

## I. Program Notes (expanded)

*Chivalrous Misdemeanors*: A new musical by trombonist RON WESTRAY, is based on and inspired by the literary work *Don Quixote de la Mancha* by Miguel de Cervantes.

Although musical masterpieces inspired by *Don Quixote* are mainstays in classical culture, *Chivalrous Misdemeanors* may be the first composed and arranged for the complex jazz setting. The piece was premiered over three nights in May 2005 at Jazz @ Lincoln Center by the JALCO in Rose Hall.

The work is punctuated with narration and vocal performances in the roles of Don Quixote and Dulcinea del Toboso. The personification of the characters and the composer's personal impression of Don Quixote's state of reality are well represented. Westray is fascinated by the way Cervantes could "turn common conversation into literature, shedding light on human fallibility." For Westray, this is one of the key points of convergence between Quixote and jazz. Unlike classical forms born in the parlors and palaces of Europe, jazz is based in the blues, and no more common a language has ever been spoken. Yet, from this fundamental vocabulary, art is born, Monk is born, Bird is born, and complex long-form, cohesively themed works on the human condition are born.

*Chivalrous Misdemeanors* consists of 23 selected tales derived from the famous novel. The tales put to the listener the question, which must certainly have arisen before undertaking this musical adventure: How can a jazz composer conquer a subject like Cervantes' *Don Quixote*? To the uninitiated it is perhaps a reasonable question; a work of this magnitude would *seem* more at home in a long-form classical context, as has been demonstrated by Strauss and Telemann, to name a few. But that, like one of the central themes running through Ron Westray's *Chivalrous Misdemeanors*, is a misperception. Composer, arranger, and renowned trombonist Ron Westray insists that a "jazz Quixote" is not only possible but is long overdue. To be revised for its second performance run, CM is still twenty-three movements, but with a newly edited abridgment, encircled by artful 'incidental' music. As with the original score, the new CM is performed in less than two hours, resulting in a condensed yet complete experience.

One of the central themes in *Chivalrous Misdemeanors* is delusion—Don Quixote’s singularly peculiar perceptions of the world around him and his penchant for action, based on those perceptions. “That is jazz,” Westray would maintain. By virtue of an acute social awareness and a preference for the esoteric, the jazzman has historically represented this model. The jazz musician thrives on ideas and ideologies; this person is, by nature, a romantic. The task of the jazz musician is to approach a piece of music with his own Quixotic vision and take to arms in the form of improvisation, based on his/her own perceptions. In this sense, the jazz musician requires empathy from the listener, as does our hero. The avid listener follows the musical ideas of the performers as they transform sound into social and psychological metaphors.

Don Quixote reacted in opposition to 17<sup>th</sup> century Spain and its refusal to adhere to the ostensibly ‘superior imperatives’ of an idealized time past: the Middle Ages as depicted in chivalric romances and in the lives of saints. Comparably, eras past seem to signal some ‘providential unity’ between diligence and reward. Presently, the jazz musician prepares and presents his sonic emblem based on a premise that, arguably, only prevails in retrospect: *Preparation Equals Opportunity*.

Like our hero, the jazz musician is at once heralded *and* unknown, but always inspired. Together, the delusional and the romantic are the impetus behind *Chivalrous Misdemeanors*’ two primary musical devices---Consonance and Dissonance. Dissonance (Disharmony) represents our hero’s knack for detachment from reality, as it does the jazz musician’s proclivity toward chaos and complexity. Consonance (Harmony) represents our hero’s ability to be understood and the jazz musician’s adeptness in *logic and rationale*. Westray brilliantly illustrates these neighboring conditions of Quixote, weaving seamlessly between the two over the course of the performance.

Like Cervantes’ brilliant and playful critique of the vain books of knight-errantry, Westray sees his composition not only as a delightful musical tale in and of itself, but as an opportunity to incorporate and parody both classical approaches to DQ and jazz’s approach to itself. The composer manages to expose the wit, irreverence and tumultuous reality of the central character without resorting to outright mockery. Cacophony and simultaneous harmonic complexity present a challenge to the listener, displaying invigorating compositional intricacies as an emblem, all the while inveigling the musicians to execute their convictions within the “Quaint-Cloud-Koo-Koo-Land of La Mancha.”

