
LINCOLN CENTER'S
**SUMMER
FOR THE
CITY**

JUNE 11 – AUGUST 9, 2025

BROOKLYN RIDER & KAYHAN KALHOR
WITH SHAWN CONLEY & MATHIAS KUNZLI

FRIDAY, AUGUST 8, 2025 AT 7:30 PM

Silent City

ALICE TULLY HALL

Run Time: Approximately 1 hour 25 minutes

BROOKLYN RIDER

JOHNNY GANDELSMAN, *violin*

COLIN JACOBSEN, *violin*

NICHOLAS CORDS, *viola*

MICHAEL NICOLAS, *cello*

KAYHAN KALHOR, *kamancheh*

SHAWN CONLEY, *bass*

MATHIAS KUNZLI, *percussion*

PROGRAM

Mirror For a Prince - Colin Jacobsen

I. *Busalik*

II. *Golestan*

III. *A Walking Fire*

Atashgah - Colin Jacobsen

Beloved, Do Not Let Me Be Discouraged - Colin Jacobsen

Silent City - Kayhan Kalhor (arr. Ljova)

PROGRAM NOTES

***A Mirror for a Prince* - Colin Jacobsen**

I have had a love affair with Persian classical and folk music ever since meeting kamancheh virtuoso and composer Kayhan Kalhor. There's something in this music that seems to speak to an epic sense of time and history, but is always grounded in an intensely personal and poetic state of mind. *A Mirror for a Prince* refers to conduct manuals created for rulers that constructed models of kings to emulate or avoid (Machiavelli wrote perhaps the most famous western version, *Il Principe*...). The first two pieces in the suite are from a collection of 16th and 17th Century music from the Ottoman court, which apparently contained quite a number of Persian musicians, as, according to Kayhan and some other authorities, the renown of Persian musicians had spread to Istanbul. In fact, the word *Ajam*, (an Arabic/Turkish scale whose western equivalent is Major and Persian is *Rast Panjgah*) was used in Ottoman music culture to describe not just the scale, but referred to "Old Iran" and its musicians. Kayhan shared with me the melodic skeleton for these pieces, which were reconstructed (much as a Jordi Savall will do with old European music) by an Iranian musician and scholar named Arash Mohafez. So, in a certain sense, there's a big game of telephone over the centuries going on here, as Mohafez himself says that his aim wasn't purely to attempt playing these melodies as they were done in the Ottoman/Safavid era, but to bring them to life using his own taste and modern Persian music values. In turn, I had to use the resonance and rich sonorities of five string players and percussion to make choices about how these melodies could sound in yet another context. One interesting feature is that they are often in lengthy rhythmic cycles (in the case of *Busalik*, 48 beats). This is because they evolved out of sophisticated poetic forms, and it's beautiful to hear how this rhyming scheme plays itself out melodically and rhythmically. *A Walking Fire*, (the third piece in the suite) is a movement from a suite of pieces of the same name I wrote originally for Brooklyn Rider. The title comes from a line of poetry by the 13th century Sufi mystic Rumi, in which he is praising his friend and mentor Shams-i-Tabrizi, saying that he is a living embodiment of love, literally "a walking fire."

— Colin Jacobsen

***Atashgah* - Colin Jacobsen**

Sometimes a person and place can affect you in ways that you wouldn't have imagined at the time...

When Nick Cords and I visited Kayhan Kalhor in Iran in the summer of 2004 on a cultural exchange grant made possible by the Silk Road Project, one of the things we saw was an ancient fire temple, or Atashgah, a little outside of the city of Esfahan. Originally built as a holy site for the Zoroastrian religion in the Sassanid period of Iran's history (3rd-6th centuries AD), its flames have probably not been lit in centuries, but it still feels like a place of great power; a place where you become aware of layers of history. For me, the experience of listening to Kayhan play music is often like watching a fire in a fireplace; it is mesmerizing, hypnotic, and yet constantly changing. His music comes from a deep inner creative fire. When I returned from Iran that summer, I felt the need to do something with what I had heard and experienced. I've been attempting to write and arrange music ever since, hoping I caught at least a spark of that creative fire.

