Programme

Claude Debussy
Premiere Rhapsodie

Robert Muczynski
Time Pieces

Sean Nicholas Alexander *(Bmus3)*, Clarinet
Cherie Khor, Piano

Program Notes

Première Rhapsodie (1910)

Claude Debussy (1862-1918)

Debussy's Première Rhapsodie began life as a competition piece for clarinet students at the Paris Conservatoire, yet it quickly outgrew its exam-room origins to become a cornerstone of the clarinet repertoire. Written in 1909–10 and dedicated to the Conservatoire's clarinet professor, Prosper Mimart, it received its public premiere in January 1911; Debussy later arranged the accompaniment for orchestra

Despite its technical demands, the Rhapsodie is above all an exercise in atmosphere: fluid phrasing, subtle dynamics, and Debussy's characteristic harmonic colour matter as much as brilliance. The music gathers itself for a more emphatic, declamatory close, leaving the impression of a miniature fantasy rather than a conventional virtuoso showpiece.
Debussy called it one of his "most amiable" works, a fitting description for a piece that turns a Conservatoire test into poetry.

Time Pieces, Opus 43 (1983)

Robert Muczynski (1929-2011)

Time Pieces was written for and dedicated to Mitchell Lurie, one of the most influential clarinetists in the 20th century. A true chamber work for clarinet and piano it has become a standard of the contemporary clarinet repertoire which displays every side of the clarinet, balancing a show of technique and finesse. Muczynski had this to say in his notes about the piece:

“This composition is a suite of four contrasting pieces, each highlighting some specific characteristic of the clarinet in terms of range, technical prowess, color, and expressiveness.... The title of the work, Time Pieces, has nothing to do with mechanical clocks or watches. It is not a play on words but rather an awareness that everything exists in time: history, our lives and...in a special way...music.”