**On Immortality**

A Dialogue by George Santayana

Set to music by Don Stratton

Directed by Dan Barrett

*with*

Nancy Ellen Ogle and Gregory Shaw, *narrators*

and the Swingmatism Jazz Ensemble

Jay Bregman, *tenor saxophone*

Dan Barrett, *trombone*

Colin Graebert, *piano*

Bob Roman, *bass*

Bobby Duron, *drums*

**Notes**

An ancient Greek myth about the after-life turns out to have been true. A stranger who has recently died finds herself on a raft crossing the River Styx, being ferried along with other newly departed souls to the Island of Remembrance by the god Charon.

In this modern version of the myth, Santayana engages the departed soul in conversation with the gaunt ferryman, exploring issues of life and death. In Santayana’s view, *truth* is simply everything that has actually happened; as such, it is impossible for anyone to live in the present and, at the same time, live in the truth. On realizing this view, the stranger becomes liberated from previous notions about living and dying and is newly able to enjoy the phenomena of existence as they arise.

**Don Stratton** (1928-2016) was a teacher, composer and trumpet player of national acclaim. In 1976, Don's “The Seasons in Maine” was performed by the Bangor Symphony at the Kennedy Center in Washington D.C., representing our State in the national bicentennial celebrations.

A Clark Terry protégé, Don was known as a trumpet player influenced by Bix Beiderbecke (as well as modern jazz trumpet players. Notably he blew with Phil Woods, Kenny Clarke), Elliot Lawrence and Claude Thornhill. His *American Post-Forty Blues,* for orchestra and solo trumpet is a perfect example of Third Stream Music.

As Professor of Music at UMaine, Don created the 20th Century Music Ensemble, in which students enthusiastically performed a wide variety of jazz along with far out experimental works and lyrical compositions. Don's music is archived in a special collection at the Bangor Public Library.

Philosopher **George Santayana** (1863-1952) wrote in a broad spectrum of genres. His major works include The Life of Reason (5 vols.), The Realms of Being (4 vols.) and a best-selling novel, The Last Puritan. He spent his final years living in Rome, where he wrote “On Immortality,” which was published posthumously.

Emeritus Professor of History, and member of the Board of Directors of the International Society for Neoplatonic Studies, **Jay Bregman** has taught at UCLA, UC Berkeley and Howard University, as well as at UMaine, where he has taught History of Jazz for over 30 years. He studied Jazz with Lennie Tristano, Yusef Lateef and Don Stratton, and played with Don. For a decade, he and Don taught an Honors Seminar on American Aesthetics and Subcultures, covering such topics as the New England Transcendentalists, Zen, Ives and Monk, Neoplatonism, the Beat Authors and Pythagorean Aesthetics. Tonight’s composition reflects that interdisciplinarity.

UMaine Professor **Nancy Ellen Ogle**’s work with contemporary composers is available on recordings on Capstone, Cormorant, Woodsum, New Media Productions and Parma labels. In 2014, Nancy was a Grammy nominee in the category of best classical solo vocal recording for a CD of Scott Brickman’s music featuring Ogle singing his Dear Darwin songs (Ravello Recordings). Nancy has premiered several of Don Stratton’s compositions, including *A Recital of Birds* and *Ktaadn*.

A fellow of the F.S.A., **Gregory J. Shaw** is Professor of Religious Studies at Stonehill College (Massachusetts, USA). His research interests include Religions of Late Antiquity, especially Neoplatonism; history of divination with an emphasis on dreams; contemporary religious movements that draw from Hermetic and Platonic sources; Jungian psychology; UFO phenomena.

**Dan Barrett** teaches trombone, tuba, jazz improvisation, jazz piano and arranging, and runs the jazz combo program at the University of Maine. He has been privileged to perform with many jazz greats including Bob Mintzer, Conrad Herwig, Andy Martin, John Fedchock, Thomas Gansch, Ingrid Jensen, Phil Markowitz, Eric Marienthal and Byron Stripling.

**Colin Graebert** has been playing jazz piano in Maine for almost twenty years. He is an active member or the Maine music scene as an accompanist, choir director, vocalist, musical theatre director and clinician. He recently graduated from the University of Maine with a Bachelor of Music in Music Education and is looking forward to officially joining the ranks of Maine’s music teachers. He lives in Stockton Springs with his wife, Hilary, and two children, Eric and Ruth.

UMaine graduate and student of Don Stratton, **Bob Roman** maintains an active performing schedule. In addition to this ensemble, he is also a member of the house band on “The Nite Show with Danny Cashman” and many others.

**Bobby Duron** has been playing drums professionally for over 40 years. Originally from Dallas, Texas, he now resides in Hampden, Maine, where he is a professor at Husson University and an active freelance musician and clinician in the greater Bangor area.