— Colin Jacobsen

***Beloved, Do Not Let Me Be Discouraged* - Colin Jacobsen**

The title of *Beloved, Do Not Let Me Be Discouraged* comes from a line of 16th century Turkish poetry by Fuzuli and is taken from his version of the legendary tale of Layli and Majnun, a story about ill-fated lovers that has many obvious parallels to Romeo and Juliet. To be majnun is literally to be crazy for love, and we first learned about this widely popular story in the Middle East and beyond during our trip to Iran. In our ears, Persian music expresses a deep desire to lose oneself in love. With a performer like Kayhan, this desire is communicated vividly, even to someone completely unfamiliar with the tradition. Additionally, the piece has links to the troubadours of 14th century Italy. The idea of medieval courtly love was a central theme of the music and poetry of the troubadours, and the very idea of this sort of ennobling love was influenced by early Arabic literature. During the 14th century, Persia and Italy enjoyed strong connections through trade in luxury goods, architecture, art and metalwork. One of our early impressions of Kayhan's instrument was that it seemed to evoke the sound world of Europe before the advent of the modern family of string instruments when the voices of early string instruments such as the rebec, the Renaissance fiddle and the lira da braccio were more humanistic, natural and intimate.

Colin, the composer of *Beloved*, describes the process of pulling together the material as follows:

Much inspiration for this piece came from working within that creative cauldron, the Silk Road Ensemble, with Alim Qasimov, the great Azeri Mugham singer, on a chamber version of Hajibeyov's opera, Layla and Majnun. There was a melodic fragment that caught my ear, and after working with it for a while it developed into the rhythmic piece that forms the second half of Beloved, do not let me be discouraged. This represents the feverish longing of the lover for his or her beloved and the divine inspiration that the mere thought of him or her brings.

At the same time that I was working on this Layla and Majnun-inspired piece, I stumbled across the genre of sacred songs called Laude which were sung in the vernacular in 14th century Italy. There was a striking similarity of devotional feeling characterized by joyful praise and ecstatic penitence between these Laude and the Layla and Majnun theme. Apparently, the genre is related to the music of the troubadours of France and Spain in the earlier Middle Ages whose music in turn may be related to the Middle Eastern idealization of a beloved.

One particular Laude, "Plangiamo," gave me the proverbial goose bumps on first hearing. It happened to be in the same mode as the rhythmic piece I had already written but was in a free, improvised and rhetorical style that I thought would make a great introduction to Beloved, do not let me be discouraged if some thought were given to a specific arrangement for our ensemble. This "Plangiamo" is the kind of melody that reveals more and more of itself each time it's heard, much the way a beloved, divine or human, can give one an endless feeling of wonder.

— Nicholas Cords

***Silent City* - Kayhan Kalhor** (arr. Ljova)

When we performed *Silent City* many years ago in Berkeley, California, we were deeply moved when a small group of audience members from New Orleans found us afterwards and, nearly in tears, told us that the piece had acted as a balm for their harrowing experiences during and after Hurricane Katrina. Though the creative spark of *Silent City* was fueled by the destruction of Hallabjah in Kurdistan Iraq, it was always intended to serve as a universal testament to fallen cities and civilizations. But even more central to *Silent City* is the idea that life always returns, sprouting anew out of the empty landscape.

Commissioned through the Silk Road Project in conjunction with a Harvard University course entitled "First Nights," the piece allowed us to develop Kayhan's ideas amongst ourselves and through the collective ear and life experience of the class itself. The variety of observations and personal anecdotes in response to our musical ideas was truly inspiring and allowed two things to happen: It gave us a greater awareness of the emotional content encoded in the music and it inspired our sense of the piece as an open dialogue between performers and audience members.

The musical narrative itself unfolds in reverse-time. The opening scene is a whispered and sparse musical atmosphere, evoking a world in which a disaster has occurred, either through humanity's own hands or by the destructive forces of nature. The echoes of distant voices return, slowly building in intensity toward an urgent climax and point of release. This substantial first portion of the piece is completely improvised, allowing us to collectively work within the mode to create a visceral sense of that barren world. We employ a variety of techniques including independent loops, call and response, echoes, and the intoning of open harmonies to reflect the slowly changing emotional landscape. A lamenting chant sings out afterwards on the kamancheh, employing a traditional melody from Turkey. This leads into a Kurdish melody that repeats itself above a densely shifting harmonic world, ultimately yielding to a joyful dance in 7/8 meter that vividly depicts life flowing back again.

— Nicholas Cords

ABOUT THE ARTISTS



BROOKLYN RIDER

"A string quartet of boundless imagination."

— NPR

Celebrating twenty years of shared musical exploration, Brooklyn Rider originated in a living room, four friends in search of an outlet for their curiosities. Inspired by the probing spirit of Germany's pre-WWI artistic collective Der Blaue Reiter, they recognized parallels with their creative community and began to build projects. In the following two decades, Brooklyn Rider has undertaken a staggering amount of work, carving a singular space in the world of string quartets. Through thoughtful programmatic framing, deep-rooted collaborations, and innovative commissioning projects, Brooklyn Rider has used the medium at every point in their adventurous journey as a vehicle for exploration and discovery.

