

PHILADELPHIA CHAMBER MUSIC SOCIETY

a life more beautiful

PREVIEW
NOTES

Valentin Kovalev, *saxophone*

Amy Yang, *piano*

Tuesday, December 3 – 7:30 PM

Benjamin Franklin Hall, American Philosophical Society

PROGRAM

Rhapsodie for Saxophone and Orchestra (Arr.)

Claude Debussy

Born: August 22, 1862

Died: March 25, 1918

Composed: 1911

Duration: 11 minutes

Debussy's *Rhapsodie* for Saxophone and piano, stands as one of the composer's late works, blending the rich colors of Impressionism with the expressiveness of the saxophone. Commissioned in 1901 by amateur saxophonist and patron of the arts, Elise Hall, the piece was completed years later, reflecting Debussy's characteristic meticulousness. The *Rhapsodie* unfolds in a fluid, freeform structure, balancing elegant lyricism with vibrant orchestral textures. The saxophone's unique timbre melds beautifully with Debussy's harmonic palette, creating a work that is both atmospheric and virtuosic. Despite its initial obscurity, it has since become a beloved showcase for saxophonists, particularly in its orchestrated form, where Debussy's tonal imagination shines vividly.

Sonata in E-flat Major, Op. 120, No. 2

Johannes Brahms

Born: May 7, 1833

Died: April 3, 1897

Composed: 1894

Duration: Approx. 25 minutes

Originally written for clarinet and piano, Brahms' *Sonata in E-flat Major, Op. 120, No. 2* is one of the composer's final instrumental works. It was part of Brahms' late creative period, during which he was particularly inspired by the artistry of clarinetist Richard Mühlfeld. This sonata is often

considered the more lyrical and expansive of the two clarinet sonatas, marked by its warm melodies and rich harmonies. In this arrangement for saxophone, the sonata gains a new layer of expressive potential. The saxophone's broad tonal range and lyrical capabilities bring out the warmth and fluidity of Brahms' melodic writing, while also highlighting the instrument's distinctive voice in a chamber music setting. The three-movement structure features a flowing *Allegro amabile*, a soulful *Appassionato*, and a graceful *Andante con moto* – *Allegro* finale, where Brahms' characteristic blend of introspection and joy shines through. Though originally composed for clarinet, this sonata has found new life in various transcriptions, allowing other instruments like the saxophone or viola to interpret Brahms' late-in-life genius.

Fantasy Pieces, Op. 73

Robert Schumann

Born: June 8, 1810

Died: July 29, 1856

Composed: 1849

Duration: Approx. 15 minutes

Originally composed for clarinet and piano, Robert Schumann's *Fantasy Pieces, Op. 73* represent the composer's lyrical and emotionally expressive style. The three short movements, played without pause, the pieces reflect his deep connection to song-like melodies and rich harmonic textures. In this arrangement for saxophone, the *Fantasy Pieces* take on a fresh voice, with the saxophone's warm tone and dynamic flexibility enhancing the expressive nuances of Schumann's writing. The opening *Zart und mit Ausdruck* (Tender and with expression) sets a gentle, poetic tone, followed by the more energetic and playful *Lebhaft, leicht* (Lively, light). The final movement,

Rasch und mit Feuer (Quick and with fire), provides a passionate and vigorous conclusion. Though originally intended for the clarinet, the adaptability of Schumann's work allows the saxophone to bring out new colors in the music, offering a compelling reinterpretation of these beautifully crafted pieces.

Suite for Saxophone and Piano, Op. 55

Fazıl Say

Born: January 14, 1970

Composed: 2014

Duration: Approx. 25 minutes

Renowned Turkish composer and pianist Fazıl Say's *Suite for Saxophone and Piano, Op. 55* is a vibrant and eclectic work that displays his signature blend of classical tradition with contemporary sensibilities and world music influences. The suite is characterized by its rhythmic vitality, striking contrasts, and emotional depth. Each movement presents a unique musical landscape offering listeners a fresh and engaging musical journey. Say's compositional style often draws upon the rich folk traditions of his native Turkey, while also embracing elements of jazz and modern classical music, making this work a compelling showcase for both performers.

Fuzzy Bird Sonata

Takashi Yoshimatsu

Born: March 18, 1953

Composed: 1994

Duration: Approx. 25 minutes

Takashi Yoshimatsu's *Fuzzy Bird Sonata* is a captivating work that embodies his innovative spirit and profound connection to nature. The title itself evokes a whimsical and playful essence, drawing listeners into a sonic landscape filled with color and movement. The sonata is structured in three movements, where Yoshimatsu masterfully utilizes the full range of the instrument, allowing for a captivating exploration of timbre and expressive potential. In this work, the interplay between the saxophone and piano creates a sense of dialogue, inviting audiences to experience the delicate balance between serenity and exuberance. *Fuzzy Bird Sonata* not only highlights Yoshimatsu's innovative compositional techniques but also serves as a poignant reminder of the beauty and complexity found in the natural world.