

Freem Saxophone Quartet



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The Freem Saxophone Quartet was founded in 2017 by four Italian saxophonists: Iacopo Sammartano, Riccardo Guazzini, Michele Bianchini, and Fabio Lombrici. They graduated with honours from the Conservatorio di Firenze, Conservatorio di La Spezia, and Conservatorio di Perugia. After the graduation they have attended several masterclasses with internationally renowned saxophonists and they have obtained numerous awards in different competitions, such as Torneo Internazionale di Musica, Borsa di studio della Società Umanitaria di Milano, Rovere d'oro, Ufam in Paris, Kandisky in Avellino. They have been active both nationally and internationally and have performed with other ensembles at Ministero degli Esteri Italiano, Orchestra Giovanile Italiana, Festival di Musica Contemporanea Archipel in Geneve, Cantiere d'Arte in Montepulciano, Festival Pucciniano, American Composers Society, Ravenna Festival, Nuova Consonanza, Società dei Concerti Barattelli, New York University, Eastman School of Music of Rochester, Colorado College, 17th World Saxophone Congress in Strasbourg, Stage Internazionale del sassofono in Fermo. The foundation of the Free Saxophone Quartet is motivated by their profound interest in chamber music and willingness to explore the possibilities offered by the distinctive elegance and malleability of this chamber music ensemble. The main objectives of the group are to divulge and promote the original repertoire for saxophone quartet and to broaden it through collaboration with contemporary composers. In 2019 they released their first cd "A Minimal Sax" for the label Brilliant Classics.

A Minimal Sax

A Minimal Sax is a journey through the analogies, differences, and evolution of languages of minimalist music, one of the most important artistic movements of the last century. This work shows all its shades, from the purism of New York Counterpoint by Steve Reich to the mood swings of the Saxophone Quartet by Philip Glass, from the melody entwined with rhythm of String Quartet n.2 by Michael Nyman to the rhythmic patterns echoing pop music found in July by Michael Torke. The tonal, rhythmic, and expressive possibilities of the saxophone quartet connect these related yet diverse compositions.

Program

Steve Reich – New York Counterpoint

vers. for saxophone quartet and tape (1985)

Philip Glass – Saxophone Quartet (1995)

Michael Nyman – String Quartet n. 2

arr. for saxophone quartet (1988 - 2008/2018)

Michael Torke – July (1995)



A Minimal Sax

Steve Reich – New York Counterpoint vers. for saxophone quartet and tape (1985)

Steve Reich was born in New York in 1936 and is today recognized as one of the greatest living American composers. He was awarded the Pulitzer prize in 2009 and the Leone d'Oro alla Carriera in 2014. New York Counterpoint was written in 1985, commissioned by the clarinetist Richard Stolzman. This composition exemplifies Reich's fascination with African music and its mesmerizing and cathartic effects, which are achieved through the repetitions of the same rhythm-melody patterns. It also echoes Reich's interest in jazz music with its rhythmic and harmonic elements.

The piece is made up of three movements (fast, slow, fast) that are played one after the other without pause. In its original version, the clarinetist pre-records the parts for ten clarinets and bass clarinet and then plays a final 11th part live against the tape. The adaptation for saxophone quartet by Susan Fancher works in the same way, the difference being that there are four soloists.

Philip Glass – Saxophone Quartet (1995)

Born in Baltimore in 1937, Philip Glass studied at the University of Chicago, at the Julliard School and in Aspen with Darius Milhaud. He then moved to Europe to study with Nadia Boulanger.

Glass is one of the most prolific and performed composers in the history of music. He is considered one of the founders of minimalism even though he prefers to define his compositions as "music with repetitive sounds". His Saxophone Quartet was written in 1995, commissioned by the Rascher Saxophone Quartet. In this piece the composer fully explores the tonal possibilities and the sounds of the four instruments. The first movement is delicate and romantic, while the second is characterized by a syncopated rhythm, polyrhythms and louder dynamics. In the third movement we find a sweet and delicate atmosphere with a simple and intimate melody started by the tenor saxophone, which is then followed by the other instruments. The fourth movement is joyous and is influenced by jazz music as is the second one.

Michael Nyman – String Quartet n. 2 arr. for saxophone quartet (1988 - 2008/2018)

Michael Nyman was born in London in 1944. He was a pianist, composer, musicologist, photographer, and director. His wide variety of interests has made him one of the most dynamic and influential figures in the contemporary cultural scene. String Quartet n.2 was written to accompany the performance of a dancer and is made up of six movements, each characterized by a different rhythmic cycle: 4 beat, 5 beat, 6 beat, 7 beat, 9 beat and multiple cycles in the final movement. Its rhythmic rigor and fresh harmonies render the piece immediately accessible and carry the audience through familiar pathways and mesmerizing labyrinths.

After having played the three movements transcribed by David Roach (Mov. I-III e IV), the Freem Saxophone Quartet decided to complete the transcription adapting the remaining movements (Mov. II-V e VI). This version for saxophone quartet gives the composition a renewed atmosphere yet maintaining its original features

Michael Torke – July (1995)

Born in Milwaukee, Michael Torke studied at the Eastman School of Music and then at Yale University. Gramophone defines his music as 'some of the most optimistic, joyful and thoroughly uplifting music to appear in recent years'. Torke elaborated a personal style in which influences from minimalism, jazz, pop, and rock are clearly recognizable.

July was written in 1995 and has since then become part of the classic saxophone quartet repertoire. This piece is characterized by a variety of themes and atmospheres; it is made up of a single movement in which we find energy and warmth side by side with the refreshing feeling we experience during cool evenings in this month. This idea is expressed through energetic sections made of rhythmic patterns and repeated arpeggios alternating with calm atmospheres evoked by long and delicate sounds.



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