

THE KNIGHTS

SUNDAY, JULY 23 | 8 PM | THE BREAKERS

This concert is made possible through the generous support of
Ms. Terry Morgenthaler and Mr. Patrick Kerins.

Eric Jacobsen, *Artistic Director* and conductor

Colin Jacobsen, *Artistic Director* and violin

Alex Gonzalez, violin

Alex Sopp, flute

VIOLIN

Colin Jacobsen

Christina Courtin

Alex Fortes

Alex Gonzalez

Yaira Matyakubova

Rachel Shapiro

VIOLA

Kyle Armbrust

Mario Gotoh

Jocelin Pan

CELLO

Jane Cords-O'Hara

Caitlin Sullivan

BASS

Lizzie Burns

FLUTE

Alex Sopp

CLARINET

Agnes Marchione

BASSOON

Edward Burns

PIANO

Blair McMillen

ANTONIO VIVALDI

Flute Concerto in G minor, Op. 10, No. 2, RV 439 "La Notte"

I. Largo

II. Fantasmii: Presto

III. Largo

IV. Presto

V. Il sonno: Largo

VI. Allegro

(Approximate duration 7 minutes)

featuring Alex Sopp, flute

ANNA CLYNE

Prince of Clouds

(Approximate duration 14 minutes)

featuring Alex Gonzalez and Colin Jacobsen, violins

BÉLA BARTÓK
arr. ALEX FORTES

Romanian Folk Dances, Sz. 56
I. Joc cu băță. Allegro moderato
II. Brâul. Allegro
III. Pê-loc. Andante
IV. Buciumeana. Moderato
V. Poargă românească. Allegro
VI. Mărunțel. Allegro
(Approximate duration 7 minutes)

INTERMISSION

AARON COPLAND

Appalachian Spring
(Approximate duration 27 minutes)

COLIN JACOBSEN

A Shadow Under Every Light
Based on traditional folk songs from Slovakia and Moravia collected by Leoš Janáček
(Approximate duration 20 minutes)

We're thrilled to bring The Knights for the first time to Newport and share with you the kind of program we love to create, full of the old and the new, crossing cultures and centuries and finding unexpected connections along the way.

One thread that we follow this evening is soloistic virtuosity and the interplay of instruments as represented by Antonio Vivaldi's flute concerto as well as Prince of Clouds, a recent work by the British-born composer Anna Clyne. For Vivaldi's work, we're delighted to feature Knights flutist Alex Sopp and in Anna Clyne's work, Alex Gonzalez and myself are the duo soloists.

In today's program, we also explore the ways in which the rich sources of various folk music and oral tradition can be interpreted and digested by composers and serve as the wellspring of new compositions. In the case of Copland's beloved Appalachian Spring, the Shaker hymn Simple Gifts, which appears at the end of the piece, speaks to the whole work's aesthetic. Bartok's Romanian Folk Dances creates a masterful, short narrative arc through a suite of dances based on tunes he collected as an ethnomusicologist making field recordings in the Transylvania region of Romania. My piece, A Shadow Under Every Light, is based on similar ethnomusicological work, done at a similar time, by the Czech composer Leoš Janáček in traditional Slovakian and Moravian folk songs. - Colin Jacobsen

Antonio Vivaldi (1678 - 1741):

Flute Concerto in G minor, Op. 10, No. 2, RV 439 "La Notte"

Among Vivaldi's surviving works are some 500 concertos for almost every imaginable combination of instruments. Vivaldi's expertise in writing concertos is quite clear from the instrumental exchanges he creates between the ritornello and the orchestral tutti. While the ensemble comes together perfectly in the tutti, the soloist is really given a chance to soar in the ritornelli, showcasing the instrument to its fullest.

Vivaldi was one of the first composers to focus on the transverse flute as a viable solo instrument, and he may have even been the first to dedicate a whole publication to the flute. He recognized the transverse flute's technical and expressive possibilities and used it in a wide variety of genres. Vivaldi was eager to make money and saw he could take advantage of the flute's popularity to rewrite material he previously used for other instruments. Including

descriptive, programmatic elements to the movement names was a good way he could boost sales, as he had already discovered when he published *The Four Seasons* a few years earlier.

