



STEVEN BANKS

Saxophone and composer

“Steven Banks — the saxophone’s best friend, fiercest advocate and primary virtuoso in the classical realm. Banks’s mastery is merely his starting point, his artistry springs from the ease and visible delight he takes in moving between modes” – The Washington Post (April 2024)

As a performer and composer, saxophonist Steven Banks is striving to bring his instrument to the heart of the classical music world. He is driven to programme and write music that directly addresses aspects of the human experience and is a devoted and intentional supporter of diverse voices in the future of concert music.

Rick Perdian of ‘Seen and Heard International’ said, “Banks has the potential to be one of the transformational musicians of the twenty-first century.”

In 2024/25, Steven Banks will appear with The Cleveland Orchestra with Stéphane Dénève, Pittsburgh Symphony with Manfred Honeck, Seattle Symphony with Xian Zhang, as well as San Diego Symphony, New Jersey Symphony, and Sarasota Orchestra. In recent seasons, Banks has made his debuts with Boston Symphony Orchestra and National Symphony Orchestra (Washington) as well as the symphony orchestras of Montreal, Cincinnati, Detroit, Kansas City, and New World, Minnesota Orchestra. He has enjoyed working with such conductors as Franz Welser-Möst, Nicholas McGegan, Rafael Payare, John Adams, Jahja Ling, Matthias Pintscher, Alain Altinoglu, Miguel Harth-Bedoya, 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 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 performs the world premiere of Joan Tower’s new saxophone concerto at the Colorado Festival with Peter Oundjian. Over the past two seasons, he has been premiering ‘Diaspora’, the new saxophone concerto by Billy Childs with the 10 commissioning partners, led by Young Concert Artists. The concerto chronicles Childs’ interpretation of the African American experience, inspired by the poetry of Maya Angelou, Nayyirah Waheed, and Claude McKay. In May 2024, Banks performed the world premiere of Augusta Read Thomas’ new concerto ‘Haemosu’s Celestial Chariot Ride’ with the Sejong Soloists at Carnegie’s Zankel Hall.

In recital, Banks has appeared with pianist Xak Bjerken at prestigious venues across the USA, including Davies Hall, Merkin Hall, The Kennedy Center, The Kravis Center, Festival Napa Valley, Chamber Music Sedona, and Parlance Concerts. A keen chamber musician, Banks regularly collaborates with artistic partners such as the St Lawrence String Quartet, Borromeo String Quartet, and Dover Quartet. This season he performs with the Miró Quartet, and on tour with The Verona Quartet 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.

As a composer, Steven Banks has been commissioned by such organisations as Young Concert Artists and the chamber music festivals of Tulsa, Tucson, and Bridgehampton. Banks is passionate about writing for saxophone and string quartet; recent highlights include the world premieres of ‘Reflections and Exaltations’ written for the St Lawrence Quartet and ‘Cries, Sighs and Dreams’, which was premiered at Carnegie Hall with the Borromeo Quartet. His solo works ‘Through My Mother’s Eyes’, written for Hilary Hahn, and ‘Fantasy on Recurring Daydreams’, premiered by pianist Zhu Wang, have received critical acclaim. His saxophone and piano works, including ‘Come As You Are’, are among the most performed pieces by saxophonists in the US.



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, founding the saxophone programme having been appointed as the first saxophone teacher at conservatory level. Banks has previously held positions at the Ithaca College, Baldwin Wallace Conservatory, and the University of Hartford. Banks studied saxophone with Taimur Sullivan, Otis Murphy Jr., and Galvin Crisp, and holds Bachelor and Master of Music degrees from the Indiana University Jacobs School of Music and Northwestern University Bienen School of Music, respectively.

An advocate for diversity and inclusion in music education and performance, Banks was invited to give a talk at the TEDx NorthwesternU 2017 on institutionalised prejudices within the industry. Banks is also an endorsing artist for Conn-Selmer, D'Addario Woodwinds, LefreQue Sound Solutions and Key Leaves.