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DREAMLOVER

Music for Saxophone by

ALBENA
PETROVIC

Performed by
JOAN MARTÍ-FRASQUIER
KEYBART ENSEMBLE
CYNTHIA KNOCH
ROMAIN NOSBAUM



You can rely on the composer Albena Petrovic: Her unmistakable personal style is always pervaded by a sense of deep reflection and literary references. Her latest project, the CD **DREAMLOVER**, explores new avenues for the expressive possibilities of the saxophone. Baritone sax player Joan Mari-Frasquier, the Kebyart Ensemble, soprano Cynthia Knoch, and pianist Romain Nosbaum participate in this project.

On her album **DREAMLOVER**, Albena Petrovic merges compositions from a variety of contexts into one comprehensive dramaturgy. United in one program, her compositions create a minimalist, declamatory gestus which is typical for Petrovic's music. The "building blocks" she uses are eclectic: The opening consists of a concert for baritone sax, here in a version that also includes piano, a certainly contemporary-feeling future dystopia. The first part of "Before the Winter" functions as a stand-in for the impending catastrophe – in this case followed by a "Lacrimae."

The latest work on this CD has not yet seen a premiere. The cycle "Poèmes - Masques, op. 236," completed last year, reflects on our contemporary moment. Soprano Cynthia Knoch interprets Albena Petrovic's texts. "This cycle is inspired by the idea

Hidden face
Hidden thoughts
Concealed thoughts
I can write
In a notebook
and I hide it in a
Safe spot.
They will find it in 200 years
...or never.

*Albena Petrovic Vratchanska
(Poemes Masques)*

of the hidden face, the mask as a symbol of fear, of hypocrisy, of lies, the search for and exploration of a new, different identity," as the composer explains her objective. "Natalia," which gives the first piece its title, is a sensitive female figure on a futile search of herself. "Commedia dell'Arte" is strongly inspired by feminism. "Le Favori du Roy" is based on the saying "the clown is dead, long live the clown" which in turn is a paraphrase of "the king is dead, long live the king." The clown, whose purpose is to entertain the audience and make them laugh, is the saddest

person in the world. "Post Mortem" alludes to the idea of a death mask, but it really is about the secret letters and diary entries written by Mexican artist Frida Kahlo. The texts are reproduced in their entirety in the CD booklet (including translations).

The pieces on this CD often feel like a form of foundational research for the saxophone, especially the name-giving work *Dreamlover* in deep baritone as well as two other solo pieces for alto sax which were created in the year 2017 as overtures for the chamber opera "Love & Jealousy." The CD concludes with the quartet "Prayer for Nonappearing" opus 102 from 2006, in which the four saxophonists that make up the Kebyart Ensemble play on an imaginary stage under the direction of the baritone sax. According to Albena Petrovic, this piece was the initial inspiration that started off the CD project. Interspersed scraps of words uttered by the performers show the experimental literary superstructure. In this case, they are based on a novel by the American author Kurt Vonnegut which thematizes the appearance of God – and, in Vonnegut's sense, also his "nonappearance."

Albena Petrovic Vrtchanska is a Luxembourgian composer of Bulgarian origin and Knightess of the Order of Merit of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg. Born in Sofia, she studied in Bulgaria and has lived and worked in Luxembourg since 1996. She has composed around six hundred works in a variety of musical genres, among them seven chamber operas and mono dramas. Her discography includes three monographic CDs: "Crystal Dream," "The Voyager," and "Bridges of Love." She is president and founder of the International Composer Competition "Artistes en Herbe" under the patronage of the Luxembourgian cultural ministry.

Saxophonist **Joan Martí-Frasquier** is among the most outstanding protagonists in contemporary music. He has premiered more than thirty works by composers such as Joan Bagés, José Luis Campana, Timothy Harenda, Albena Petrovic and Enric Riu and has recorded several CDs. After music studies in Barcelona, he went to France to complete his training with Christophe Bois, Philippe Braquart and later Damien Royannais. He is a member of the society "Bar & Co," which is dedicated to the development and dissemination of the baritone sax in classical and contemporary music. He has also worked with the Dutch collective "The Baritone Institute."

Romain Nosbaum is an individualist among his generation of Luxembourgian pianists. Born in Switzerland, he started playing piano at age seven,

and completed his studies at the conservatories in Luxembourg and Metz. Additional studies led him to Basel, Bern, and the University Mozarteum in Salzburg. Among his teachers were Alexander Müllenbach, Marie-Paule Aboulker, Peter Efler and Rada Petkova. His concert activities as soloist and as chamber musician have led him through all of Europe, Russia, and all the way to Eastern Asia.

Soprano **Cynthia Knoch** is at home in the classical-contemporary as well as the popular music world. The native-born Luxembourgian received her musical education at conservatories in Esch-sur-Alzette and Ville de Luxembourg. After training to become a dancer, she studied performing arts in Osnabrück (Germany). She studied classical voice in Maastricht and Tilburg (Netherlands) and was a finalist at the international Mozart singing contest in Prague. Cynthia Knoch had her stage debut in 2000 with Leonard Bernstein's "West Side Story," has toured the world with André Rieu, and has founded her own label, "Lola Marie et Les Chats Noirs."

The **Kebyart Ensemble** is named after the Balinese Kebyar gamelan ensemble because they are fascinated by its charisma. The unmistakable handwriting of Pere Méndez (soprano saxophone) Víctor Serra (alto saxophone), Robert Seara (tenor saxophone) and Daniel Miguel (baritone saxophone) is apparent in their creative and open-minded approach to the repertoire. For the 2021 season, the ensemble was chosen for the ECHO Rising Stars award. Performances in numerous international concert halls and tours through all of Europe and Asia followed. The ensemble has received several of the most prestigious European chamber music prizes for their interpretations.



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