Daily Life

UConn Saxophone Studio Celebrates the Memory of Former Student in Concert

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On April 12 at the Von der Mehden Recital Hall, the University of Connecticut Saxophone Studio performed "A Celebration of Zachary Rubin" in honor of the second-semester music and finance major who passed away earlier this year.

"UConn extends its deepest condolences to the family and friends of the students who have passed during the current academic year," UConn spokesperson Stephanie Reitz wrote in an email to The Daily Campus.

On April 22 at 3 p.m. a memorial service will be held in the Student Union Ballroom to remember the students who have passed, according to Reitz. Family, friends and faculty connected to each student are invited.

The first performance of the night was a medley of tunes from the 1875 opera "Carmen" by French composer Georges Bizet performed by a saxophone quartet, which consisted of UConn students Noah Lafond, Haly Ducharme, Amelia Brott and Jackson Civitillo.

Greg Case, UConn's saxophone instructor, took the stage next. Case told the audience about the work Rubin was doing within the music department, and how this concert is in celebration of his memory but also the power of music to bring people together.

When Case asked among his students who wanted to perform a solo piece, he said "the next person you're going to hear next immediately said 'I would like to play something.'"

Olivia Fortenbach performed the next piece, a somber performance of the second movement for the Concerto for Alto Saxophone, written by Ronald Binge. Fortenbach was accompanied by Pianist Georgi Lekov and wore a pin emblazoned with the initials "ZR."

Julie Carver, a fourth-semester general music and natural resources student and the production manager for the concert, echoed Case's sentiment on how eager students were to contribute to this concert.

"There was enough people that stepped up initially," Carver said. "It was literally the second day and we had all of what we needed to make a full program."

Carver also appreciated Lekov stepping up to the plate and accompanying the solo saxophone pieces at the concert.

"It's just really hard for them," Carver said. "It's just notoriously really weird and clunky because there's always weird harmonies going on."

Halfway through the first half, a third saxophone quartet which consisted of UConn students Arian Rozman, Carlos Delgado, Michael Gennaro and Jack Wood arrived onstage. The quartet performed "Slipstream," an original piece composed by Delgado and dedicated to Rubin.

Delgado's inspiration for the name came from the community and solace they found from the people in the saxophone studio

"A slipstream is defined as an area of reduced air pressure behind a rapidly moving object." Delgado said. "I like to think, in a way, that represents the way we, as a community and as members of the same studio, are willing to shoulder each other's burdens and help each other when we're down."

Jackson Civitillo, a sixth-semester music education major who helped set up the concert, said the community he has found within music helped him get through the aftermath of Rubin's passing.

"Greg [Case] said it best: 'music is something that brings people together in a way that no one can,'" Civitello said.

"I don't think I could have done it without having those people as my spine the whole time," Carver said.

The last performance before a short intermission was by Case himself, who performed a piece titled "Gratitude" off of the larger concerto "Solace," by American composer Joel Love. It was a standout performance from the instructor, as Case's saxophone pierced the air with its eclectic stabs and wails.

After two quick duet performances in succession, the big showstopper arrived in the form of two massive saxophone ensemble performances featuring Case and his studio, conducted by Joe D'Aleo, saxophonist for the United States Coast Guard Band.

Civitillo talked about how these larger ensemble performances gave everyone "a cool opportunity to be like 'Hey, what if we all get to play something together?'"

The first ensemble performance, "Passacaglia in Celebration of Zachary Rubin," was originally written by University of Michigan Professor Elwood Derr and attributed to the memory of Carl Orff. The title was changed to honor Rubin. It was a brilliant showcase of dynamics, seeing 16 saxophonists and conductors play in lockstep with each other.

The last performance of the night was an Intermedio composed by Spanish composter Jerónimo Giménez and arranged by Case, who again emphasized the importance of the saxophone studio community. It was an upbeat, bouncy and joyous piece of music that ended in a standing ovation from the audience and concluded the concert.

"After the concert was done, I remember just so many people coming up to me and congratulating me," Carver said. "It's nice to know that I have so many people behind me."

Carver and Civitello had a hectic day setting up the concert, and for Civitello it was some of the most planning he ever put behind a concert.



The flyer for the UConn Saxophone Studio Concert, a memorial performance for UConn Student Zachary Rubin. The concert was a beautiful representation of how music can bring communities together to remember the life of Rubin, who was a second-semester music and finance major who passed away earlier this year.

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"I think I speak for both of us when I say that from the second I woke up I did not stop running around," Civitillo said. "It's probably the most planned and most well thought out and biggest production concert I've ever been a part of in my life anywhere."

Not only were there many moving parts to consider, Carver and Civitillo also had to keep their emotions at bay when planning.

"Every step of the way, you're reminded of that person you're not going to be able to say or see again," Carver said.

Despite all the hiccups along the road, Carver thought the concert left a positive impact on herself and the saxophone studio as a whole.

"It felt like the first time we felt some light in a long time in the saxophone studio was at that concert," Carver said. "It was just like 'wow we're making music together like we're supposed to be doing.'"

If you or someone you know is suffering with their mental health, you can check out Student Health and Wellness' resources on mental health posted on their website at studenthealth.uconn.edu/mental-health.

The Daily Comics



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