La Notte is unique in the Op. 10 concertos for several reasons: it is the only concerto in the group in a minor key, some of its movements have descriptive titles, and it is the only concerto in the group which has a movement, the 5th movement, without a solo section. In addition, it has six movements, alternating slow/fast, while all the other concertos of Op. 10 have three movements: fast/slow/fast. It is also probably the most difficult of the concertos of Opus 10 because of the technical challenges of the 4th movement. The 5th movement of *La Notte* is taken from two sections of the 2nd movement of *Autumn from The Four Seasons*, transposed down a tone; interestingly enough, the 2nd movement of *Autumn in The Four Seasons* also depicts "sleep" ("*sweet slumber*").

The flute concerto is among the most virtuosic of Vivaldi's work. There are runs demanding very skilled articulation and long passages where the flutist must play slow, protracted tones that are challenging in their own way. Vivaldi depicts the theme of "the night," highlighted by the depiction of supernatural fears, in six short movements, alternating fast and slow. The first movement, *Largo*, contains long rather disconcerting flute trills with constant dotted rhythms in the accompaniment. Ghosts are represented in *Fantasma*, ("Phantasms") *Presto*, with ascending triplets. A brief slow movement, *Largo* provides some respite with calm. The ghosts come back in the next movement, *Presto*, with string tremolos. Finally, sleep arrives in the very beautiful "Il sonno," ("Sleep") *Largo*, the penultimate movement, with the flute's protracted notes indicating slumber, but this sleep, as the dissonances make clear, is not necessarily without some agitation. The speed of the final movement, *Allegro*, indicates that the sleep has concluded but not without a continuing sense of a jitteriness brought on by the past nightmares.

Anna Clyne (b. 1980): *Prince of Clouds*

When writing *Prince of Clouds* I was contemplating the presence of musical lineage—a family-tree of sorts that passes from generation to generation. This transfer of knowledge and inspiration between generations is a beautiful gift. Composed specifically for Jennifer Koh and her mentor at the Curtis Institute of Music, Jaime Laredo, this thread was in the foreground of my imagination as a dialogue between the soloists and ensemble. As a composer, working with such virtuosic, passionate and unique musicians is also another branch of this musical chain.
- Anna Clyne

Prince of Clouds harkens back to Baroque-style composition and features a kind of musical purity. Canonic lines in the solo violin parts create both a dialogue between the soloists and between the soloists with the ensemble. It was inspired by Bach's celebrated *Double Concerto* BWV 1043, a landmark work of the Baroque repertory for strings.

Prince of Clouds was co-commissioned by the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, IRIS Orchestra, Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra, and the Curtis Institute of Music. *Prince of Clouds* was composed at the Hermitage Artist Retreat in Summer 2012 and premiered November 3, 2012 with the IRIS Orchestra, conductor Michael Stern, and soloists Jennifer Koh and Jaime Laredo, in Germantown, Tennessee.

Béla Bartók (1881 – 1945): Romanian Folk Dances

In 1905, Bela Bartók began the study of folk music of Hungary, which was to be the central element in his work during the remaining forty years of his life. In collaboration with the composer Zoltan Kodaly, Bartók collected and examined the music of the itinerant gypsies and peasants

fixed to the land in an area that stretched from Slovakia to Romania. He assimilated the styles of this music so thoroughly that it became impossible to tell the authentic folk tunes from the original material in his work. It was a progression, as one biographer brilliantly put it, "from real to imaginary folk music."

In 1915, he wrote this set of *Romanian Folk Dances* for piano, using material he had gathered in 1910 and 1912 in Transylvania. In 1917, he arranged the work for small orchestra. It has been one of his most popular compositions ever since, and has been arranged for string orchestra, for violin and piano, and other ensembles. There are seven dances in the set: *Stick Dance*, *Sash Dance*, *In One Spot*, *Horn Dance*, *Romanian Polka*, and two called simply *Fast Dance*. Bartók heard gypsy fiddlers play the first and fourth dances, Romanian peasants on folk flutes play the second and third, and gypsy and peasant fiddlers play the last three.

In Bartók's collection of Romanian folk tunes, issued posthumously in the 1960's, there are some 3,400 melodies, more than a thousand of them instrumental dance tunes that accompanied the dancing in Transylvanian village squares on Sundays. In 1915, he assembled some of them into a suite for piano that he entitled "*Romanian Folk Dances from Hungary*," described as a very simple arrangement for educational use, and in 1917, he made the orchestral version from which a string orchestra version has been derived. His friend, Zoltán Székely created a popular violin arrangement, which is now frequently also played on the guitar.

