saxophonists and musicians in his new composition, “The Center Does Not Hold.” Renowned “BEATBoX SAX” artist Derek Brown spoke fondly of his recent performance with the quartet, calling them “a top-tier ensemble with an incredible range of playing styles and emotions.”

Ancia takes its role as ambassadors of new music seriously, not solely through the commissioning of new works, but through performances of the most captivating existing repertoire. The ensemble particularly enjoys showcasing concertos – a genre often overlooked by saxophone quartets – by some of the most influential composers of our time, including Philip Glass (*Concerto for Saxophone Quartet*, with the Wayzata Symphony Orchestra) and William Bolcom (*Concerto Grosso*, with the Bloomington Symphony). Although the quartet’s mission privileges the creation and dissemination of new music, Ancia thoroughly enjoys transporting audiences across time and genre. The group expertly performs repertoire spanning centuries and styles, with programs as likely to include arrangements of 12th-century German mystic Hildegard von Bingen as those of jazz legend Duke Ellington.

Ancia has been the recipient of numerous national, regional, and local grants and awards, including awards from the Minnesota Arts and Cultural Heritage Fund and Metropolitan Regional Arts Council Community Arts grants for seven consecutive years. Ancia has collaborated with composers through Society of Composers, Meet the Composer, American Composers Forum, and THE Commission Project.

Individually, Ancia members are active soloists, chamber musicians, and professional saxophonists in a broad range of musical genres, including work in classical, jazz, contemporary and popular idioms. Ancia members hold degrees from Eastman School of Music, Ithaca College, Kansas State University, the University of Minnesota, the New England Conservatory of Music, Northwestern University, St. Olaf College and the University of Wisconsin. As dedicated teachers, Ancia members serve as saxophone artist-teachers at Augsburg University, McNeese State University, LA, the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater, and Eastview High School, Apple Valley. They have presented masterclasses, workshops, and educational performances across North America, Europe, and Asia.

Ancia is an Artist-Clinician Ensemble for Selmer Paris Saxophones and Vandoren Woodwind Products. The group is based in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Group members are: Matthew Sintchak (soprano saxophone), Joan Hutton (alto saxophone), Benjamin Cold (tenor saxophone), and Angela Wyatt (baritone saxophone).