

# Candlelight Concert Society Presents

**HANZHI WANG** ACCORDION  
**STEVEN BANKS** SAXOPHONE  
**XAK BJERKEN** PIANO

Saturday, February 25, 2023, 7:30 pm

Smith Theatre, Horowitz Visual and Performing Arts Center, Howard Community College

*This performance is sponsored by Jerry Perseghin*

GEORGE FRIDERIC HANDEL (1685-1759)

**Recorder Sonata in G Minor, HWV 360**

KRZYSZTOF PENDERECKI (1933-2020)

**Three Miniatures**

*Hanzhi Wang, accordion*

*Steven Banks, saxophone*

JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH (1685-1750)

**Selections from Goldberg Variations, BWV 988**

MARTIN LOHSE (b. 1971)

**Autumn Rain & Winter's Tale**

PYOTR IL'YICH TCHAIKOVSKY (1840-1893)

**The Seasons, Op. 37a**

arr. Hanzhi Wang

*September (The Hunt) Allegro non troppo*

*October (Autumn Song) Andante doloroso e molto cantabile*

*November (Troika) Allegro moderato*

*Hanzhi Wang, accordion*

## *Intermission*

STEVEN BANKS (b. 1993)

**Come As You Are**

*Lift My Eyes*

*Times of the Storm*

*Strength of My Life*

*Lift My Hands*

PEDRO ITURRALDE (1929-2020)

**Pequeña Czarda**

*Steven Banks, saxophone*

*Xak Bjerken, piano*

MIKOŁAJ MAJKUSIAK (b. 1983)

**The Elements**

ASTOR PIAZZOLLA (1921-1992)

**Milonga Del Angel**

*Hanzhi Wang, accordion*

*Steven Banks, saxophone*



## TONIGHT'S ARTISTS

### HANZHI WANG ACCORDION



*“Staggering virtuosity that held the audience in a state of breathlessness, as thrilling to watch as to hear.”*

*Oberon's Grove (New York)*

Praised for her engaging stage presence and performances that are technically and musically brilliant, **Hanzhi Wang** is the only accordionist to ever win a place on the roster of Young Concert Artists in its 60-year history. An ambassador for her instrument, Hanzhi has been praised for her captivating stage presence and performances that display passion and finesse.

A ground-breaking artist, Hanzhi's other firsts include being named Musical America's "New Artist of the Month," an interview and performance on the 2,145th episode of New York WQXR's Young Artists Showcase as the first solo accordionist on the program, and the Naxos label's first-ever solo accordion CD, "On the Path to H.C. Andersen," which was nominated for the prestigious DR (Danish Radio) P2 Prize in 2019.

A First Prize Winner of the 2017 Young Concert Artists Susan Wadsworth International Auditions, Hanzhi debuted in New York in The Peter Marino Concert at Carnegie Hall's Zankel Hall. Her Washington, DC debut opened the 40th Anniversary Young Concert Artists Series at the Kennedy Center, co-presented with Washington Performing Arts. She holds the Ruth Laredo Prize and Mortimer Levitt Career Development Award for Women Artists of YCA.

Hanzhi has performed recitals at UC Santa Barbara's

Lively Arts, Stanford Live, Bravo! Vail, Krannert Center, and Candlelight Concert Society. Upcoming recitals include the Artist Series Concerts of Sarasota and a concert with YCA saxophonist, Steven Banks, at The Morgan Library; Museum in New York City. Hanzhi has appeared as soloist with the Oregon Music Festival, Victoria Symphony, Cantori, Chamber Orchestra of the Triangle, Sinfonia Gulf Coast, Iris Orchestra, and next season performs with the Hawaii Symphony, Erie Philharmonic, and Reno Chamber Orchestra.

