Composed

A professional musician thrives as a student in UCSC’s graduate program in composition

By Scott Rappaport

This past January, the San Francisco Chronicle identified Sylvain Carton as the “powerhouse alto saxophone player” in one of the Bay Area’s “most provocative jazz ensembles.” It was richly deserved praise for the up-and-coming co-leader of the Mitchell Marcus Quintet.

Carton, who earned a master of arts degree in music composition from UC Santa Cruz five months after the newspaper tribute, has artistic breadth that demands attention. His musical tastes run from Stravinsky and Bartok, to Mingus and Ellington…from Stravinsky and Bartok, to Middle-Eastern surf-metal to East-European/French accordion, junk percussion, violin, bass, guitar, banjo, accordion, junk percussion, trumpet, flute, and saxophone. Carton also composes for his half dozen other bands—including an extended 18-piece version of the jazz quintet called the MMQ + 13 Big Band. He also recently completed work on string arrangements for a new documentary film produced by National Geographic.

“Because David was also heavily involved with world music in his own writing, I felt he was better able to understand some of the concepts in my pieces,” Carton says. “He was someone I could bounce ideas off of because he understood what I was trying to go for in my compositions.”

“I want to use the skills I’ve gained at UCSC to continue to broaden my horizons with composition. One of the things I enjoyed most about UC Santa Cruz was meeting fellow students and professors with a multitude of interests, who combined to form a great community that inspires creativity.”

Sylvain Carton’s music can be found at: sylvaincarton.com

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