



Friday–Saturday, July 22–23, 2022 at 7:30 pm

Mostly Mozart Festival Orchestra

Xian Zhang*, *conductor*

Steven Banks*, *saxophone*

PROGRAM

NOKUTHULA NGWENYAMA *Primal Message* (New York premiere) (2020)

ALEXANDER GLAZUNOV Saxophone Concerto (1934)

Allegro moderato—Andante sostenuto—Allegro

JACQUES IBERT *Concertino da Camera* (1935)

Allegro con moto

Larghetto—Animato molto

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN Symphony No. 4 (1806)

Adagio—Allegro vivace

Adagio

Allegro vivace

Allegro ma non troppo

Performed without intermission

This program is dedicated in recognition of the support of Richard Benson.

* Mostly Mozart debut

Alice Tully Hall

Starr Theater, Adrienne Arsht Stage

About the Artists

Xian Zhang

Xian Zhang is in her sixth season as Music Director of the New Jersey Symphony Orchestra. She is also Principal Guest Conductor of Melbourne Symphony Orchestra and Conductor Emeritus of Orchestra Sinfonica di Milano Giuseppe Verdi following a successful period from 2009 to 2016 as its Music Director. European engagements this season and the next include Philharmonia Orchestra, La Verdi in Milan, Spanish National Orchestra, the orchestra of Komische Oper in Berlin, Orchestre National du Capitole de Toulouse, and Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio France. Other recent highlights include conducting Orchestre National de Lyon at the Paris Philharmonie and Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio France as part of La Folle Journée festival in Nantes. Upcoming U.S. engagements include returns to San Francisco Symphony, Los Angeles Philharmonic, and to Philadelphia, Detroit, and Minnesota, and in Canada, to the Montreal, NAC Ottawa, and Toronto symphony orchestras.

In the opera world, Zhang will make her debut with the Metropolitan Opera in 2024. She recently conducted *Tosca* for Cincinnati Opera. Previous opera engagements have included *Nabucco* with Welsh National Opera, *Otello* with Savonlinna Festival, *La Traviata* for Den Norske Opera (Oslo), *La Bohème* for English National Opera, and *La forza del destino* with Washington National Opera.

Zhang has previously served as Principal Guest Conductor of the BBC National Orchestra and Chorus of Wales and was the first female conductor to hold a titled role with a BBC orchestra. In 2002, she won first prize in the Maazel-Vilar Conductor's Competition. She was appointed New York Philharmonic's Assistant Conductor in 2002 and subsequently became its Associate Conductor and the first holder of the Arturo Toscanini Chair.

Steven Banks

Winner of the prestigious 2022 Avery Fisher Career Grant, Steven Banks is an ambassador for the classical saxophone, establishing himself as both a compelling and charismatic soloist, dedicated to showcasing the vast capabilities of the instrument, as well as an advocate for expanding its repertoire. As an artist with a commitment to rethinking and expanding the boundaries of classical music, Banks "has the potential to be one of the transformational artists of the 21st century" (*Seen and Heard International*).

Banks has recently appeared as concerto soloist under the direction of Peter Oundjian, first at the Colorado Music Festival in performances of works by Glazunov and Ibert, and later with the Colorado Symphony, performing John Adams' Concerto. He also recently appeared on subscription concerts with the Cleveland Orchestra in Philip Glass' *Façades* with John Adams on the podium, drawing critical acclaim. Banks was also recently chosen to join WQXR's 2022 Artist Propulsion Lab, a program designed to advance the careers of early and mid-career artists and support the future of classical music.

Banks regularly gives recitals at universities, performing arts series, and festivals across the U.S. and abroad, and he is also an emerging composer. This season, he premieres an original composition for alto saxophone and string quartet in Carnegie Hall alongside the Borromeo String Quartet. He has also recently completed commissions for the *Project 14* initiative at Yale University and the Northwestern University Saxophone Ensemble.

