



FRIENDS OF  
CHAMBER  
MUSIC

MAY 14, 2025

## MIRÓ QUARTET

**DANIEL CHING**, violin  
**WILLIAM FEDKENHEUER**, violin  
**JOHN LARGESS**, viola  
**JOSHUA GINDELE**, cello

## STEVEN BANKS, SAXOPHONE

**HILDEGARD OF BINGEN**  
(1098-1179)

*O Virtus Sapientiae*

**CAROLINE SHAW**  
(b. 1982)

"Other Song" \*  
"And So" \*  
*Transcribed by Corey Dundee*

**LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN**  
(1770-1827)

**Quartet No. 15 in A Minor, Op. 132**  
III. Heiliger Dankgesang

**STEVEN BANKS**  
(b. 1993)

*Come What May* \*\*

### INTERMISSION

**OSVALDO GOLIJOV**  
(b. 1960)

*The Dreams and Prayers of Isaac the Blind* \*  
*Transcribed by Corey Dundee*

*\* Transcribed by Corey Dundee for Steven Banks and the Miró Quartet,  
commissioned by Friends of Chamber Music Denver*

*\*\* Commissioned by Arizona Friends of Chamber Music*



**DANIEL  
CHING**, violin

**WILLIAM  
FEDKENHEUER**,  
violin

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LARGESS**, viola

**JOSHUA  
GINDELE**, cello

## MIRÓ QUARTET

The Miró Quartet is one of America's most celebrated string quartets, praised as "furiously committed" by *The New Yorker* and recognized for its "exceptional tonal focus and interpretive intensity" by the *Cleveland Plain Dealer*. For 30 years, the Miró Quartet has performed throughout the world on the most prestigious concert stages, earning accolades from critics and audiences alike. Based in Austin, TX, and thriving on the area's storied music scene, the Miró Quartet takes pride in finding new ways to communicate with audiences of all backgrounds while cultivating the longstanding tradition of chamber music.

The Miró Quartet was nominated for a 2024 GRAMMY Award for its album, *House of Belonging*, created in collaboration with Austin-based choral group Conspirare, and in May 2024 released a new album, *Home*, on Pentatone. Now celebrating their 30th anniversary, the Miró Quartet's upcoming projects include a series at Chamber Music Tulsa and performances for String Theory at the Hunter, Music Toronto, International Classical Concerts, BIG ARTS, and more. Past projects include *Here on Earth* with pianist Lara Downes, the premiere of a new version of Kevin Puts' *Credo*, and collaborations with composers Steven Banks, Tamar-Kali, and Gabriel Kahane, as well as soprano Karen Slack.

Formed in 1995, the Miró Quartet was awarded first prize at several national and international competitions including the Banff International String Quartet Competition and the Naumburg Chamber Music Competition. In 2005, the Miró Quartet became the first ensemble ever to be awarded the coveted Avery Fisher Career Grant.

The Miró Quartet took its name and inspiration from the Spanish artist Joan Miró, whose Surrealist works—with subject matter drawn from the realm of memory, dreams, and imaginative fantasy—are some of the most groundbreaking, influential, and admired of the 20th century. Visit [miroquartet.com](http://miroquartet.com) for more information.

Miró Quartet is represented by MKI Artists: 70 S Winooski Ave. #318, Burlington, VT 05401. Recordings: Bridge Records, Oxingale Records, Longhorn Music, Miró Quartet Media.

## STEVEN BANKS, SAXOPHONE

Performer, composer, and saxophonist Steven Banks is driven to program and write music that directly addresses aspects of the human experience. He is a devoted and intentional supporter of diverse voices in the future of concert music.

In 2024-25, Banks appears with orchestras including The Cleveland Orchestra, Pittsburgh Symphony, and Seattle Symphony. He has debuted with the Boston Symphony Orchestra and the National Symphony Orchestra (Washington), and has worked with conductors including Manfred Honeck, Stéphane Denève, and Ruth Reinhardt.

Banks is committed to establishing the saxophone as an integral part of the sound of classical music in the 21st century and broadening the public view of the instrument and its expressive capabilities. Commissioning new works for saxophone is at the heart of this commitment. In July 2025, he will perform the world premiere of Joan Tower's new saxophone concerto at the Colorado Music Festival with Peter Oundjian. He has also premiered a saxophone concerto by Billy Childs, *Diaspora*, which chronicles Childs' interpretation of the African American experience, inspired by the poetry of Maya Angelou, Nayyirah Waheed, and Claude McKay.

Banks has appeared in recital with pianist Xak Bjerken at prestigious venues across the US, and as a chamber musician collaborates with the St. Lawrence String Quartet, the Borromeo String Quartet, and the Dover Quartet. This season, he performs with both the Miró and Verona Quartets with a new saxophone and string quartet written by Christopher Theofanidis. Banks is a founding member of the award-winning all-saxophone ensemble Kenari Quartet.

