

Program Notes

Jörg Widmann – Fantasie for Clarinet Solo (1993)

Jörg Widmann (b. 1973) is a German composer and clarinetist whose works often blur the boundaries between music, theatre, and gesture. Written in 1993 when Widmann was only twenty, *Fantasie* for Clarinet Solo reveals his intimate understanding of the instrument and his fascination with transforming it into a voice of raw human expression.

The piece unfolds as a free, unbroken fantasy without a strict formal structure. It shifts constantly between fragile lyricism and explosive virtuosity, between whispering phrases and wild bursts of energy. Widmann employs a wide palette of extended techniques—flutter-tonguing, overblowing, pitch bends, and multiphonics—not merely for novelty but as essential elements of the musical narrative. The clarinet seems to argue, laugh, sigh, and cry, creating the impression of a theatrical monologue contained within a single voice.

Performing *Fantasie* feels like entering an inner dialogue where discipline and spontaneity coexist. Every gesture is charged with emotional and physical intensity. The work challenges the performer to move beyond pure technique, to inhabit a space where sound becomes speech and the instrument itself seems alive.

Aaron Copland – Clarinet Concerto (1948)

Aaron Copland (1900–1990), often called the “Dean of American Composers,” wrote his *Clarinet Concerto* in 1948 for jazz clarinetist Benny Goodman. It has since become one of the cornerstones of the clarinet repertoire, celebrated for its lyrical purity and rhythmic vitality—hallmarks of Copland’s mature style.

The concerto is written in two contrasting movements connected by a cadenza. The opening section, marked *Slowly and expressively*, is serene and introspective, built on long melodic lines that evoke a sense of vast space and quiet openness. The extended cadenza functions as a bridge, gradually introducing fragments of rhythmic and motivic material that

blossom into the exuberant second movement. Marked *Rather fast*, the finale draws on jazz syncopation and Latin dance rhythms, reflecting both Goodman's background and Copland's fascination with American popular idioms.

For the performer, the concerto offers a journey from reflection to freedom—from lyrical restraint to joyful, dance-like motion. It captures the clarinet's dual nature: singing and agile, poetic yet playful.

Between the Two

Though written more than fifty years apart, Widmann's *Fantasie* and Copland's *Clarinet Concerto* trace a shared path of discovery. Widmann's music turns inward, exploring the instrument's most intimate and volatile colors; Copland's looks outward, celebrating clarity, openness, and rhythmic life. Together they form a musical odyssey—from introspection to liberation, from solitary voice to expansive horizon.

