



Akropolis Reed Quintet | Sep 2025 Tour

Program Listing

Jean-Philippe Rameau (1683-1764) – Nouvelle Suite in A minor, "*La Triomphante*" (1728) arr. Raaf Hekkema [~12-15']

Movements selected from the following:

- I. Prelude
- II. Allemande
- III. Les trois main
- IV. Sarabande
- V. Fanfarinette
- VI. La Triomphante

Derrick Skye (b.1982) – *A Soulful Nexus* (2023) [~15-18']

Movements selected from the following:

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4

- Intermission -

Ryan Lindveit (b.1994) – *Venus of Willendorf* (2024) [8']

George Gershwin (1898-1937) – *An American in Paris* (1928) arr. Raaf Hekkema [18']

Program Notes

Suite "La Triomphante"

Arranged from harpsichord for reed quintet by Raaf Hekkema, Rameau's "La Triomphante" suite was one of 2 large-scale "nouvelle" harpsichord suites, this one composed in 1727. Rameau composed this suite both as a concert work and as a method book ("pour la mécanique des doigts"), the movements serving as development of proper ornamentation. A defining characteristic of the French Baroque style was the use of rhythm and ornamentation (as opposed to the German style, more concerned with counterpoint). The ornamentations, which were not composed, but implied by the performer based on standard practices, accentuate important harmonic moments. To the lay-listener these will sound like trills of various length and starting points. This music was also dance music, and so the use of rhythm to accentuate changes in harmony and to draw the ear into important harmonic moments gives this arrangement particular joy, allowing five players to negotiate rhythms and textures among themselves.

A Soulful Nexus

From the composer: "A Soulful Nexus is a transcultural classical work that blends elements of Persian classical music with ornamental vocal techniques found in solo Balkan vocal melodies and the groove-based polyrhythms characteristic of electronic dance music. From Persian classical music, the piece uses an E *koron*, which to the Western trained ear may sound like a flat microtonal pitch. However, in Persian classical music, a *koron* is considered its own note, not a microtone between notes. Sonically, this demonstrates how something initially perceived as an imperfection, over time and with change in perspective, can be seen as an aspect of perfection.

Central to *A Soulful Nexus* is the use of the melodic framework *Gushé Shekaste* from Persian classical music, which includes the E *koron*. *Shekaste* translated means "broken," due to the relationship between the main tetrachord and auxiliary notes of this melodic framework. Throughout the piece, *Morakab-Navazie* is used to move between *Gushé Shekaste* and *Darâmad Dastgâh-e Mahur* and *Dastgâh-e Râstpanjgâh*. The fourth movement in particular is inspired by Afro-Persian music from Southern Iran. From Balkan music, the piece uses mordents and fragmented motivic phrasing often used by solo vocalists in Bulgarian women's choir music. From electronic dance music, *A Soulful Nexus* uses cyclical, groove-based polyrhythms to accompany instrumental solos. The title *A Soulful Nexus* serves as an invitation for listeners and performers to trace the intricate pathways of these musical idioms interwoven throughout the composition."

A Soulful Nexus has been made possible by the Chamber Music America Classical Commissioning Program, with generous funding provided by The Mellon Foundation.

Venus of Willendorf

From the composer:

I first learned about the Venus of Willendorf, a 30,000-year-old, 4.4-inch carved limestone figure found in Austria, in an art history class in 2014, and so it was with tremendous sense of anticipation and excitement that I approached visiting the Natural History Museum Vienna, where the figure is currently exhibited, ten years later. In the same spirit of joyful enthusiasm, I composed Venus of Willendorf for the Akropolis Reed Quintet, a group of musicians who eagerly tackle every musical challenge with artistry and aplomb. The origins of the Venus figurine are mysterious, as is its meaning, though some scholars theorize that it is associated with fertility, growth, and vitality. In response to this theory, I composed exuberant and vigorous music for these talented musicians. Additionally, the Venus is both quite tiny and amply voluptuous, so I often simultaneously feature high notes in the oboe with low notes in the bass clarinet to reflect metaphorical mappings of high sounds with small things and low sounds with large things.

An American in Paris

In *An American in Paris*, Gershwin aimed to create one of his more serious works despite his natural affinity for frivolity. He consulted Ravel about this conundrum, who wisely instructed that if Gershwin was making more money than Ravel (which he was), he shouldn't change how he writes his music. He sought advice from Nadia Boulanger, the great teacher of Aaron Copland and others. She also wisely suggested to Gershwin try to be no one but Gershwin. And so, using complex motivic development which is constantly modulating and changing form, Gershwin manages to create his most accessible, but simultaneously most complex piece of music. Among the challenges Dutch saxophonist Raaf Hekkema faced in arranging the work was how to convey these ideas with only 5 instruments. Hekkema brilliantly takes a smaller color palette and combines the instruments to create more textural possibilities than the listener could ever predict. In ways, while Gershwin's orchestration maximizes the orchestra's capabilities, the listener might find Gershwin's ideas even easier to deduce in the chamber music format. The continually repeating and evolving motives make for a challenging but thrilling performance which Akropolis is delighted to bring to the stage.