The music begins with *Stick Dance*, a high-kicking dance that was originally a Gypsy duet for a folk string instrument and violin. *Waistband Dance* existed as a popular round dance whose melody Bartók first heard played on a peasant flute and originally gave to the clarinet. In *One Spot* denotes a dance in which a couple dances together, the man with arms akimbo and the woman's hands on his shoulders. Next comes a *Hornpipe Dance*, but the meaning of the title remains obscure because Bartók took the tune from a Gypsy fiddler. Following is A *Romanian Polka* collected in the hometown of the friend to whom he dedicated this work. At the end comes a pair of *Fast Dances* (also known as *Short and Sweet*).

Aaron Copland (1900 – 1990): Appalachian Spring

Appalachian Spring has an iconic stature. It is the work most emblematic of Copland's name, having inspired more admiration from critics and listeners than any of his other music. Some of this fame is probably due to its intertwined history with the work of the famous 20th century modern dancer, Martha Graham. When the Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge Foundation in the Library of Congress commissioned a dance work from Graham in 1942, she turned to Aaron Copland for the music for the ballet that she based on the childhood memories of her 90-year-old grandmother, who had spent most of her life on a Pennsylvania farm.

In 1944, Copland delivered a score to her entitled Ballet for Martha, a name which subsequently became the work's subtitle. Graham found the title she wanted for her ballet in the poem "The Dance," from Hart Crane's cycle *The Bridge*. Graham said she chose the title solely because she liked the sound of it, even though it had no connection with either the location or scenario of the ballet. Copland himself commented, "Over and over again, people come up to me after seeing the ballet on stage and say, 'Mr. Copland, when I see that ballet and when I hear your music, I can just see the Appalachians and I just feel spring.' Well, I'm willing if they are!" The ballet *Appalachian Spring* became one of Graham's most durable works and one of the best loved of all-American compositions. "*Appalachian Spring* would never have existed without her special personality," Copland said in 1974. "The music was created for her and it reflects the unique quality of a human being."

The action of the ballet, as described in a note in the score, concerns “a pioneer celebration, in spring, around a newly built farmhouse in the Pennsylvania hills, in the early part of the last [sic. 19th] century. The bride-to-be and the young farmer-husband enact the emotions, joyful and apprehensive, that their new domestic partnership invites. An older neighbor suggests now and then the rocky confidence of experience. A revivalist and his followers remind the new householders of the strange and terrible aspects of human fate. At the end, the couple are left, quiet and strong, in their new house.” In an interview published in 1975, Graham added, “It is essentially the coming of a new life. It has to do with growing things. Spring is the loveliest and saddest time of year.”

Copland consciously chose a populist style in an attempt to create a musical language that was fundamentally American and that spoke directly to an American audience. With immediate and simple music, Copland was also able to display his consummate skill and subtlety. “*Appalachian Spring* is generally thought to be folk-inspired,” Copland said, “but the Shaker tune ‘*Tis the Gift to be Simple*’ is the only folk material actually quoted in the piece. Rhythms and melodies that suggest a certain ambiance, and the use of specific folk themes, are after all not the same thing. Nevertheless, the score displays an absorption in the vernacular, as Pollock, Copland’s biographer says, “suitable to a script so steeped in a wide range of American myth and folklore. It often gives the impression of folk music.”

Copland’s *Appalachian Spring* ballet divides into two parts that “seemingly portray peace and war.” In May 1945 Copland arranged this orchestral suite from the ballet, cutting pieces here and there and highlighting the work’s “more idyllic side.” He requires a relatively small orchestra but larger than the one he had used for the original ballet. The larger group provided a new color and brilliance to the work.

The complete *Appalachian Spring* was first performed at the Library of Congress in Washington on October 30, 1944, by a cast that included Martha Graham, Merce Cunningham and Erick Hawkins with sets by Noguchi and Graham. The concert was an 80th birthday tribute to the patron of the arts Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge, who had made a tremendous impact on contemporary American music. The music for the ballet was originally scored for an ensemble of thirteen instruments: flute, clarinet, bassoon, piano, four violins, two violas, two cellos and bass. Those were all the instruments there was room for in the tiny pit of the small auditorium. When he created the suite, Copland expanded the instrumentation to encompass a full orchestra.

