



In creating this music for an album, I can draw from in my personal experiences. When I was a boy my Uncle Don lived in BC, far away from the city life we live in today. I would imagine the land he lived in was it like for indigenous societies? The spirits of nature surrounded them and gave them a very existence. Facing the task of creating music from my imagination, striving to provide a sense of place. Digging into BC history I came across the name of The province's second premier, Amor De Cosmos, (his name to Amor De Cosmos, "The Universe"), to pay tribute, as he

-Canadian cast, I asked myself, "What experience that conveys this place?" I took my family on trips into the interior of BC that had become accustomed to. As a teenager before the European settlers arrived. What does it mean to survive in this atmosphere? The music, both protecting and threatening their lives. In writing for this ensemble I delved into the world of the music with a sense of belonging. I was inspired by the life of William Alexander Smith. He was an odd character. At 26 he changed his name, inaccurately translated as "Lover of the land." He said, "to what I love most...Love of order,

beauty, the world, the universe." In 1858 he founded the British Colonist newspaper in Victoria, promoting union with Canada, and he was one of our first members of parliament after BC joined Confederation in 1871. Increasingly unstable, he pushed for BC to secede, and lost his seat in 1882. By 1895 the courts had declared him mentally incompetent. Discovering him was a catalyst in connecting to my own personal history – not because of William Smith's life or career as such, but because the invention of Amor de Cosmos intrigued me. In 1986 I left BC to study in NYC. I decided to reside there – it's been 20 years now – but I've been drawn back to BC for many reasons: work, family and holidays. Like Mr. Smith I had to reinvent myself in order to survive in a new environment. On *Amor de Cosmos* I let the memories surge, and perhaps I was able to reinvent myself again.

🎵 The Music 🎵

On "Ghostlines" and "The Hunt," the two improvisations on this album, my main objective was to forgo playing the sax in a traditional manner. I wanted the sounds to be primitive and unconscious, like I was playing the horn for the first time. Practicing to play in this manner is important, so in fact I practice to sound strange. But searching out alternative fingerings, overtone combinations (ghost notes as I like to call them) and vocalizing are a big part of my experimentation.

"Temporary Constellation" is one of the few compositions I've written that explores odd time

signatures. I arranged this song as a musical palindrome. There are some complex layers in the introduction of this tune. Once the vamp comes in any proper melody is sacrificed for a humorous serpentine line played by the marimba and muted trumpet. Dylan's great solo is underpinned by similar comic undertones, as are Chris Gestrin's plucked piano breaks.

"Amor de Cosmos" is about the fragile balance between man and nature. The man in question here held a typical Victorian attitude – to look out for one's own vested interests for the better good of self-preservation – which is still a driving force in politics today. I like that he fought for public schooling and to protect the interests

of his constituency. But he also became an opponent of land concessions to First Nations in the province, seeing them as a hindrance to British Columbia's economic growth and to settlement by those of European descent. His sense of entitlement is both admirable and contemptible.

Seymour was a purebred Newfoundland who my father bought one day on a whim. An adorable puppy grew into one of the largest, droolingest dogs in history. But Seymour was also a great swimmer and very friendly. Sadly, after my father, step-mom and brother relocated to California he was stolen from us. The center of "So Long Seymour" focuses on a memory I have of him chasing a squirrel through the woods, while my brother Paul clings on to the leash for dear life.

"The Wash Away" is a heartfelt song inspired by the late West African griot kora master Keba Cissoko. The kora is an African harp and griots are responsible for preserving the history of their culture. My grandparents Bert and Thelma Stevens were the storytellers in our family. Like the First Nations of the west coast with their potlatch, we all share a universal love for gatherings, celebration, food and conversation. Brad's inspired solo is an appropriate nod to Hugh Masakela — a major figure in South African jazz.

A few years back I suffered from a ruptured ap-

pendix. The "Infirmary" I chose was the infamous psychiatric hospital Bellevue, which is now the largest public hospital in the country. In NYC public hospitals offer a sliding scale system to cover expenses. My appendicitis led to multiple surgeries and I spent a lot more time there than I would have liked. Like many residents in the US I can't afford medical insurance, and Bellevue has taken care of me on numerous occasions. Chris does a beautiful job with this ballad.

"Paddy Pie Face" says something about my father's life. The melody is complex and the secondary part is random and deconstructive. As a whole it is the strangest little tune — quite similar to my dear father. Paddy, as he preferred to be called, always said my brother Paul and I were his proudest achievements. Now we are fathers and so his pride lives on in our own. Paddy's wide smile and goofy laugh are the inspiration for the title.

Thank you to Chris, Dylan, Sal, Brad and André for bringing their wonderful ideas to this project. Thanks to Tony Reif and Songlines for supporting me and seeing this through. Also to the Songlines engineering and design team. A special thanks to my family in BC, London and New York City.

This album is dedicated to my Grandfather HW Stevens.

MICHAEL BLAKE, *Brooklyn NY, June 2007*



1. Ghostlines 4:43
2. Temporary Constellation 7:16
3. Amor de Cosmos 9:53
4. So Long Seymour 10:56
5. The Wash Away 7:22
6. Infirmary 5:01
7. The Hunt 5:44
8. Paddy Pie Face 6:22

Total time 57:17



All compositions written and arranged by Michael Blake (Baby Tank Music, SESAC)
except 1 and 7 by Chris Gestrin and Michael Blake (SOCAN/Baby Tank Music, SESAC)

◆◆ Produced by Tony Reif ◆◆

Recorded by Sheldon Zaharko, September 15, 2005 at The Factory, assisted by Liam May
Edited and mixed by John Raham, May 21-23, 2006 at Ogre Studio (stereo) and May 23 and 27, 2006
at Zen Mastering (multi-channel). Mastered by Graemme Brown at Zen Mastering.
This album was recorded, mixed and mastered in Vancouver BC.

◆◆ Design by Eli Bornowsky ◆◆

Photos by Paola Biferale; vintage photos from the Blake family archives

Info/bookings: www.michaelblake.net



~ Michael Blake ~

— tenor and soprano saxophone —

•• Brad Turner ••

— trumpet —

~ Sal Ferreras ~

— marimba and percussion —

•• Chris Gestrin ••

— acoustic and electric piano, electronics —

~ André Lachance ~

— acoustic bass —

•• Dylan van der Schyff ••

— drums —

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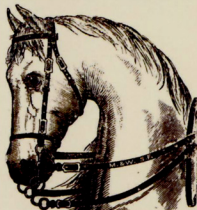
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