To mark the twenty-year milestone, a wide range of projects are on the horizon for 2025 and beyond that celebrate the key elements of their work. Honoring a long-standing relationship with the string quartets of Philip Glass, Brooklyn Rider has embarked on the first-ever retrospective of the composer's complete works for the medium. Initially presented by the Yale Schwarzman Center, the

retrospective was repeated at the Met Cloisters in NYC in May 2025. A major commission by Gabriela Lena Frank, *Frida's Dreams* is due for the 2025-26 season. Their latest recording, *The Four Elements* (May 2025, In A Circle Records) serves as a dual metaphor for the complex inner world of the string quartet and the future of planet Earth. The quartet expands their reach into the orchestral world in upcoming seasons with a major new work for quartet and orchestra by Nico Muhly, to be presented by a wide-ranging consortium of orchestras across Europe and North America. Lastly, a special concert at Tanglewood later this August will feature the Schubert Cello Quintet as the centerpiece alongside the quartet's friend and mentor Yo-Yo Ma.

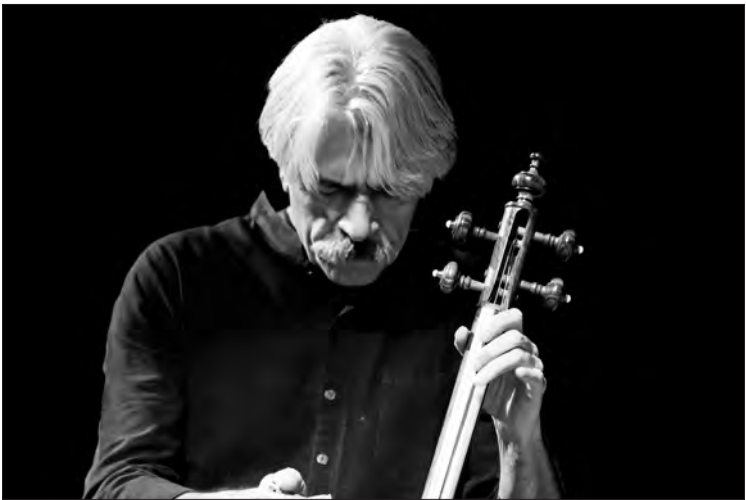


PHOTO CREDIT: NIMA NAZEMI

KAYHAN KALHOR

Kayhan Kalhor is an internationally acclaimed and Grammy Award-winning virtuoso of the Persian kamancheh, a spiked fiddle and precursor to the violin. Through his many and diverse musical collaborations, Kalhor has been instrumental in popularizing Iranian music and culture around the world. He has performed as a soloist with various ensembles and orchestras, including the New York Philharmonic and the Orchestre National de Lyon. Kalhor's recent composition, *Venus in the Mirror* for kamancheh and cello, was commissioned by the NDR Elbphilharmonie Orchestra and the Morgenland Festival. It premiered in July 2025 with Yo-Yo Ma and conductor Alan Gilbert.

PHOTO CREDIT: DEBORAH STEWART



SHAWN CONLEY

Hawaiian born bassist and composer Shawn Conley grew up loving all types of music. This love of diversity of sound developed into a career that straddles many genres. He is a longtime member of the Silkroad Ensemble and a member of the Brooklyn-based chamber orchestra The Knights. Recent projects include Silkroad's Grammy Award-winning album *Sing Me Home*, an upcoming release of the Brahms and Beethoven violin concertos with Gil

Shaham and The Knights, the world premiere tour of Osvaldo Golijov's *Falling Out of Time* (commissioned by Silkroad), as well as an international tour of the performance-art piece *The Head and the Load* created by South African visual artist William Kentridge. Shawn can also be heard on The Knights album *Azul*, featuring Silkroad founder Yo-Yo Ma. As a studio musician, he has performed on multiple soundtracks including *True Grit*, *Moonrise Kingdom*, *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*, *The Vietnam War* documentary by Ken Burns and Lynn Novick, and the Amazon series *The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel*. Shawn studied at Rice University with Paul Ellison and in Paris, France with Francois Rabbath. He currently lives in Honolulu, where he is the Principal Bassist with the Hawaii Symphony Orchestra.

