



MIDDLEBURY  
PERFORMING ARTS SERIES

P R E S E N T S

# *Sophie Shao & Friends*

FRIDAY, MARCH 29, 2024

7:30 PM ET

ROBISON HALL, MAHANEY ARTS CENTER



## Sophie Shao and Friends

Bixby Kennedy, Clarinet · Jennifer Frautschi, Violin  
Sophie Shao, Cello · Orion Weiss, Piano

### *Spiral Galaxy*

- I. Spiral Galaxy
- II. Galactic Halo
- III. Sagittarius A\*

David Serkin Ludwig

(b. 1974)

Jennifer Frautschi, Violin · Sophie Shao, Cello · Orion Weiss, Piano

∞ *Intermission* ∞

### *Quatuor pour la fin du temps* (*Quartet for the End of Time*)

- I. Liturgie de cristal (*Crystal Liturgy*)
- II. Vocalise, pour l'Ange qui annonce la fin du Temps  
(*Vocalise, for the Angel Announcing the End of Time*)
- III. Abîme des oiseaux (*The Abyss of the Birds*)
- IV. Intermède (*Interlude*)
- V. Louange à l'Éternité de Jésus (*Praise to the Eternity of Jesus*)
- VI. Danse de la fureur, pour les sept trompettes (*Dance of Wrath, for the Seven Trumpets*)
- VII. Fouillis d'arcs-en-ciel, pour l'Ange qui annonce la fin du Temps  
(*Tangle of Rainbows, for the Angel Announcing the End of Time*)
- VIII. Louange à l'Immortalité de Jésus (*In Praise of the Immortality of Jesus*)

Olivier Messaien

(1908–1992)

Bixby Kennedy, Clarinet · Jennifer Frautschi, Violin  
Sophie Shao, Cello · Orion Weiss, Piano

∞ ∞

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## Program Notes

### **LUDWIG** *Spiral Galaxy*

*Note by composer David Ludwig © 2018*

My third piano trio is inspired by our cosmic home the Milky Way; many of my pieces are motivated by some relationship to science and observation. In this trio, I've used principles from math and physics to guide its musical ideas, shapes, and language. And the individual movements of the piece are each in their own way a direct reflection on specific galactic features.

The eponymous first movement "Spiral Galaxy" begins with a fragmented series of notes that wind outward from a single starting point, growing gradually into an extended musical line, followed by a spiraling aria. The second movement "Galactic Halo" musically describes the sphere of stars that radiates out from the galaxy. This movement is concerned with the slowly evolving colors and static canopy of the firmament held up in the extended sonorities of the trio instruments. The last movement "Sagittarius A\*" is an homage to the great black hole in the middle of the Milky Way, and for this, I've written a swirling fugue that continually pulls downward. At the end of the movement comes the final draw of its gravity into loud disintegration, and then finally, the quiet serenity of oblivion.

On a more (literally) poetic level, I was moved in writing this trio by the idea of the spiral, itself, and how that shape is a metaphor for the growing connections (and complications) of our lives. Lines from two poems occur to me—one from Yeats: "Turning and turning in the widening gyre," and this from Rilke: "I live my life in expanding rings that pull across overall existence. I may not complete the last's ending, but I will try."

*Spiral Galaxy* was commissioned by Arizona Friends of Chamber Music for the Morgenstern Trio, and there is no doubt in my mind that the community that supports the series inspired me to write this piece.

### **MESSAIEN** *Quatuor pour la fin du temps* (*Quartet for the End of Time*)

*Note by Jessie Rothwell, courtesy of the L.A. Philharmonic*

The importance of a composer's early influences is difficult to overestimate. In 1918, one year before Messiaen entered the Paris Conservatoire, his teacher Jehan de Gibon gave him a score of Debussy's opera *Pelléas et Mélisande*. Messiaen described it as "a thunderbolt" and "probably the most decisive influence on me." Perhaps this as much as anything would determine his musical roots, which lay in Debussy's anti-symphonic outlook, rather than the 19th-century symphonic tradition. But even by the time he wrote *Quatuor pour la fin du temps* (*Quartet for the End of Time*), Messiaen had found his own modal system with a completely individual sound.