Banks was the first saxophonist to be awarded both the Avery Fisher Career Grant and the First Prize at the Young Concert Artists International Auditions. He serves as Saxophone and Chamber Music Faculty and Artist-in-Residence at the Cleveland Institute of Music, having founded the saxophone program and been appointed as the first saxophone at the conservatory level. He holds Bachelor



**STEVEN BANKS,** saxophone

and Master of Music degrees from Indiana University's Jacobs School of Music and Northwestern University's Beinen School of Music, respectively. He is also an endorsing artist for Conn-Selmer, D'Addario Woodwinds, LefreQue Sound Solutions, and Key Leaves.

Steven Banks is represented by KD Schmid.

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## NOTES

### HILDEGARD OF BINGEN: O VIRTUS SAPIENTIAE

#### IN BRIEF

**BORN:** 1098, Bermersheim vor de Höhe, Germany

**DIED:** September 17, 1179, Bingen, Germany

#### **MOST RECENT FRIENDS OF CHAMBER MUSIC**

**PERFORMANCE:** Tonight marks the first performance of this work on our series.

**DURATION:** 3 minutes

Hildegard of Bingen was a German Benedictine mystic, writer, and composer. Her parents were members of the nobility who promised Hildegard, their tenth child, to the church when she was born. She entered the novitiate at age 8 and took the veil at age 15. She became Mother Superior at the monastery of Disibodenburg in 1136, and later founded monasteries at Rupertsberg, in the Rhine Valley, and a daughter house at Eibingen. One of the most distinguished women of the Middle Ages, Hildegard was noted for her poetry and her medical and scientific treatises, in addition to her music.

She began writing lyrical poetry in the 1140s. In the 1150s she compiled more than 70 of her works as *Symphona armonie celestium revelationum*. Collectively, they comprise a liturgical cycle, most of which are associated with specific Catholic feasts. "O virtus sapientiae" means "O strength of wisdom." The text is an ode to God's infinite wisdom. It is classified as an antiphon, a short Biblical text set to music in a simple syllabic style. Within the Catholic liturgy, antiphons would precede and follow a psalm or canticle. This one has a serene chant floating above a drone bass.

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## IN BRIEF

**BORN:** 1982, Greenville, NC

**FIRST PERFORMANCE:** "Other Song" premiered March 24, 2025, Carnegie Hall. "And So" premiered March 2020 at Lincoln Center (Sō Percussion)

### **MOST RECENT FRIENDS OF CHAMBER MUSIC**

**PERFORMANCE:** Tonight marks the first performance of these works on our series.

**DURATION:** 10 minutes

CAROLINE SHAW:  
"OTHER SONG" AND  
"AND SO"  
(TRANSCRIBED BY  
COREY DUNDEE)

Caroline Shaw broke through to the forefront of the international new music world in 2013, when her *Partita for 8 Voices* won the Pulitzer Prize in music. She was the youngest composer ever to receive that prestigious award. She studied at Rice, Yale, and Princeton, and currently serves on the faculty at NYU and as a Creative Associate at Juilliard.

Though Shaw is still in her early 40s, her career has soared. She has fulfilled commissions from soprano Renée Fleming with pianist Inon Barnatan, the Dover and Calidore Quartets, soprano Dawn Upshaw with Sō Percussion, pianist Gilbert Kalish, and the Baltimore Symphony, among others. During the 2018-19 season, Jonathan Biss was the soloist in *Watermark*, Shaw's then-new piano concerto for the Seattle Symphony. She remains active as a performer, both as a violinist and as a singer with *A Roomful of Teeth*.

Denver Friends of Chamber Music commissioned these arrangements of "Other Song" and "And So." The first was originally for voice and string quartet, while Shaw wrote "And So" for voice and the Sō Percussion ensemble. In both cases, the saxophone assumes the vocal line. The lyrics to each song shed light on the mood of the music:

### **Other Song**

Find where you go  
Behind the glare is what I know  
The melody climbs higher

The song is in the fold  
The harmony is cold  
What's old is new is ever ever told

Program Notes  
*Continued*

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I go where you are  
I know there is no  
Assigned melody

The song is in the fold  
The harmony is cold  
What's old is new [is old] [is new] is ever ever told

Find the line

I go where you go

**And So**

Would a song by any other name  
Sound as sweet and true?  
Would all the reds be just the same  
Or violets as blue?

If you were gone  
Would words still flow  
And would they rhyme with you?  
If you were gone  
Would I still know  
How to love, and how to grow  
And how the vowel threads through?

