

John Sampen is one of the most outstanding classical American saxophonists specializing in contemporary music. He studied at Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois with Dr. Frederick Hemke, where he received his doctorate in 1984. Other teachers include Larry Teal and Donald Sinta. In 1970 he was a certificate winner of the prestigious International Music Competition in Geneva, Switzerland. Since 1977 Sampen has taught saxophone at Bowling Green State University in Bowling Green, Ohio, as a Distinguished Artist Professor of Music.

Over 80 new pieces for various types of saxophone have been written for and dedicated to Sampen by composers such as Samuel Adler, William Albright, Milton Babbitt, John Cage, John Harbison, Jennifer Higdon, Donald Martino, Ryo Noda, Pauline Oliveros, Shulamit Ran, Bernard Rands, Gunther Schuller, Elliott Schwartz, Marilyn Shrude, Morton Subotnick, and Vladimir Ussachevsky. Moreover, he has collaborated with composers John Adams, Philip Glass, Gyorgy Kurtag, Witold Lutosławski, Karlheinz Stockhausen and Joan Tower to create saxophone versions of their music.

Sampen performs with his wife, composer/pianist Marilyn Shrude, in the presentation of both contemporary and traditional repertoire. He has appeared as a soloist with orchestras such as the Nürnberg Symphony, Orchestra Internazionale d'Italy, New Mexico Symphony, and the Toledo Symphony, as well as numerous chamber ensembles. He has recorded for Belgian and Swiss radio, National Public Radio (USA), and for the Orion, CRI, Albany, New World, AMP, and Capstone labels.

As a distinguished teacher, John Sampen has given master classes at universities and conservatories in Europe, Asia, and North and South America. He is a collaborator and clinician for Conn-Selmer Company and Légère Reeds, and is a former president of the North American Saxophone Alliance.