

Fazıl Say (b. 1970)

Fazıl Say is not only a prolific composer but also a virtuosic pianist. His first piano teacher was Mithat Fenmen, who asked him to improvise on themes from piano repertoire, Turkish melodies, and his daily piano exercises. This creative process formed the immense improvisatory talent and the aesthetic outlook that made Say the pianist and composer he is today. Say also honed his skills as a classical pianist with David Levine, first at the Musikhochschule Robert Schumann in Düsseldorf and later in Berlin. He has performed with renowned American and European orchestras as well as numerous leading conductors, building a repertoire ranging from Classical and Romantic to contemporary music. His compositions reflect his interest not only in Turkish folklore and literature but also in improvisation and jazz, as well as his passion for Mozart. His œuvre ranges from large-scale orchestral and vocal works to a wide variety of music for chamber ensembles.

Alevi Dedeler Rakı Masasında (Alevi Elders at the Rakı Table), Op. 35 (2011)

Turkish composer and pianist Fazıl Say humorously describes an everyday Anatolian village scene in four short movements, played without pause. An *andantino ritornello* in irregular meters, present in all movements, provides the thematic context of an eventful gathering. Each instrument represents one of the Alevi elders sitting at a well-laid table while drinking rakı, a Turkish unsweetened alcohol. Sometimes their conversation consists entirely of jokes; at other times, they discuss philosophy, God, life, and humanism. In one section of the piece, Say uses the Turkish tune *Uzun İnce Bir Yoldayım* by Aşık Veysel, passing it among all five instruments. Alevism is a branch of Shi'a Islam that emerged during the tenth century and is practiced in Turkey and the Balkans among ethnic Turks and Kurds. Philosophy, human development, and humanist ideals are important cornerstones of the Alevi belief.

—Program note by Güzde Çakır

Reference:

Say, Fazıl. "Biography/Works." Accessed on May 24, 2020. <https://fazilsay.com/>.

Say, Fazıl. *Alevi Dedeler Rakı Masasında* for woodwind quintet. (Germany: Schott Music).