

KRANNERT CENTER DEBUT ARTIST JONATHAN DUFRESNE, SAXOPHONE

Sunday, April 7, 2024, at 3pm Foellinger Great Hall

# **PROGRAM**

# KRANNERT CENTER DEBUT ARTIST JONATHAN DUFRESNE, SAXOPHONE

Kevina Lam, piano

Fazil Say Suite for Alto Saxophone and Piano, Op. 55

(b. 1970) I. Allegro

III. Presto

Alfred Desenclos Prélude, Cadence, et Finale

(1912–1971)

Baljinder Singh Sekhon II Gradient

(b. 1980)

20-minute intermission

Alexander Glazunov Chant du Ménestrel, Op. 71

(1865–1936) (trans. Jonathan Dufresne)
Takashi Yoshimatsu Fuzzy Bird Sonata

(b. 1953)

I. Run, bird

II. Sing, bird

III. Fly, bird

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# **PROGRAM NOTES**

# **FAZIL SAY**

(b. 1970)

Suite for Alto Saxophone and Piano, Op. 55

I. Allegro

II. Andante

III. Presto

Turkish pianist and composer Fazıl Say has been commissioned to write music for the Salzburger Festspiele, the WDR and the Schleswig-Holstein Musik Festival, the Festspiele Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, the Konzerthaus Wien, the Dresdner Philharmonie, the Louis Vuitton Foundation, the Orpheus Chamber Orchestra and the BBC, among others. His oeuvre includes four symphonies, two oratorios, various solo concertos, and numerous works for piano and chamber music. The recipient of four ECHO Klassiks and much critical acclaim for his recordings of Beethoven, Mozart, Bach, Gershwin, and others, Say released a recording of his own Troy Sonata, Troy Sonata—Fazıl Say Plays Say, on Warner Brothers in 2019. In the 2023–24 season, he will be Spotlight Artist at the Concertgebouw Amsterdam and Composer in Focus at the GAIDA Festival in Vilnius, Lithuania.

About Suite for Alto Saxophone and Piano, Op. 55, Say writes:

"Suite, consisting of six short pieces for alto saxophone and piano, is a virtuoso work for this duo. I composed my Suite in 2014 in commission of the legendary saxophone virtuoso Mr. Sugawa with whom I played the world premiere in Tokyo in 2014. The pieces are very much inspired by Turkish music, rhythms, dances, folklore . . . and composed in modal and sometimes atonal character."

# **ALFRED DESENCLOS**

(1912 - 1971)

Prélude, Cadence, et Finale

French composer Alfred Desenclos was born in Le Portel, a village on the north coast of France. Forced to abandon his formal education as a teen in order to help support his large family by working in the local textile industry, Desenclos would not begin his serious study of music until the age of 20, when he enrolled in the Conservatoire of Roubaix to train as a pianist. Later, in 1932, he was accepted to the Paris Conservatoire, where he won prizes in fugue, harmony, composition, and accompaniment. During this time, he supported himself by serving as the maître de chapelle (chapel master) at the church of Notre-Dame-de-Lorette, in the 9th arrondissement of Paris. He wrote a large amount of sacred music in the tradition of Saint-Saëns and Fauré, and won the prestigious Prix de Rome award in 1942. He later became director of the Conservatoire of Roubaix, and taught harmony at the Paris Conservatoire from 1967 until his death in 1971.

Desencios described himself as a "romantic" and the intricate and atmospheric *Prélude, Cadence, et Finale* certainly reflects the influence of the Romantics on his work. Composed in 1956 the Paris Conservatoire Competition and dedicated to Marcel Mule, the piece is interwoven with recurring themes and rhythmic patterns that build to a passionate, dramatic Finale.

# **BALJINDER SINGH SEKHON II**

(b. 1980)

# Gradient

The music of Baljinder Sekhon has been presented in over 600 concerts in twenty-six countries. From works for large ensemble to solo works to electronic music, Sekhon's music demonstrates a wide range of genres and styles. His works have been performed in venues such as Carnegie Hall, Kennedy Center, Seoul Arts Center (Korea), and National Recital Hall (Taiwan). Seventeen commercial recordings of his work have been released, with his most recognized output being his contributions to the percussion and saxophone genres. His second full album, Alchemy, featuring works for saxophone, was released on Innova Recordings on October 22, 2021. His first album, Places & Times (Innova), features works for percussion and was released on April 27, 2018.