PHOTO CREDIT: RENÉ MOSELE



MATHIAS KUNZLI

Born and raised in Switzerland, Mathias Kunzli moved to the United States to study at Berklee College of Music. Kunzli has appeared at Carnegie Hall, Royal Albert Hall, Sydney Opera House, Royal Festival Hall, Avery Fisher Hall, Alice Tully Hall, Outside Lands Festival, Montreal Jazz Festival, Montreux Jazz Festival, Monterey Jazz Festival, *Late Show with David Letterman*, *The Tonight Show with Jay Leno*, *The Colbert Report*, *Late Night with Jimmy Fallon*, *Good*

Morning America, *Late Late Show with James Corden*, *The Late Show with Stephen Colbert*, *Late Night with Seth Meyers*. Mathias has played on over one hundred and fifty albums and numerous film scores. As a leader he released "Playground", an improvised solo-show and "A Lyrebird's Wish". Collaborators include Regina Spektor, Moby, Lauryn Hill, Yo-Yo Ma, Vieux Farka Toure, John Zorn, Yanka Roupkina, Theodosii Spassov, Bakithi Kumalo, Savina Yannatou, Brooklyn Rider Paul Winter, Nadja Salerno-Sonnenberg, Frank London, Gina Gershon, Keyhan Kalhor, Mary Wilson, Kimbra, Sophia Brous.

Brooklyn Rider: 20 Years at Play
Part of Lincoln Center's *Summer for the City*
August 7-9, 2025

Brooklyn Rider and Friends | Damrosch Park | August 7

The Four Elements, Part I Earth & Air | David Rubenstein Atrium | August 7

Silent City | Alice Tully Hall | August 8

The Four Elements, Part II Fire & Water | David Rubenstein Atrium | August 8

Family Concert: A String Quartet at Play | LeFrak Lobby, David Geffen Hall |
August 9

Chalk and Soot | Alice Tully Hall | August 9

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By Diep Tran

Earlier this year, *Sleep No More* closed after a 14-year run in New York. But Felix Barrett, who created the immersive hit with his company Punchdrunk, isn't too upset about it. "Because *Sleep No More* was always just there, it felt like whenever I was here in town, I was looking after that show," says the London-based theatre maker. "And so actually, now that it's closed here...it's like the doorway in my mind is open for new work."

Ever since Punchdrunk opened *Sleep No More* in London in 2003, the company has become synonymous with that show—where audience members wore masks and followed performers around five floors of a building, in a story reminiscent of *Macbeth*. It also inspired a legion of similarly structured productions.


Compared to *Sleep No More*, *Viola's Room* is more compact. The show is currently running at Off-Broadway's The Shed; six audience members are welcomed at a time, and they walk a predetermined path, barefoot. That's not to say it's a short walk—the space is 12,500 square feet. Plus, there are no live actors—instead they hear a narrative through a personal headset, spoken by Helena Bonham Carter.

"After *Sleep No More*, which was a vast,

sprawling epic, I wanted to try and distill the potency and the atmosphere within that but try and create the most intimate version of it," explains Barrett. Getting Bonham Carter to record her voice for the show wasn't too difficult: "One phone call, she jumped straight in."

Viola's Room is inspired by the Barry Pain fairy story *The Moon Slave*, about a princess who is engaged to be married. But shortly before her wedding, she is pulled by supernatural powers to a forest, where she is compelled to dance. After, once a month on the full moon, Viola is pulled back into the forest. The story ends on a disquieting note.

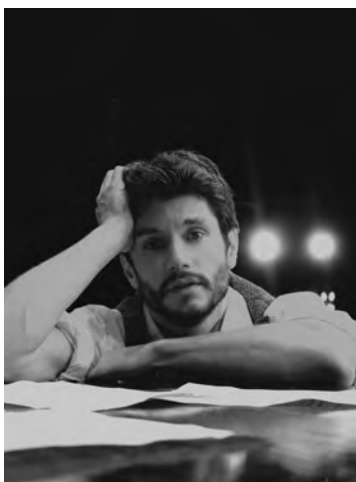
In *Viola's Room*, audiences begin in the bedroom of a teenage girl. They then physically crawl into the world of Princess Viola—where there are mazes and trees, a sumptuous feast, a spooky church, a pit of sand, and many more memorable environments.

"It's a coming-of-age ritual—that amazing point where you're on the cusp of adulthood," says Barrett. "It's deeply melancholic, in a way, because it can only last for a tiny moment. But it's so exhilarating because you're straddling two different worlds. And so, we really wanted to convey that within the piece and offer audiences a chance to step back into their own childhoods for an hour." 

Oh, Actors!

Photos by Heather Gershonowitz

Cole Escola's hit Broadway play *Oh, Mary!* is entering a new era. The show's original cast members Conrad Ricamora, James Scully, and Bianca Leigh will depart the show August 2. Tony Macht will follow September 28. Below, some of the show's original cast and understudies pose on the Lyceum Theatre stage.



Clockwise from top right: Julian Manjerico (understudy), Bianca Leigh (Mary's Teacher), Hannah Solow (understudy), Martin Landry (understudy), Tony Macht (Mary's Husband Assistant), and James Scully (Mary's Teacher).