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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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PRISM CELEBRATES 25 YEARS WITH CD RELEASE CONCERTS IN PHILA. + NYC PHILADELPHIA MUSEUM OF ART, JAN. 29 LE POISSON ROUGE, JAN. 31

BREATH BENEATH RELEASED FEB. 2; **ANTIPHONY** FOLLOWS IN MARCH

"The PRISM Quartet...play with grit, brio, and take-no-prisoners accuracy."
- Detroit Free Press

PRISM, America's pre-eminent concert saxophone quartet, celebrates its 25th-anniversary season with concerts in New York and Philadelphia, marking the release of *Breath Beneath* (New Dynamic, issued February 2), and previewing *Antiphony* (Innova, March 30). The shows take place at the **Philadelphia Museum of Art** on Friday, January 29 (5:45 pm) and **Le Poisson Rouge** (NYC) on Sunday, January 31 (7:30 pm, doors at 6:30); ticket information follows.

Antiphony and *Breath Beneath* cap an intensive two-year period during which PRISM has released no fewer than **five** new CDs, encompassing an astonishing range of musical styles, from postmodern concert idioms to Middle Eastern laments, Highland bagpipes, and Chinese folk music. At both venues, the group's program will draw on works from each of these five discs – a fitting retrospective for this prolific ensemble, which has commissioned more than 120 pieces since its founding in Fall 1984.

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T H E P R O G R A M

The concerts open with the first track of *Breath Beneath*: **Roshanne Etezady's Keen**, a striking work that plays on the double meaning of its title – as an adjective, 'ardent' or 'intense;' as a verb, a wailing lament. Says Etezady, "I wanted to write a piece that took advantage not only of the homogenous nature of the saxophone quartet, with its evenness of timbre across the four voices, but also allowed the instruments to display the subtleties and nuances that make saxophone one of the most versatile instruments in existence." *Breath Beneath* also includes a diverse and compelling selection of pieces by Kati Agócs, Zach Browning, Ross Feller, Kristin Kuster, and Rand Steiger.

From *Concertos for Saxophone Quartet* (Innova, 2009) comes *Machine*, the third movement of **Steven Mackey's Animal, Vegetable, Mineral** – a work that can be played with or without its orchestral accompaniment. Mackey, a former competitive freestyle skier, says that "AVM is informed by the sense of serious play that I get from skiing. It is a sensual and exhilarating sport with dire consequences for missteps. Joy and fear commingle as a matter of course." On disc, this exciting and technically demanding piece is paired with William Bolcom's much-praised *Concerto Grosso*; PRISM plays both works with the Boston Modern Orchestra Project under Gil Rose.

Pitch Black is the title track from PRISM's disc (Innova, 2008) of music by Dutch composer **Jacob TV** (aka Jacob Ter Veldhuis), known for his ingenious use of the sampled speech-melody technique used by Steve Reich in *Different Trains*. In the case of *Pitch Black* (for sax quartet and "ghetto-blasters") Jacob TV samples an interview by the late trumpeter Chet Baker, reminiscing about his time in prison: "It was pitch black in there you know, and you couldn't see anything..." Baker, sounding dissolute, becomes an unwitting soloist against a sardonic yet often swinging backdrop created by JTV. From the same disc, PRISM will also play *Jesus Is Coming*, in which the tape part juxtaposes samples from a street evangelist in Times Square with the babbling of an infant.

The next selection comes from PRISM's upcoming *Antiphony* disc, devoted to new works by composers from China. Among them is **Lei Liang**, whose haunting *Yuan* was inspired by a tragic event during the Chinese Cultural Revolution. Says Lei, "A woman's husband was tortured and killed by a local village official. Without the means to demand justice, she sought revenge by wailing like a ghost in the woods behind the official's home every night, until – after months of this – both she and the official went insane." At the end, the players create eerie sounds on their detached mouth-pieces, "as if the tormented souls could only find comfort in the company of each another." *Antiphony* also features pieces by **Tan Dun, Chen Yi, Zhou Long, Wang Gwei,** and **Ming-Hsiu Yen**, played by PRISM alone and with the ensemble **Music from China**.

The program concludes with three movements from **William Albright's** witty and inventive *Fantasy Etudes*, recorded by PRISM on a composer portrait disc titled *Music for Saxophones* (Innova, 2008). PRISM formed at the University of Michigan, where Albright served as an important mentor to the group. Regarding the *Fantasy Etudes*, Albright notes, "Many of the movements were intentionally conceived 'against type,' that is, inspired by sounds not usually associated with the saxophone, or, at least, the 'polite' saxophone. American jazz...is a constant presence." Among these sounds are bagpipes, steam whistles, ocean liners, shofars, and "the sounds emanating from the flocks of Canadian geese that fly over my house in Michigan each fall."

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A B O U T P R I S M

Intriguing programs of great beauty and breadth have distinguished the PRISM Quartet as one of America's foremost chamber ensembles, presenting the saxophone as a serious concert instrument while embracing its rich history in jazz and popular music. Founded in 1984, the ensemble has commissioned more than 120 works, many by internationally celebrated American composers, including William Albright, Martin Bresnick, Chen Yi, Jennifer Higdon, Lee Hyla, Libby Larson, Steven Mackey, Greg Osby, Bernard Rands, and Zhou Long. It has twice been awarded the Chamber Music America/ASCAP Award for Adventurous Programming of Contemporary Music and has been chosen by Musical America as "Outstanding Young Artists." Members of PRISM are Matthew Levy (tenor sax), Timothy McAllister (soprano), Zach Shemon (alto), and Taimur Sullivan (baritone).

PRISM has performed in Carnegie Hall on the Making Music Series, in Alice Tully Hall with the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, and throughout Latin America under the auspices of the United States Information Agency. PRISM has also been presented to critical acclaim as soloists with orchestras nationwide, including the Detroit Symphony and Cleveland Orchestras, performing William Bolcom's *Concerto Grosso*, written especially for the Quartet.

The PRISM Quartet is one of the nation's most active proponents of new music, developing a presence for its medium with performances in nearly every state and abroad. The Quartet also maintains three annual Young Composer Commissioning Awards in Philadelphia, New York, and at the Walden School in New Hampshire, where PRISM conducts regular residencies. The PRISM Quartet serves as artists/clinicians for the Selmer Company and performs exclusively on Selmer saxophones. Further information and audio clips at <http://prismquartet.com>.

The Philadelphia Museum of Art is located at 26th Street and the Benjamin Franklin Parkway. Tickets are free with museum admission: \$16 adults, \$14 seniors, \$12 students, and free for members and children twelve and under. For more information: (215) 684-7506 or <http://www.philamuseum.org/artafter5/>.

Le Poisson Rouge is located at 158 Bleecker Street, NYC. Tickets are \$15, and available at www.lepoissonrouge.com or by calling 212/505-FISH (3474).

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