Sekhon currently serves as Associate Professor of Composition at Penn State University. He holds a PhD and MA from the Eastman School of Music where he is a three-time recipient of the Howard Hanson Orchestral prize, and holds a BM from the University of South Carolina. His engagements as a percussionist include those at the L.A. Philharmonic's Green Umbrella Series in Walt Disney Hall, Festival Spazio Musica in Cagliari, Italy, and at the Bang On a Can Marathon in New York City.

# About Gradient, Sekhon writes:

"Gradient is scored for saxophone and piano and these instruments play an equal role throughout the work. This work is primarily focused on the spectrum of sound created by the two of these instruments together. Extended techniques are employed in order to explore a common ground between the saxophone and piano. Gradient

explores two different spectra: one that has the saxophone and piano on opposite ends with characteristics of both instruments intersecting in the middle, and another spectrum that contains all of the sounds from both of these instruments with similar sounds from each instrument occupying the same area of the spectrum. While this piece is an exploration of sound, the compositional approach is a process-oriented one that deals with the evolution of, and relationship between, pitch and rhythmic material."

# **ALEXANDER GLAZUNOV**

(1865 - 1936)

Chant du Ménestrel, Op. 71 (Trans. Jonathan Dufresne)

Alexander Glazunov was a composer, music teacher, and conductor of the late Russian Romantic period. Born in Saint Petersburg to a wealthy publisher, Glazunov began studying piano at age nine and by age eleven was composing original works. An orchestral score he had composed was premiered by Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov when Glazunov was 16; Glazanov went on to study under Rimsky-Korsakov as a private student.

Guzanov served as director of the Saint Petersburg Conservatory between 1905 and 1928 and was instrumental in the reorganization of the institute into the Petrograd Conservatory, then the Leningrad Conservatory, following the Bolshevik Revolution. He continued as head of the Conservatory until 1930, though he had left the Soviet Union in 1928 and did not return, touring in the United States and Europe before settling in Paris, where he remained until his death in 1936.

As a composer, Glazunov served as a kind of bridge between the era of Russian masters Tchaikovsky, Mussorgsky, and Rimsky-Korsakov and the modern school of Shostakovich and Prokofiev. His music successfully married national character and tradition with cosmopolitanism; while younger generations often consider his work old-fashioned, he still holds a prominent place in Russian music as a renowned composer and teacher, one who provided stability during a time of great upheaval in Russian history.

Chant du Ménestrel (The Minstral's Song) was written originally for cello and orchestra, with a version for cello and piano published simultaneously. Composed in 1901, the piece was dedicated to Alexander Wierzbilowicz, solo cellist to Tsar Nicholas II and a professor at the St. Petersburg Conservatory. In the Middle Ages, German minstrels (or minnesingers), traveled the countryside in the manner of their French counterparts, the troubadours, singing songs of courtly love. Chant du Ménestrel evokes these wandering poet-musicians in a beautifully melancholy piece that radiates tenderness and longing.

## TAKASHI YOSHIMATSU

(b. 1953)

Fuzzy Bird Sonata

I. Run, bird

II. Sing, bird II. Fly, bird

Takashi Yoshimatu was born and raised in Tokyo and received no formal musical training in his youth. In the early 1970s, he dropped out of Keio University, where he was studying engineering, and joined a prog rock band as a keyboard player. His musical interests varied widely, from jazz and rock to the symphonies of Beethoven and Tchaikovsky. A self-taught composer, he won the Japan Symphony Foundation Prize for his *Dorian for Orchestra in* 1980; the following year, his *Threnody for Toki* premiered, a work inspired by

the extinction of a rare species of bird on Japan's main island. It would become his best known and most popular composition.

After *Threnody*, Yoshimatu went on to publish many works, including multiple symphonies, concertos, stage works, and works for traditional Japanese instruments. His compositions are frequently very personal in nature, drawing on themes of grief, memory, and a deep love of nature. Yoshimatu's music favors lyricism over atonality and is tinged with romanticism and delightful nostalgia. He is widely considered to be one of Japan's greatest contemporary composers in the western classical style.

Fuzzy Bird Sonata, commissioned by acclaimed Japanese saxophonist Nobuya Sugawa, was written by Yoshimatu in 1991 as part of the the composer's continuing Tori (Bird) series of chamber pieces. A captivating and technically challenging piece, Fuzzy Bird fuses elements of jazz, classical, birdsong, and Japanese folk music to create a singular sound that alludes to multiple genres but, in the end, reveals its own unique nature.

