

MELISSA PIPE SEXTET

OF WHAT REMAINS

Melissa Pipe is a baritone saxophonist, bassoonist, composer and arranger who lives in Montreal.

As well as leading her own quintet and sextet, she performs regularly with jazz, hip hop, popular, indie, and classical ensembles as a freelancer. A versatile player and writer, she has written for small group, chamber ensemble, big band and symphony orchestra.

While pursuing her formal studies in jazz saxophone and composition, she began exploring the woodwind doubles conventionally played by saxophonists (flute, clarinet, bass clarinet), but soon became intrigued and enchanted by one of the more unusual doubles: the bassoon. This sparked a long parallel road of independent study, exploration and fortuitous meetings that allowed her to hone her skills as a bassoon player and writer.

“Of What Remains” is Melissa’s first release as a leader and features her playing and writing for small group.



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SEXTET
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Melissa Pipe: baritone sax, bassoon
Lex French: trumpet
Philippe Côté: tenor sax, bass clarinet
Geoff Lapp: piano
Solon McDade: bass
Mili Hong, drums

w/ Michael Sundell, contrabassoon *select tracks*

Produced by: Philippe Côté and Melissa Pipe
Recorded and mixed by: Paul Johnston
Mastered by: Guy Hébert

Released April 2023 on ODD SOUND

Of What Remains explores ideas around temporality: the shifting of time, form and being. The individual pieces form a whole, joining together fragmentation, symbiosis, distillation, evaporation, and transience, while looking at what is left behind, or what remains.

The sextet’s instrumentation of trumpet, tenor sax/bass clarinet, baritone sax/bassoon, piano, bass and drums allows her to write in both a traditional jazz ensemble configuration (trumpet and saxes with the rhythm section) and in a “chamber jazz” format. The additional colour, timbre and orchestration possibilities of the bassoon and the bass clarinet are particularly effective in infusing elements of classical and folk music into the pieces.

“La complainte du vent” is a short piece based on the traditional French *complainte* which tells the tale of a dark and often tragic story. The piece is interlaced between tracks on the album, coming and going, like the wind, picking up, dancing, and dying away before reemerging once again.

“La part des anges” takes its name from the aging process of distilled spirits; as the alcohol ages and matures in its cask, a small part of it evaporates over time which is known as the “angel’s share”. This piece plays around with the idea of how the two parts are inextricably linked yet move away from each other through small shifts over time. The melodic fragments here are the angel’s share, evaporating at an increasing rate, while the bass, the spirit, remains, slowly evolving over time.

“In Due Time” is a groove-based tune in 7/4, featuring the baritone sax. The piece has a bluesy melody over a distorted second-line feel. The tune builds over solo trades before going back to the head and slowly fading away, ending with the drums and the baritone sax’s slap tongue effect in a percussive duet.

“Ici, ainsi” begins with the bassoon and bass clarinet stating the opening melody. It is then echoed by the trumpet, as the bassoon, contrabassoon and bass step in below and reveal the harmony of the passage the second time. A feature for all three horns, the tune takes a few turns before closing with the opening melody again, slightly transformed.

“Apothecium” is a minor blues which opens with the baritone sax and bass playing the melody in unison. Written in a traditional jazz style, it features a stop-time chorus of piano solo rhythm section punches and melodic interventions in the horns with tight harmonies. The tune ends as it begins, with the baritone and bass playing the melody.

“Fragment no. 2” is a feature for the double bass, based on a poem by Sappho, or what has survived of it in its fragmented form. The ballad opens with the bass playing the melody with horns accompanying, then the horns join in on the melody as it comes around a second time in an impassioned plea, before giving way to an introspective solo section featuring the bass, piano and a duet between the tenor and baritone saxes.

“Day” is an *aubade*, at once welcoming and lamenting the arrival of dawn. The piece opens with a contemplative piano solo, followed by a rhythm section interlude that gives way to the trumpet melody, accompanied by the bassoon and bass clarinet. The solo section builds into a vamp leading to a drum solo before returning to the main melody, slowly fading back to the interlude, ending in suspension.

“Puudutus” is an arrangement of a piece by Estonian composer Tõnu Kõrvits scored here for baritone saxophone, bass clarinet, and contrabassoon.



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