The quartet came out of—and was originally performed in—very particular circumstances. Near the beginning of World War II, Messiaen was summoned for military service. He was captured in May 1940, and taken to a prisoner-of-war camp at Görlitz in Silesia (now mostly within the borders of Poland). In the dead of winter of 1940–41, he wrote the quartet for the instruments on hand among the camp’s inmates: violin, cello, clarinet, and (himself playing) piano. The first performance took place before a large audience of prisoners. It was his most ambitious work so far—a sequence of eight movements that spoke to this Biblical passage from Revelations:

“I saw a mighty angel descend from heaven, clad in mist; and a rainbow was upon his head. His face was like the sun, his feet like pillars of fire. He set his right foot on the sea, his left foot on the earth, and standing thus on sea and earth he lifted his hand to heaven and swore by Him who liveth for ever and ever, saying: There shall be time no longer; but on the day of the trumpet of the seventh angel, the mystery of God shall be finished.”

*(Revelations 10:1)*

Messiaen’s understanding of this passage speaks not to a vision of the Apocalypse, nor to his own situation as a prisoner, but to the idea of the end of time as the end of past and future and the beginning of eternity. The music was meant to be an extension of the Angel of the Apocalypse’s words, and one with particular musical meaning, for Messiaen was no longer interested in time as rhythm. He did not want to hear steady rhythms like military drums, and instead aspired to rhythms outside of time. Messiaen wrote the following explanations of each segment of the piece:

I. *Liturgy of crystal*. Between the morning hours of three and four, the awakening of the birds: a thrush or a nightingale soloist improvises, amid notes of shining sound and a halo of trills that lose themselves high in the trees. Transpose this to the religious plane: you will have the harmonious silence of heaven.

II. *Vocalise, for the angel who announces the end of Time*. The first and third parts (very short) evoke the power of that mighty angel, his hair a rainbow and his clothing mist, who places one foot on the sea and one foot on the earth. Between these sections are the ineffable harmonies of heaven. From the piano, soft cascades of blue-orange chords, encircling with their distant carillon the plainchant-like recitativo of the violin and cello.

III. *Abyss of the birds*. Clarinet solo. The abyss is Time, with its sadnesses and tediums. The birds are the opposite of Time; they are our desire for light, for stars, for rainbows and for jubilant outpourings of song!

IV. *Interlude*. Scherzo. Of a more outgoing character than the other movements but related to them, nonetheless, by various melodic references.

V. *Praise to the eternity of Jesus*. Jesus is here considered as one with the Word. A long phrase, infinitely slow, by the cello expatiates with love and reverence on the everlastingness of the Word, mighty and dulcet, “which the years can in no way exhaust.” Majestically the melody unfolds itself at a distance



both intimate and awesome. “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.”

VI. *Dance of fury, for the seven trumpets*. Rhythmically the most idiosyncratic movement of the set. The four instruments in unison give the effect of gongs and trumpets (the first six trumpets of the Apocalypse attend various catastrophes, the trumpet of the seventh angel announces the consummation of the mystery of God). Use of extended note values, augmented or diminished rhythmic patterns, non-retrogradable rhythms – a systematic use of values which, read from left to right or from right to left, remain the same. Music of stone, formidable sonority; movement as irresistible as steel, as huge blocks of livid fury or ice-like frenzy. Listen particularly to the terrifying fortissimo of the theme in augmentation and with change of register of its different notes, toward the end of the piece.

VII. *Cluster of rainbows, for the angel who announces the end of Time*. Here certain passages from the second movement return. The mighty angel appears, and in particular the rainbow that envelops him (the rainbow, symbol of peace, of wisdom, of every quiver of luminosity and sound). In my dreamings I hear and see ordered melodies and chords, familiar hues and forms; then, following this transitory stage I pass into the unreal and submit ecstatically to a vortex, a dizzying interpenetration of superhuman sounds and colors. These fiery swords, these rivers of blue-orange lava, these sudden stars: Behold the cluster, behold the rainbow!

