

BEYOND BORDERS



Daniela Broderick (second from left) and Thomas Liley (second from right) perform "Burlesque" to a world audience at Mahidol University in Bangkok in July.

JJC Music Professors Perform Piece at 40th Annual World Saxophone Congress in Bangkok

by Kelly Rohder

Thomas Liley approached this performance as he had all others.

The JJC music professor practiced his mental focus and concentrated on controlling his airstream to create the proper sound and response of his instrument. He practiced with other musicians.

For this particular performance, he had rehearsed the day before with a Latvian violinist, a Polish cellist, and his Joliet Junior College colleague, pianist and assistant professor Daniela Broderick.

And then the day of the concert arrived. Liley stepped onto the stage, and in front of hundreds of professionals and saxophone students representing more than 70 countries, he presented American composer Claude Baker's new chamber piece, "Burlesque," to a world audience gathered in Mahidol University's School of Music in Bangkok.

The university served as the site of this year's 40th annual World Saxophone Congress meeting, of which Liley's performance—the official unveiling of Baker's piece—was a highlight.

The magnitude of the performance didn't seem to ruffle Liley, who said he prepares for all performances—

whether they're in the JJC Fine Arts Theatre or at an international symposium in Hong Kong—the same way.

"Practice, or more accurately, preparation, should at a certain stage of development be primarily mental. Learning how a musical passage sounds and how your part does (or does not) fit into the context, as well as maintaining the mental focus necessary for a good performance are crucial," Liley said.

"Also important is maintaining the control and flexibility of the airstream to create the proper sound and response; the saxophone is a wind instrument, after all. There are various techniques to develop these skills. For example, memorization is an excellent strategy to develop the mental aspect; the practice of crescendo and decrescendo (gradual increase and decrease of volume) are useful to better manipulate the airstream," he said.

In March, the JJC community was treated to a special performance of "Burlesque," when Liley, Broderick, and Michele Lekas of the Northwest Indiana Symphony, and Emily Mantell of the Illinois Philharmonic Orchestra performed the piece in the Fine Arts

Theatre as part of the college's Musica Viva Series for an audience that included Claude Baker himself. Liley said "Burlesque," which is nearly 16 minutes in length, is a chamber work for saxophone, violin, cello, and piano that suggests music of the past and present.

"In Burlesque, Baker evokes the music of Mozart, Liszt, and the 20th century composer George Rochberg," he said. "He pieces it together in a way that I think the audiences have found interesting."

"What I like the most about the work," Broderick added, "is the mixture of old and new, peace and chaos. When we performed the piece at JJC in March, with the composer in the audience, it was great to have the opportunity to discuss some of those details with him."

Broderick was equally thrilled at the chance to accompany Liley to the Congress in Bangkok this summer for the piece's world premiere.

"It was my first performance abroad, although I am from Brazil, so performing in the U.S. was technically abroad for me for a while. Now it is my home," she said.

Liley, a charter member of the World Saxophone Congress, has been asked to play at five symposiums over the organization's 40-year history, which includes performances in





Thomas Liley, Marcin Szawelski, cello, Daniela Broderick, and Inga Causa, violin.

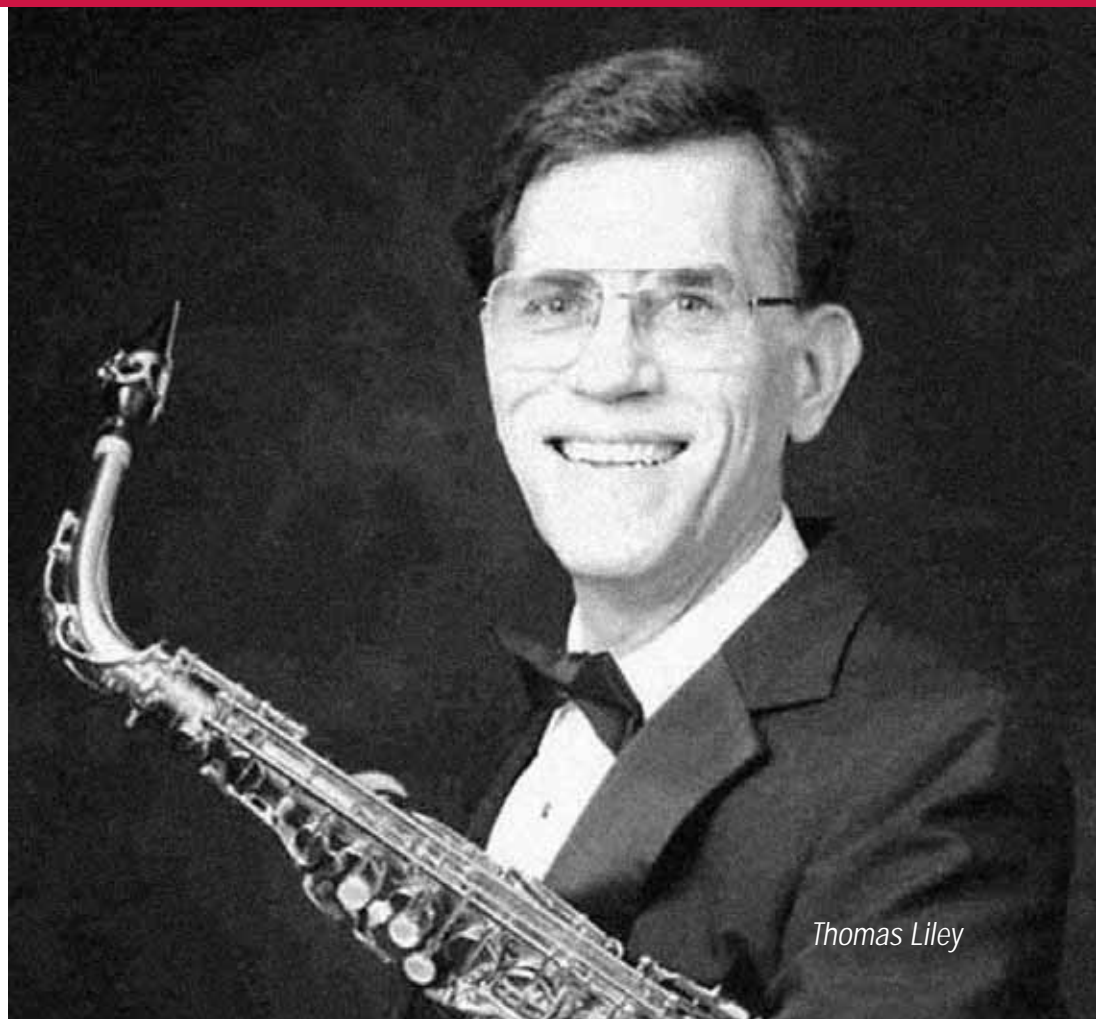
"I want my students to know this is possible for them, too." – Thomas Liley

Montreal, Slovenia, Washington, D.C., and Minneapolis.

But his impressive list of professional performances is not merely confined to bullet points on his resume. He transforms each experience and each performance into learning opportunities for his students.

"I'm aware of the influence I have as an educator," Liley, who has been a professor of music at the college since 1991, said.

"In the most general sense, [my performances] demonstrate to my students what it is like to be a professional musician. I want my students to know that this is possible for them, too."



Thomas Liley