

A Valentine Special

Love Songs

Toronto Saxophone Collective

with

Jason Xu

conducted by
James Wu

February 13th, 2026 - 7PM

College Street United Church
452 College St. M5T 2S6



TORONTO
SAXOPHONE
COLLECTIVE

PROGRAMME

Romeo and Juliet (1935)
Op. 64, No. 13 Dance of the Knights

Sergei Prokofiev
Arr. Blake Smith

String Quartet No. 2 (1881)
I. Allegro moderato, III. Notturno: Andante

Alexander Borodin
Arr. Yunfei Xie

Ballade for Saxophone and Orchestra (1938)
Soloist: Jason Xu

Henri Tomasi
Arr. Jean-Marie Londeix

Seagull (2012)
Soloist: Jason Xu

Toshio Mashima
Arr. Kashihara Takuyuki

INTERMISSION

Les Contes d'Hoffmann: Barcarolle (1881)

Jacques Offenbach
Arr. Kenichi Koda

Waltz No. 2 (1938)

Dmitry Shostakovich
Arr. Ivan Romero

Danzón No. 2 (1994)

Arturo Márquez
Arr. Blake Smith

Conductor - James Wu

Soloist - Jason Xu

Toronto Saxophone Collective

Jason Lau

Liam McClure

Nicole Carson

Chantelle Tom-Ying

Robert Hess

Chun Wang

Kannan Bloor

Harrison Argatoff

Blake Smith

Seamus Hayden

Min Gu Kang

Described by Pan M 360 as possessing “a beautiful, expressive, and silky sound” with the ability to “make the lines sing in a virtuosic way,” Chinese-Canadian classical saxophonist Jason Xu has been named as one of “Canada’s Top 30 Under 30 Classical Musicians” by the CBC Music (national Canadian Broadcast Corporation). Renowned for his emotional depth, Jason strives to inspire and forge profound bonds with his audience through the transformative power of music.



@torontosaxophonecollective

@jason_saxu @jameswumusic

Romeo and Juliet

Prokofiev's Dance of the Knights is also well known as Montagues and Capulets. It is a part of the first act in the ballet and constitutes the first section of Romeo and Juliet Suite No. 2, Op. 64ter. In the ballet this music accompanies a fateful encounter between the two rival houses and then the first time that Juliet meets Romeo at her family's masquerade ball. Along with the use in popular culture it remains as one of Prokofiev's most iconic pieces.

String Quartet No. 2

Known as Borodin's last major work, it is told that it may even be dedicated to his wife for their twenty-fifth anniversary. Both movements start with a beautiful melody on the cello, performed on the baritone saxophone. As the lyrical melodies pass around the piece develops a very nostalgic and romantic atmosphere.

Ballade for Saxophone and Orchestra

Tomasi's Ballade is inspired by a poem by Suzanne Malard depicting the inner world of a clown. Outwardly, the clown's role is to bring joy and laughter to others, yet inwardly he carries loneliness and hidden pain as he reflects on memories of the past.

This striking contrast between public cheerfulness and private sorrow lies at the heart of the work. Tomasi translates this emotional duality into music of deep expressiveness, allowing moments of lightness and lyricism to coexist with darker and more introspective passages. The result is a moving portrait of a character who gives happiness to the world while quietly bearing his own suffering, making this Ballade both poignant yet deeply human. [Notes from Jason Xu]

Seagull

This piece is originally the lyrical second movement of Toshio Mashima's Concerto Birds for Alto Saxophone and Wind Ensemble, commissioned by the world renown Japanese Saxophonist, Nobuya Sugawa. Each movement represents a different bird, and Seagull stands out as the most melodically expressive and song-like of the three.

Mashima's melodic structure makes the instrument appear to sing like a seagull over open water. The long, flowing lines and warm harmonies create a feeling of open skies, gentle waves, and quiet reflection.

In the spirit of a Valentine's Day concert, Seagull represents a symbol of love's freedom and longing. Its tender and heartfelt melody suggests both distance and connection, like two hearts soaring together across a wide horizon: simple, sincere, and deeply moving. [Notes from Jason Xu]

Les Contes d'Hoffmann: Barcarolle

"Barcarolle" is a part of Offenbach's final masterpiece Les Contes d'Hoffmann. (The Tales of Hoffman) It is originally a duet for soprano and mezzo-soprano however it is frequently performed independently as orchestral or instrumental work.

Waltz No. 2

One of the most recognizable melodies written, Waltz No. 2 is famously known for the circus-like yet bittersweet Soviet and bold orchestration which compares different to Strauss' known for its fluidity.

Danzón No. 2

This piece is built on a five-note pattern on the clave and being inspired by ballrooms in Veracruz and Mexico City it's known to be a modern tribute to danzón, a genre with Cuban roots that now is the cornerstone of Mexican urban culture. As the music develops from the pattern, it mirrors the etiquette of dance through formal elegance and restraint with a rhythmic apotheosis to carry you away.