VIII. *Praise to the immortality of Jesus*. Expansive violin solo balancing the cello solo of the fifth movement. Why this second glorification? It addresses itself more specifically to the second aspect of Jesus – to Jesus the man, to the Word made flesh, raised up immortal from the dead so as to communicate His life to us. It is total love. Its slow rising to a supreme point is the ascension of man toward his God, of the Son of God toward his Father, of the mortal newly made divine toward paradise.

And I repeat anew what I said above: All this is mere striving and childish stammering if one compares it to the overwhelming grandeur of the subject!



## Biographies

### Jennifer Frautschi, Violin

Two-time GRAMMY nominee and Avery Fisher career grant recipient violinist Jennifer Frautschi has appeared as a soloist with innumerable orchestras including the Cincinnati Symphony, Chicago Symphony, Los Angeles Philharmonic, Milwaukee Symphony, Minnesota Orchestra, and the St. Paul Chamber Orchestra. As a chamber musician, she has performed with the Boston Chamber Music Society and Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center and appeared at Chamber Music



Northwest, La Jolla Summerfest, Music@Menlo, Tippet Rise Art Center, Toronto Summer Music, and the Bridgehampton, Charlottesville, Lake Champlain, Moab, Ojai, Santa Fe, Seattle, and Spoleto Music Festivals.

Frautschi's extensive discography includes several discs for Naxos: the Stravinsky Violin Concerto with the Philharmonia Orchestra of London, conducted by the legendary Robert Craft; and two GRAMMY-nominated recordings with the Fred Sherry Quartet: Schoenberg's Concerto for String Quartet and Orchestra and the Schoenberg Third String Quartet. Her most recent releases are with pianist John Blacklow on Albany Records: the first devoted to the three sonatas of Robert Schumann; the second, *American Duos*, an exploration of recent additions to the violin and piano repertoire by contemporary American composers Barbara White, Steven Mackey, Elena Ruehr, Dan Coleman, and Stephen Hartke. She also recorded three widely praised CDs for Artek: an orchestral recording of the Prokofiev concerti with Gerard Schwarz and the Seattle Symphony; the violin music of Ravel and Stravinsky; and 20<sup>th</sup> century works for solo violin. Other recordings include a disc of Romantic Horn Trios, with hornist Eric Ruske and pianist Stephen Prutsman; and the Stravinsky Duo Concertant with pianist Jeremy Denk.

Born in Pasadena, California, Frautschi attended the Colburn School, Harvard, the New England Conservatory, and the Juilliard School. She performs on a 1722 Antonio Stradivarius violin known as the "ex-Cadiz," on generous loan from a private American foundation with support from Rare Violins in Consortium. She currently teaches in the graduate program at Stony Brook University.

### **Bixby Kennedy, Clarinet**

Admired for his "marvelous ringing tone" (Joseph Dalton, *Albany Times Union*) Bixby Kennedy is one of the most versatile clarinetists of his generation. He has performed concerti with orchestras including the Minnesota Orchestra, Houston Symphony, and New Haven Symphony Orchestra. As a chamber musician, Bixby has performed throughout the US and Europe in venues including Carnegie Hall, Alice Tully Hall, The Kennedy Center, Marlboro Music Festival, and is the clarinetist for the "explosive" New York City-based chamber ensemble Frisson. He has appeared as a guest artist with Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra, Orpheus Chamber Orchestra, and The Knights. As an orchestral musician, Bixby has performed with the MET Opera and NY Philharmonic in addition to regular engagements with the Albany and New Haven Symphony Orchestras. On period instruments, Bixby has performed classical repertoire on original and replica instruments throughout the US with Grand Harmonie Orchestra. He is a former member of Ensemble Connect and works as a teaching artist throughout the US. As an arranger, his works have been performed by Orpheus Chamber Orchestra, Ensemble Schumann, Frisson, Ensemble Connect, and Symphony in C. He loves traveling, trying new foods, laughing, hiking, and playing tennis. Bixby performs exclusively on Backun instruments.