And so, you say, the saying goes  
A rose is a rose is a rose is a rose  
Is a rose is a rose is a tired rhyme  
But in the verse there's always time

Would scansion cease to mark the beats if I went away?  
Would a syllable interrupt the feet of tetrametric iambs when  
I am gone?  
Listen, and I will sing a tune of love and life, and of the  
ocean's prose  
And the poetry of a red, red rose that's nearly sprung in June

And so, you say, the saying goes  
A rose is a rose is a rose is a rose  
Is a rose is a rose is how I'm  
Keeping track of time

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## IN BRIEF

**BORN:** December 1770, Bonn, Germany

**DIED:** March 26, 1827, Vienna, Austria

**MOST RECENT FRIENDS OF CHAMBER MUSIC**

**PERFORMANCE:** November 28, 2023, Isidore String Quartet

**DURATION:** 16 minutes

LUDWIG VAN  
BEETHOVEN: *HEILIGER  
DANKGESANG FROM  
QUARTET NO. 15 IN  
A MINOR, OP. 132*

Beethoven's Quartet No. 15, which was completed in the summer of 1825, is one of three commissioned by the Russian Prince Galitzin; he was the third Russian nobleman to play an important role in the history of Beethoven's monumental contribution to the string quartet literature. (Prince Lobkowitz encouraged Beethoven in the late 1790s to produce the six quartets that comprise his Op. 18; the three Op. 59 quartets (1805-1806) are generally referred to by the name of their dedicatee, Count Rasumovsky.) As in so many of the late works, Beethoven sought in this quartet new approaches to musical form. The work is in five movements, but Beethoven concentrates his musical intensity in this third movement, the central Adagio.

This middle movement of Op. 132 is the centerpiece of the work on several levels. It is approximately 15 minutes long—a disproportionate one-third of the length of the entire quartet. Beethoven's emphasis on the slow movement as the psychological crux of the work is achieved in more conceptual ways. Entitled *Heiliger Dankgesang eines Genesenen an die Gottheit, in der lydischen Tonart*, which translates roughly to "Holy Song of Thanksgiving from a convalescent to the divinity, in the Lydian mode," it is usually referred to simply as the *Canzona*. The form of the movement is ABABA. Beethoven employs lyrical B-sections (marked *Neue Kraft fühlend*, "feeling new strength") in A major to contrast with the modal, chorale-like A sections. The peculiar lack of harmonic tension in the Lydian mode teases the tonally oriented ear, which is drawn to both C major and F major, despite the knowledge that the pure Lydian scale belongs to neither key.

Musical scholars have viewed the Op. 132 quartet as a symmetrical work, with the Adagio as its pivot. We hear it as an independent movement.

STEVEN BANKS:  
*COME WHAT MAY*  
(COLORADO  
PREMIERE)

IN BRIEF

**BORN:** 1993, Clemmons, North Carolina

**FIRST PERFORMANCE:** March 9, 2025, Tucson, AZ, Miró Quartet

**MOST RECENT FRIENDS OF CHAMBER MUSIC**

**PERFORMANCE:** Tonight marks the first performance of this work on our series.

**DURATION:** 20 minutes

*Steven Banks's composer's note follows:*

When I started writing *Come What May*, my goal was to explore timelessness in music. What I realized during the composition process is that, for many reasons, the act of honest creation cannot include consideration of what the masses may or may not do with a work after it has been created.

There is no formula one can follow to ensure the creation of a “timeless” piece of art. What is inherently timeless, however, is our humanity. The small, yet infinite sliver of consciousness that we each carry allows us all to have a singular experience of the world and unique set of proclivities. As such, the job of a composer must be to express their individual voice in the truest possible way and to follow their curiosities and inclinations where they lead.

Right now, I am very much fascinated by composers like Brahms, who were able to make such grand musical statements with such small amounts of thematic material. The primary theme of *Come What May*, presented in the tenor saxophone at the beginning of the piece, came to me after a meditation session I did with my instrument in hand. After allowing the silence of the room to become predominant, and allowing my mind to become quiet, the first melody that emerged through my instrument was this one.

The writing process gave me the opportunity to develop a relationship with this theme by stylizing, transposing,



compressing, and displacing it in so many ways that felt relevant and meaningful. Just as we are all challenged by the various trials of life, the themes of *Come What May* are challenged in many ways but hopefully emerge stronger at the end with a clearer sense of identity and purpose than could have been reached without the journey.

– S.B.

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#### IN BRIEF

**BORN:** Born 1960, La Plata, Argentina

**MOST RECENT FRIENDS OF CHAMBER MUSIC**

**PERFORMANCE:** Tonight marks the first performance of this work on our series.

**DURATION:** 32 minutes

OSVALDO GOLIJOV:  
DREAMS AND PRAYERS  
OF ISAAC THE BLIND  
(TRANSCRIBED BY  
COREY DUNDEE)

A quarter-century ago, when *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* was published, it did not even include an entry for Argentinian-born Osvaldo Golijov. Grove Music Online has since amended that oversight with a brief biography, and the 2013 edition of *The New Grove Dictionary of American Music* added a long article acknowledging the impact that Golijov has had on new music in the 21st century.

