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Steven Banks, Saxophone and Xak Bjerken, Piano: Guest Artist Recital

Steven Banks

Xak Bjerken

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Pianist **Xak Bjerken** has appeared with the Scottish Chamber Orchestra, Spoleto Festival Orchestra, Thailand Philharmonic Orchestra, the Schoenberg Ensemble, and the Los Angeles Philharmonic in Disney Hall. He has performed at the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam, Glinka Hall in St Petersburg, the Konzerthaus in Berlin, and for many years performed throughout the US as a member of the Los Angeles Piano Quartet. He has performed with the Cuarteto Casals, the Prazak, New Zealand, and Miami string quartets, and held chamber music residencies at the Tanglewood Music Center, Spoleto Festival and Olympic Music Festival.

He is the director of Ensemble X, a new music ensemble, and has served on the faculty of Kneisel Hall, the Eastern Music Festival, and at the Chamber Music Conference at Bennington College. Bjerken has worked closely with composers György Kurtag, Sofia Gubaidulina, Steven Stucky, and George Benjamin, and over the next two years, will be presenting premieres of piano concertos by Stephen Hartke, Elizabeth Ogonek, and Jesse Jones.

He released his first solo recording on CRI in 2001, and has since recorded for Koch International, Chandos, Albany Records, Artona, and is about to release his third recording for Open G Records, presenting solo and chamber works by Steven Stucky. Xak Bjerken is Professor of Music at Cornell University where he co-directs Mayfest, an international chamber music festival with his wife, pianist Miri Yampolsky. Bjerken studied with Aube Tzerko at the University of California at Los Angeles and received his Master's and Doctoral degrees from the Peabody Conservatory as a student of and teaching assistant to Leon Fleisher.

*We acknowledge with respect the Onondaga Nation,
firekeepers of the Haudenosaunee, the indigenous people
on whose ancestral lands Syracuse University now stands.*

In order to allow performers and audience members to have the best possible concert-going experience, please turn off all electronic devices and refrain from making extraneous noise, taking flash photographs, or moving about the auditorium during the performance. Thank you.



Setnor School of Music



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***Steven Banks, saxophone
&
Xak Bjerken, piano***

Guest Artist Recital

**Setnor Auditorium
February 22, 2020
8:00 PM**

**STEVEN BANKS
& XAK BJERKEN**

Drei Fantasiestücke, Op. 73 I. Zart unt mit Ausdruck II. Lebhaft, leicht III. Rasch und mit Feuer	Robert Schumann (1810-1856)
Picnic on the Marne I. Driving from Paris II. A Bend in the River III. Bal Musette IV. Vermouth V. A Tense Discussion VI. Making Up VII. The Ride Back to Town	Ned Rorem (b. 1923)
Flute Partita in A minor, BWV 1013 I. Allemande II. Corrente III. Sarabande IV. Bourrée Anglaise	J.S. Bach (1685-1750)
Sonata for Alto Saxophone and Piano, Op. 19 I. With Vigor II. With Tranquility III. With Gaiety	Paul Creston (1906-1985)
As I Am	Steven Banks (b. 1993)

Recognized for his “glowing mahogany tone” (*Seen and Heard International*) and “breathtaking” (*Classical Voice of NC*) performances, **Steven Banks** has establishing himself as an important young artist on the saxophone, which is rarely heard as a solo concert instrument.

Steven Banks is the first saxophonist to earn a place on the Young Concert Artists roster in its 59-year history, capturing First Prize at the 2019 Young Concert Artists International Auditions as well as the special Korean Concert Society Prize (for support of his Kennedy Center debut), Buffalo Chamber Music Society Prize, Saint Vincent College Concert Series Prize, Sinfonia Gulf Coast Prize, Tannery Pond Concerts Prize, Usedom Music Festival Prize, and Washington Performing Arts Prize.

Mr. Banks has performed as a concerto soloist with the Durham Symphony and North Carolina Symphony. This season, he performs John Mackey’s *Concerto for Soprano Saxophone* with the Ithaca College Wind Ensemble, and teams up with PRISM Quartet for the world premiere of James Aiken’s *Concerto for Saxophone Quartet* with the Indianapolis Chamber Orchestra.

In addition to solo work, Mr. Banks has an ongoing relationship with The Cleveland Orchestra, appearing with the ensemble under conductors including Franz Welser-Most and Jahja Ling, as well as travelling to Abu Dhabi this season to perform. He appears on a Naxos recording as baritone saxophonist of the award-winning Kenari Quartet. As a jazz performer, he has played alongside musicians affiliated with the Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra, Buddy Rich Big Band, and Vanguard Jazz Orchestra. Mr. Banks is an advocate for diversity and inclusion in music education, performance, and newly commissioned works in the classical realm. He gave a talk at the 2017 TEDxNorthwesternU conference with ideas about how to address institutionalized prejudices against women and people of color, and has written and given guest lectures on the history of black classical composers.

As Assistant Professor of Saxophone at Ithaca College, he makes a concerted effort to ensure that all music students feel supported in their everyday studies. Steven Banks has a Bachelor of Arts degree in Saxophone Performance with a minor in Jazz Studies from the Indiana University Jacobs School of Music, and Master of Music degree from the Northwestern University Bienen School

of Music. His primary saxophone teachers have been Taimur Sullivan, Otis Murphy, Jr., and Galvin Crisp. Mr. Banks is an endorsing artist for Conn-Selmer instruments, D'Addario Woodwinds, IefreQue Sound Solutions, and Key Leaves.

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