## **David Ludwig, Composer**

David Serkin Ludwig's first memory was singing Beatles songs with his sister; his second was hearing his grandfather perform at Carnegie Hall; foreshadowing a diverse career collaborating with many of today's leading musicians, filmmakers, and writers. His choral work "The New Colossus," opened the private prayer service for President Obama's second inauguration. The next year NPR Music named him in the world's "Top 100 Composers Under Forty." He holds positions and residencies with nearly two dozen orchestras and music festivals in the US and abroad.



Ludwig has received commissions and notable performances from many of the most recognized artists and ensembles of our time, including the Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Minnesota, and National Symphony Orchestras, Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, the Dresden Music Festival, as well as Jonathan Biss, Jeremy Denk, Jennifer Koh, Jaime Laredo, David Shifrin, eighth blackbird, the Dover and Borromeo Quartets, Imani Winds, and the PRISM Saxophone Quartet and conductors Yannick Nezet Sequin, Manfred Honeck, Juanjo Mena, and JoAnn Falletta.

This year Ludwig was honored by the American Academy of Arts and Letters as recipient of their annual award in music. In 2022 Ludwig was awarded the Stoeger Prize from the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, the largest of its kind for chamber music. He received the prestigious 2018 Pew Center for the Arts and Heritage Fellowship, as well as the First Music Award, and is a two-time recipient of the Independence Foundation Fellowship, a Theodore Presser Foundation Career Grant, and awards from New Music USA, the American Composers Forum, American Music Center, Detroit Chamber Winds, and the National Endowment for the Arts.

He has been Composer-in-Residence with the Lake Champlain Chamber Music Festival since its inception in 2008. A New Music USA-supported residency with the Vermont Symphony led to his position as permanent New Music Advisor following four years as composer with the orchestra.

In 2021 Ludwig was named a Steinway Artist by Steinway and Sons. He served on the composition faculty of The Curtis Institute of Music for nearly two decades before being appointed Dean and Director of Music of The Juilliard School in June 2021. He lives in New York City with his wife, acclaimed violinist Bella Hristova, and their four beloved cats.

## Sophie Shao, Cello

Cellist Sophie Shao, the winner of the prestigious Avery Fisher Career Grant and top prizes at the Rostropovich and Tchaikovsky competitions, is a versatile and passionate artist whose performances the *New York Times* has described as “eloquent, powerful,” the *LA Times* noted as “impressive” and the *Washington Post* called “deeply satisfying.” Shao has appeared as soloist to critical acclaim throughout the United States and has commissioned Howard Shore’s cello concerto *Mythic Gardens*, performing the premiere with Leon Botstein and the American Symphony Orchestra, the UK premiere with Keith Lockhart and the BBC Concert Orchestra, and European premiere with Ludwig Wicki and the 21st Century Orchestra. She also premiered Richard Wilson’s *The Cello Has Many Secrets* and Shih-Hui Chen’s multimedia concerto *Our Son is Not Coming Home to Dinner*.



Shao has given recitals in Suntory Hall in Tokyo, the Philadelphia Chamber Music Society, Middlebury College, Phillips Collection, University of Notre Dame, Lyric Society of New York, at Lincoln Center, Bargemusic, and the complete Bach Suites at Union College. Her dedication to chamber music has conceived her popular “Sophie Shao and Friends” groups and performs in festivals around the country such as Chamber Music Northwest and Festival Mosaic. She has attended the Marlboro Music Festival, Ravinia Steans Institute, and is a member of Chamber Music Society Two, a young artist residency of the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center. She is a dedicated music educator, presenting a lecture “Why Bach is Still Relevant in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century” and recital at the National Gallery of Art; artist-in-residence at the Zeta Charter Schools in the Bronx; masterclasses at the University of Michigan, Juilliard, Indiana University; and is on faculty at the University of Connecticut, where she teaches cello, chamber music, and organizes an annual UConn Cello Day. She has previously been on the faculty of Vassar College, Princeton University, and Bard Conservatory.