Golijov was reared in an Eastern European/Jewish household in La Plata, Argentina. (His mother was a Romanian piano teacher; his father a Ukrainian doctor.) He emigrated from Argentina to Israel in 1983, studying with Mark Kopytman at the Jerusalem Rubin Academy. Golijov came to the U.S. in 1986 to pursue a doctorate in composition with George Crumb at the University of Pennsylvania. Subsequently he worked with Lukas Foss and Oliver Knussen at Tanglewood. In 2003 Golijov was awarded a MacArthur Fellowship, the so-called “genius” award, and the Vilcek Foundation awarded him its Prize for Creative Promise in 2008. He is the recipient of two GRAMMY awards. The Santa Fe Opera premiered his opera *Ainadamar* in 2005; last fall, the Metropolitan Opera revived it in a new production. Golijov has served on the faculty of Holy Cross College in Worcester, Massachusetts since 1991.

*Dreams and Prayers of Isaac the Blind* originated as a quintet for clarinet (or Klezmer clarinet) and string quartet. Denver

Program Notes  
*Continued*

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Friends of Chamber Music commissioned this arrangement for saxophone and string quartet. Osvaldo Golijov's program note follows:

Eight centuries ago Isaac the Blind, the great kabbalist rabbi of Provence, dictated a manuscript in which he asserted that all things and events in the universe are the product of combinations of the Hebrew alphabet's letters: "Their root is in a name, for the letters are like branches, which appear in the manner of flickering flames, mobile, and nevertheless linked to the coal." His conviction still resonates today: don't we have scientists who believe that the clue to our life and fate is hidden in other codes?

Isaac's lifelong devotion to his art is as striking as that of string quartets and klezmer musicians. In their search for something that arises from tangible elements but transcends them, they are all reaching a state of communion. Gershom Scholem, the preeminent scholar of Jewish mysticism, says that "Isaac and his disciples do not speak of ecstasy, of a unique act of stepping outside oneself in which human consciousness abolishes itself. *Debhequth* (communion) is a constant state, nurtured and renewed through meditation." If communion is not the reason, how else would one explain the strange life that Isaac led, or the decades during which groups of four souls dissolve their individuality into single, higher organisms, called string quartets? How would one explain the chain of klezmer generations that, while blessing births, weddings, and burials, were trying to discover the melody that could be set free from itself and become only air, spirit, *ruakh*?

The movements of this work sound to me as if written in three of the different languages spoken by the Jewish people throughout our history. This somehow reflects the composition's epic nature. I hear the prelude and the first movement, the most ancient, in Aramaic; the second movement is in Yiddish, the rich and fragile language of a long exile; the third movement and postlude are in sacred Hebrew.

The prelude and the first movement simultaneously explore two prayers in different ways: The quartet plays the first part of the central prayer of the High Holidays, “We will observe the mighty holiness of this day...,” while the clarinet dreams the motifs from “Our Father, Our King.” The second movement is based on “The Old Klezmer Band”, a traditional dance tune, which is surrounded here by contrasting manifestations of its own halo. The third movement was written before all the others. It is an instrumental version of *K'vakarat*, a work that I wrote a few years ago for Kronos and Cantor Misha Alexandrovich. The meaning of the word klezmer: instrument of song, becomes clear when one hears David Krakauer's interpretation of the cantor's line (*transferred to saxophone in Mr. Banks's arrangement*). This movement, together with the postlude, bring to conclusion the prayer left open in the first movement: “...Thou pass and record, count and visit, every living soul, appointing the measure of every creature's life and decreeing its destiny.”

But blindness is as important in this work as dreaming and praying. I had always the intuition that, in order to achieve the highest possible intensity in a performance, musicians should play, metaphorically speaking, “blind.” That is why, I think, all legendary bards in cultures around the world, starting with Homer, are said to be blind. “Blindness” is probably the secret of great string quartets, those who don't need their eyes to communicate among them, with the music, or the audience. My homage to all of them and Isaac of Provence is this work for blind musicians, so they can play it by heart. Blindness, then, reminded me of how to compose music as it was in the beginning: An art that springs from and relies on our ability to sing and hear, with the power to build castles of sound in our memories.

— Osvaldo Golijov

*The Dreams and Prayers of Isaac the Blind* consists of a Prelude, three central movements, and a postlude. Mr. Dundee's transcription transfers the clarinet part to the saxophone.

*Program notes by Laurie Shulman ©2025*

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