

*Interview - September 2021*



*Australian-French saxophonist and composer Katia Beaugeais, has been awarded a PhD in Composition. Her saxophone album has just been released on Australia's leading classical music record label.*

**On top of your commissions and performances, you also wrote a thesis that you successfully defended. Could you tell us a bit more?**

Several months ago, I was awarded a Doctor of Philosophy in Composition at the Sydney Conservatorium of Music. During 2020 lockdown, I made a lot of progress on my thesis topic about the dual role of a composer-performer. As a saxophonist and composer, I wanted to find out how both these roles influenced each other. As there was so much to say, I ended up writing a 430-page thesis! It was fascinating!

The first part of my thesis focuses on my own compositions. I wanted to research how my saxophone role could influence my music, whether I am writing for woodwinds or strings, since I compose for all instruments. All this analysis raised many questions, for example: how do I feel about certain sounds when they are not coming from a saxophone? How do I find and create different colours? How do I create various harmonies for other instruments which are fundamental in my compositional work?...

For the second part of my thesis, I examined my role as composer-performer when performing other composers' music. I commissioned 4 women and 1 male composer to write a new solo saxophone piece that explored contemporary playing techniques for premiere performances at the Zagreb and Strasbourg World Saxophone Congress. These pieces and my own music were recorded for my ABC Classic saxophone album titled "Breath by Breath" – named after my soprano sax piece where I circular breathe for 7 minutes non-stop – and released on 9 July. This part raised significant issues about what is involved between a composer-saxophonist and a non-saxophonist.

What I discovered, is that I cannot separate my performer and composer role!

## In the end, lots of positive things this year despite the context?

We had 3 months of lockdown at the beginning of the academic year in Sydney, which starts in March. Like everyone else, I taught some courses remotely. In any case, I had planned to take a 3 to 6 month break from teaching and performances, in order to finish my thesis. After that, I had concerts scheduled for the end of the year. Unfortunately, after 3 months without COVID-19, we are back in lockdown due to the large number of new cases...

Ironically, I found this period very interesting, as it allowed me to connect with many more musicians from around the world, especially from France and the UK during this time. I wrote a new saxophone piece for Amy Dickson's online recording project, that was absolutely terrific! Also, Adam Gorb (Head of Composition at the Royal Northern College of Music in Manchester), sent me a new 12-minute solo sax piece, in which I will have the honour of premiering at the next World Saxophone Congress in Japan next year.

Generally, I love working with musicians of all nationalities! Otherwise, we can find ourselves quickly isolated. As a composer, I love being involved in rehearsals and listening to musicians who inspire me to create new sounds for my own compositions – for example, to decide which playing effects to focus on, etc...

Before Sydney's lockdown, I went to Melbourne for a holiday - I love it there! For me, it's the little Paris of Australia!



*For all information about Katia Beaugeais visit her website <https://www.newmusicblock.com>, as well as the direct link for her latest album released by ABC Classic "Breath by Breath"*