Shao’s recordings include the Complete Bach Suites, Andre Previn’s *Reflections* for Cello and English Horn and Orchestra on EMI Classics ; Richard Wilson’s *Diablerie* and *Brash Attacks*; Barbara White’s *My Barn Having Burned to the Ground* and *I Can Now See the Moon* on Albany Records; Howard Shore’s original score for the movie *The Betrayal* on Howe Records; Marlboro Music Festival’s 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary on Bridge Records; Herschel Garfein’s *The Layers* on Asic Records; and Howard Shore’s *Mythic Gardens* on Sony Classical. Shao’s new solo album, *CanCan Macabre*, has just been released on Centaur Records.

A native of Houston, Texas, Shao began playing the cello at age six and studied with Shirley Trepel, the principal cellist of the Houston Symphony. At age thirteen she enrolled at the Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia, studying cello with David Soyer and chamber music with Felix Galimir. After graduating from the Curtis Institute, she continued her cello studies with Aldo Parisot at Yale University, receiving a B.A. in Religious Studies from Yale College and an M.M. from the Yale School of Music, where she was enrolled as a Paul and Daisy Soros Fellow.



## Orion Weiss, Piano

One of the most sought-after soloists and chamber music collaborators of his generation, Orion Weiss is widely regarded as a “brilliant pianist” (*The New York Times*) with “powerful technique and exceptional insight” (*The Washington Post*). He has dazzled audiences with his passionate, lush sound and performed with dozens of orchestras in North America including the Chicago Symphony, Boston Symphony, Los Angeles Philharmonic, and New York Philharmonic.



Highlights of Weiss’s 2023/2024 season include concerts led by conductor Michael Tilson Thomas with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra and Ken-David Masur with the National Symphony Orchestra. He performs alongside violinist Augustin Hadelich in concerts at the Kennedy Center and Toronto’s Royal Conservatory of Music. He also appears in a May 2024 performance at Carnegie Hall.

Recent seasons have seen Weiss in performances for the Lucerne Festival, Denver Friends of Chamber Music, Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, the Kennedy Center, 92<sup>nd</sup> Street Y, and at the Aspen, Bard, Ravinia, and Grand Teton summer festivals. Other highlights include a performance of Beethoven’s Triple Concerto with the Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra; a livestream with the Minnesota Orchestra; the release of his recording of Christopher Rouse’s *Seeing*; the first two installments of his Arc recital trilogy; a recording of Korngold’s Left Hand concerto and other works with Leon Botstein and TON; and recordings of Gershwin’s complete works for piano and orchestra with the Buffalo Philharmonic and JoAnn Falletta. Weiss can be heard on the Naxos, Telos, Bridge, First Hand, Yarlung, and Artek labels.

Known for his affinity for chamber music, Weiss performs regularly with violinists Augustin Hadelich, William Hagen and James Ehnes; pianists Michael Brown and Shai Wosner; cellist Julie Albers; and the Ariel, Parker, and Pacifica Quartets. In recent seasons, he has also performed with the San Francisco Symphony, Philadelphia Orchestra, Pittsburgh Symphony, Toronto Symphony Orchestra, National Arts Centre Orchestra, Israel Philharmonic Orchestra, and Orpheus Chamber Orchestra.

A native of Ohio, Weiss attended the Cleveland Institute of Music and made his Cleveland Orchestra debut performing Liszt’s Piano Concerto No. 1 in 1999. That same year, with less than 24 hours’ notice, Weiss stepped in to replace André Watts for a performance of Shostakovich’s Piano Concerto No. 2 with the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra. Weiss’s list of awards includes the Classical Recording Foundation’s Young Artist of the Year, Gilmore Young Artist Award, an Avery Fisher Career Grant, and more. In 2004, he graduated from the Juilliard School, where he studied with Emanuel Ax.

Learn more [www.orionweiss.com](http://www.orionweiss.com).

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