Hanzhi won First Prize in the 40th Castelfidardo International Accordion Competition in Italy. She inspires the next generation of accordionists with lectures, performances, and master classes at the Manhattan School of Music, Royal Danish Academy of Music, Tianjin Music Conservatory, Ghent Music Conservatory (Belgium), and in Norway and Portugal. Composers Martin Lohse, James Black, and Sophia Gubaidulina have written and dedicated works to her.

Hanzhi earned her Bachelor's degree at the China Central Conservatory of Music in Beijing. She completed her Master's degree and Soloist Diploma at the Royal Danish Academy of Music in Copenhagen with the renowned accordion professor Geir Draugsvoll, where she also served as an assistant teacher at the Academy.

### STEVEN BANKS SAXOPHONE



*“One senses that Banks has the potential to be one of the transformational musicians of the twenty-first century.”*

*Seen and Heard International*

**Steven Banks** is an ambassador for the classical saxophone, establishing himself as both a compelling and charismatic soloist as well as an advocate for

expanding its repertoire. Steven is the first saxophonist to capture First Prize at the Young Concert Artists Susan Wadsworth International Auditions (2019). He was also recently chosen to join WQXR's 2022 Artist Propulsion Lab, a program designed to advance the careers of artists and support the future of classical music.

Steven has recently appeared as soloist with the Orchestre Symphonique de Montréal, Aspen Festival Orchestra, Oregon Mozart Players, Colorado Music Festival, Colorado Symphony, Utah Symphony, and the Mostly Mozart Festival Orchestra. He is also on subscription with the Cleveland Orchestra. Upcoming orchestral engagements include the Kansas City Symphony, Cincinnati Symphony, Detroit Symphony, New World Symphony, National Symphony Orchestra, and the Minnesota Orchestra.

Steven's upcoming and recent recitals include Festival Napa Valley, Usedomer MusikFestival, Spoleto Festival USA, and the San Francisco Symphony's Spotlight Series at Davies Hall. His critically acclaimed recital debut was streamed from Merkin Concert Hall, and co-sponsored by Washington Performing Arts featuring world premieres by Carlos Simon, Saad Haddad, and one of his own compositions.

An emerging composer, Steven's music showcases "a unique and ambitious blend of feelings and sounds" and portrays "a deep intimacy" (*Cleveland Classical*). Steven's original composition for alto saxophone and string quartet, titled *Cries, Sighs and Dreams*, premiered at 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.

Steven is an advocate for diversity and inclusion in music education, performance, and newly-commissioned works in the classical realm. At the TEDxNorthwesternU 2017 conference, Steven presented on his dynamic approach to overcoming institutionalized prejudices against women and people of color. He has also written and given lectures on the history of Black classical composers.

Steven has a Bachelor of Arts 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 the Northwestern University Bienen School of Music. His primary saxophone teachers have been Taimur Sullivan, Otis Murphy, Jr., and Galvin Crisp.

## XAK BJERKEN PIANO



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 held chamber music residencies at the Tanglewood Music Center, Spoleto Festival, and Olympic Music Festival.

Bjerken is the director of Ensemble X, a new music ensemble at Cornell, and has served on the faculty of Kneisel Hall, the Eastern Music Festival, and at the Chamber Music Conference at Bennington College. He has worked closely with contemporary composers such as György Kurtag, Sofia Gubaidulina, Steven Stucky, and George Benjamin, and has premiered piano concertos by Stephen Hartke, Elizabeth Ogonek, and Jesse Jones, a recording of which was released by Naxos in 2021. He released his first solo recording on CRI in 2001, and has since recorded for Koch International, Chandos, Albany Records, Artona, and Open G Records.

Bjerken is Professor of Music at Cornell University where he co-directs Mayfest, an international chamber music festival with his wife, pianist Miri Yampolsky. He studied with Aube Tzerko at the University of California, Los Angeles, and received his Master's and Doctoral degrees from the Peabody Conservatory as a student of and teaching assistant to Leon Fleisher. He is the proud father of Misha (bassist), Anna (singer), and Maya (athlete and stargazer).