



### STEVEN BANKS, saxophone

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. Steven is also 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, the Mostly Mozart Festival Orchestra and on subscription with the Cleveland Orchestra, performing with such conductors as John Adams, Peter Oundjian, Earl Lee, Xian Zhang, Nicholas McGegan, and Rafael Payere. Upcoming orchestral engagements include the Kansas City Symphony, Cincinnati Symphony, Detroit Symphony, New World Symphony, National Symphony Orchestra and the Minnesota Orchestra.

Prior to his invitation as soloist with The Cleveland Orchestra, Steven appeared with the ensemble under conductors including Franz Welser-Most, Jahja Ling, Matthias Pintscher, Alain Altinoglu, and Roderick Cox. He can be heard on a Naxos recording as baritone saxophonist of the award-winning Kenari Quartet.

Steven made his debut at the Spoleto Music Festival in Charleston, SC with the St. Lawrence String Quartet and will reunite with the Quartet this season on the Stanford Live series at Bing Concert Hall. 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, the music of Steven Banks showcases "a unique and ambitious blend of feelings and sounds" and portrays "a deep intimacy" and "a sense of vulnerability" (*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, and was performed again this past summer at the Aspen Music Festival and School. 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. He presented at the TEDxNorthwesternU 2017 conference presenting his dynamic approach to overcoming institutionalized prejudices against women and people of color, and he has written and given lectures on the history of black classical composers. He also collaborated with flutist Anthony Trionfo and violinist Randall Goosby to create the Learning to Listen roundtable, a discussion on the nuances of the Black experience in classical music and beyond. In partnership with the Sphinx Organization, they also created the Illuminate! series, which opened three essential conversations on the subject of music education, artist activism, and the LGBTQIA+ community in classical music.

Having previously served as Assistant Professor of Saxophone at Ithaca College, in the coming season Steven will hold the Jackie McLean Fellowship at the University of Hartford and also serve as a Visiting Faculty member at the Cleveland Institute of Music, where he'll offer individual saxophone lessons, as well as master classes, and other residency activities.

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 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.

Steven is an endorsing artist for Conn-Selmer instruments, D'Addario Woodwinds, IefreQue Sound Solutions, and Key Leaves.