# **PROFILE**

Described as having a "deliciously smooth sound" (The News-Gazette), Jonathan Dufresne has been invited to perform internationally in Austria, the Netherlands, Canada, and several venues across the United States, including Carnegie Hall. He also performed as a soloist with the University of Illinois Symphony Orchestra, Illinois Wind Symphony, Hindsley Symphonic Band, Danville Symphony Orchestra, LMEA Symphony Orchestra, St. James Episcopal Choir, and the LSU Jazz Ensemble, to name a few.

Recent accomplishments include first prize in the 2024 Krannert Debut Artist Competition, second prize in the 2023 MTNA Chamber Music Competition, first prize in the 2022 UISO Concerto Competition, first prize in the 21st Century Talents International Solo Competition, finalist in the 2021 Coltman Chamber Music Competition, and semi-finalist in the 2021 Fischoff Chamber Music Competition.

Strongly valuing versatility, Jonathan is regularly hired to perform alongside cover bands and occasional celebrities, such as Ginuwine, Robin Thicke, and Ben Folds, for corporate events, festivals, and sporting events, including the Allstate Sugar Bowl in New Orleans.

As an educator, he has held several teaching positions as saxophone instructor across Illinois and Louisiana and has maintained a private studio, of which many of his students have participated in All-State ensembles. Currently, he serves as Instructor of Saxophone at Lincoln Land Community College and Graduate Teaching Assistant of the University of Illinois Saxophone Studio.

Jonathan holds a BM from Louisiana State University and an MM from the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. Currently, he is pursuing a DMA in saxophone performance and literature at the U of I under the tutelage of Debra Richtmeyer, with additional study under Chip McNeill and Ron Bridgewater. Jonathan's former teachers include Griffin Campbell, Doug Stone, and Jennifer C. Foret, with additional study under renowned composer/arranger and jazz bassist, Bill Grimes.

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The University of Illinois System carries out its mission in its namesake state, which includes the traditional territory of the Peoria, Kaskaskia, Piankashaw, Wea, Miami, Mascoutin, Odawa, Sauk, Mesquaki, Kickapoo, Potawatomi, Ojibwe, Menominee, Ho-Chunk, and Chickasaw Nations. These lands continue to carry the stories of these Nations and their struggles for survival and identity.

As a land-grant institution, the University of Illinois has a particular responsibility to acknowledge the peoples of these lands, as well as the histories of dispossession that have allowed for the growth of this institution. We are also obligated to reflect on and actively address these histories and the role that this university has played in shaping them.

This acknowledgment and the centering of Native peoples is a start as we move forward.

Krannert Center affirms the commitment by the university to move beyond these statements, toward building deeper relationships and taking actions that uphold and preserve Indigenous rights and cultural equity.

As we gather to experience this performance, we have an opportunity to reflect on the ways that systems of oppression have shaped our society. We can work together to create systems that support human dignity, establish equity, strengthen cross-cultural relationships, and draw upon the creative capacity of all people that make up this community, state, nation, and world.



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Ushers will be happy to provide you cough drops courtesy of St. Joseph Apothecary, or disposable foam earplugs if the place starts rockin'.

If you or a companion needs medical assistance, contact an usher or other staff member.

Please take a moment before the performance to note the theatre exits nearest to you. If it becomes necessary to evacuate the theatre, please remain calm, follow the instructions of the house staff, and exit in an orderly fashion to the appropriate safe meeting location, which will be announced to you.

# **PHONES AND DEVICES**

The use of cell phones, cameras, and recording devices during performances is prohibited unless otherwise announced from the stage.

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As a courtesy to performers and audience members, latecomers will be seated only at times selected in advance by the artist. Should you find that you've arrived late to a performance, our Patron Services staff will keep you informed about the earliest seating opportunity.

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If you are in need of Lost and Found, please visit the Patron Services counter. We will do our best to reunite object and owner!

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If you find you can't attend a performance, please contact the Ticket Office in advance, preferably by 6pm the day before the performance (kran-tix@illinois.edu). We never charge a handling fee on ticket transactions.

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For assistance regarding your visit, please email:

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**krannert** center



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When you come to Krannert Center, we promise that you'll leave different: refreshed, reaffirmed, renewed!