Banks is an advocate for diversity and inclusion in music education, performance, and newly commissioned works in the classical realm. He spoke at the TEDxNorthwesternU 2017 conference on how to create change in institutionalized prejudices against women and people of color, and has written and given guest lectures on the history of Black classical composers.

He has a bachelor of music degree in saxophone performance with a minor in jazz studies from the Indiana University Jacobs School of Music, and a master of music degree from Northwestern University's Bienen School of Music. His primary saxophone teachers have been Taimur Sullivan, Otis Murphy, Jr., and Galvin Crisp. He is currently Assistant Professor of Saxophone at Ithaca College. Banks is an endorsing artist for Conn-Selmer instruments, D'Addario Woodwinds, IefreQue Sound Solutions, and Key Leaves.

Nokuthula Ngwenyama, *composer*

"Mother of Peace" and "Lion" in Zulu, Nokuthula Ngwenyama has garnered attention as an orchestral soloist, recitalist, chamber musician, and composer. A recipient of the prestigious Avery Fisher Career Grant, she gained international prominence as a performer upon winning the Primrose International Viola Competition at 16. The following year she won the Young Concert Artists International Auditions, which led to debuts at the Kennedy Center and the 92nd Street Y. As a composer, Uptown Magazine featured her in its "A Poet of Sound" feature.

Actively composing and performing, during the 2021–22 season Ngwenyama collaborates with the Kalichstein-Laredo-Robinson Trio on the premiere of *Elegy* for piano quartet, and joins the Oregon Mozart Players led by Kelly Kuo to perform Dobrinka Tabakova's *Suite in Old Style*. She also returns to the Colburn School as an Amplify Artist, premiering a string quartet for violin, viola, cello, and bass. As a member of the group umama womama, she joins fellow instrumentalists and composers Valerie Coleman-Page and Hannah Lash to premiere a jointly written trio, commissioned by Chamber Music Northwest, Phoenix Chamber Music Society, and Clarion Concerts. *Primal Message*, an homage to the Arecibo message, that received its orchestral world premiere with Xian Zhang and the Detroit Symphony Orchestra last season, is performed by her and the Orquesta Nacional de España, Canada's National Arts Centre Orchestra, Los Angeles Philharmonic, and the Toronto, New Jersey, and San Francisco symphony orchestras. It receives its New York premiere with the Mostly Mozart Festival Orchestra.

Born in Los Angeles of Zimbabwean-Japanese parentage, Ngwenyama studied theory and counterpoint with Mary Ann Cummins, Warren Spaeth, and Herbert Zipper at the Crossroads School. She is an alumna of the Colburn School for the Performing Arts (now the Colburn Community School of Performing Arts) and the Curtis Institute of Music. As a Fulbright Scholar she attended the Paris Conservatoire and received a master of theological studies degree from

Harvard University. She is the first composer-in-residence of the Phoenix Chamber Music Society, and curates Composer's Choice, a co-production of ASU/Kerr Cultural Center, Phoenix Chamber Music Society, and Peace Mama Productions. It features 21st-century music and its creators—from the concert hall to television, video games, and beyond—in a chamber setting.

Mostly Mozart Festival Orchestra

The Mostly Mozart Festival Orchestra returns this summer to showcase its breadth of repertoire with Renée and Robert Belfer Music Director Louis Langrée at the helm for the 20th year. Opening with free outdoor concerts in Damrosch Park and continuing in Alice Tully Hall for three weeks, the beloved summertime NYC ensemble performs two programs weekly, featuring exceptional guest conductors and soloists. The Orchestra is deeply committed to ongoing community engagement and mentorship programs such as the 2022 Mostly Mozart in Harmony initiative, a collaboration with the Fiorello H. LaGuardia High School of Music & Art and Performing Arts to bring local music students of all ages into the professional world. During the year, MMFO members perform nationwide as soloists and chamber musicians, on Broadway, and with major orchestras including the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra, New York City Ballet Orchestra, St. Louis Symphony Orchestra, Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra, Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra, Orchestra of St. Luke's, and Orpheus Chamber Orchestra.