CLEVELAND
INSTITUTE OF MUSIC

## Steven Banks

Saxophone Faculty, Conservatory

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. As an artist with a commitment to rethinking and expanding the boundaries of classical music, Banks "has the potential to be one of the transformational artists of the twenty-first century." (*Seen and Heard International*)

Banks has recently appeared as concerto soloist under the direction of Peter Oundjian, first at the Colorado Music Festival in performances of works by Glazunov and Ibert, and later with the Colorado Symphony, performing John Adams' Concerto. He also recently appeared on subscription concerts with The Cleveland Orchestra in Philip Glass' *Façades* with John Adams on the podium. Zachary Lewis of Cleveland.com reviewed Banks' Cleveland Orchestra performance: "The suavest offering was by Steven Banks. Out of the few notes that comprise Philip Glass' *Façades*, the saxophonist wove a spellbinding aria. The mellow, mournful line of his soprano sax soared over a gently throbbing orchestra, changing colors with every harmonic shift and bewitching listeners like the flute of a snake charmer."

Additional solo engagements include Mozart's Concerto in C Major with the Oregon Mozart Players and conductor Earl Lee, as well as repeat performances of the Glazunov Concerto with the Erie Philharmonic and the Utah Symphony Summer Series in Park City, Utah. Banks makes his debut at the Spoleto Music Festival in Charleston, South Carolina, with the St. Lawrence String Quartet and will appear in recital at Davies Hall on the Spotlight Series of the San Francisco Symphony.

Banks was also recently chosen to join WQXR's 2022 Artist Propulsion Lab, a program designed to advance the careers of early and mid-career artists and support the future of classical music.

Banks regularly gives recitals at universities, performing arts series and festivals across the United States and abroad. Recital invitations this season include Festival Napa Valley, Usedomer MusikFestival, Artist Series Concerts of Sarasota, Mary Baldwin University, Clemson University, Tannery Pond, Tennessee Arts Academy, Clarion Concerts, Jewish Community Alliance, Cutchogue Library and Aspen Music Festival.

Prior to his invitation as soloist with The Cleveland Orchestra, Banks appeared with the ensemble under conductors including Franz Welser-Möst, 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.

An emerging composer, Banks' music showcases "a unique and ambitious blend of feelings and sounds" and portrays "a deep intimacy" and "a sense of vulnerability" (*Cleveland Classical*). This season, Banks will premiere an original composition for alto saxophone and string quartet in 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.

Banks is an advocate for diversity and inclusion in music education, performance and newly commissioned works in the classical realm. He gave a talk 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 colleagues Anthony Trionfo, flutist, and Randall Goosby, violinist, 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.

Last season, 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. Banks is the first saxophonist to earn a place on the Young Concert Artists roster in its 60-year history, capturing first prize at the 2019 Young Concert Artists International Auditions.

Banks 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.

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