Colin Jacobsen (b. 1978): *A Shadow Under Every Light*

Violinist and composer Colin Jacobsen is, according to the *Washington Post* “one of the most interesting figures on the classical music scene.” For the last twenty years, Jacobsen has created an exceptional position for himself, collaborating with a wide range of artists from diverse traditions and disciplines, and he constantly searched for new ways to connect with audiences.

In the suite *A Shadow Under Every Light*, Jacobsen arranged six traditional folk tunes from Moravia and Slovakia that the Czech composer Janáček captured in field recordings in the first decade of the 20th century. In the more concerto-like solo parts, Jacobsen references virtuosic folk fiddling. The work had its world premiere on Sept. 4, 2022 at the Clark Museum in Williamstown, MA.

The six pieces are:

1. Nezabudka- Forget-Me-Not
2. A Tam Dolu Pri Marase- And Down There by the Maras
3. Neumrem Ja Na Zemi- I Won't Die on the Ground
4. V Tem Trencanskem Zamku- In That Trencian Castle
5. Z Hvezdy Vyslo Slunce- The Sun Came Out of the Star
6. Otee Nas Nebesky- Prayer for Rain

"I've always loved the iconoclastic music of Leoš Janáček, the Czech composer, musical theorist, folklorist and teacher who wrote much of his most widely regarded music in the early decades of the 20th century. I knew that the atmosphere of Slovakian, Moravian and other Eastern European folk music infused his work, and that he even notated people's speech patterns for musical motifs. But while digging further into his music and background while performing his string quartet no. 1 ("The Kreutzer Sonata"), I discovered that he made field recordings, (much as Hungarian composers Bartók and Kodály did around the same time), traveling to small villages with early wax cylinder recording devices and capturing the music of the people, notating, and digesting that music as part of the background to his own compositional process. Through the university library system, I was able to locate an out-of-print-album of some of these field recordings and have made a suite of these songs for solo violin and chamber orchestra, tipping my hat both to Janáček, as well as to the structure and spirit behind Bartók's *Romanian Folk Dances*. After an improvisatory solo violin cadenza, you'll hear a voice coming out of the mists of time from a small Slovakian village, which starts us off on our journey through six Slavik and Moravian folk songs...". - Colin Jacobsen



The Knights are a collective of adventurous musicians dedicated to transforming the orchestral experience and eliminating barriers between audiences and music. Driven by an open-minded spirit of camaraderie and exploration, they inspire listeners with vibrant programs rooted in the classical tradition and passion for artistic discovery. The Knights evolved from late-night chamber music reading parties with friends at the home of violinist Colin Jacobsen and cellist Eric Jacobsen. The Jacobsen brothers together serve as artistic directors of The Knights, with Eric Jacobsen as conductor.

Proud to be known as "one of Brooklyn's sterling cultural products... known far beyond the borough for their relaxed virtuosity and expansive repertory" (*The New Yorker*), the orchestra has toured extensively across the United States and Europe since their founding in 2007. The Knights are celebrated globally, appearing across the world's most prestigious stages, including those at Tanglewood Music Center, Ravinia Music Festival, the Kennedy Center, the Vienna Musikverein, and Hamburg's Elbphilharmonie. The orchestra has collaborated with many renowned soloists including Yo-Yo Ma, Dawn Upshaw, Béla Fleck, and Gil Shaham.

After a whirlwind eleven-stop European tour with violinist Ray Chen, The Knights look forward to making music closer to home this summer. Artistic collaborators in the 2022-23 season include 2022 GRAMMY-winning countertenor Anthony Roth Costanzo, violinist Ray Chen, and genre-shattering pianist/composer Aaron Diehl, with whom The Knights will release

an album of Mary Lou Williams' Zodiac Suite in 2023. For the latest on our season and a complete list of artistic partners and collaborative projects, please visit our website: theknightsnyc.com.

The Knights are proud to share a three-concert series presented by Carnegie Hall for the upcoming 2023-24 season. Programs include new works commissioned as part of the Rhapsody project, a multi-year initiative inspired by the 2024 centennial of George Gershwin's Rhapsody in Blue. The Knights' Carnegie Hall concerts in 2023-24 will feature Chris Thile, Wu Man, Magos Herrera, and Jeffrey Kahane, among other esteemed collaborators.



Violinist and composer **Colin Jacobsen** is "one of the most interesting figures on the classical music scene" (Washington Post). Since the early 2000's, Jacobsen has forged an intriguing path in the cultural landscape

of our time, collaborating with an astonishingly wide range of artists across diverse traditions and disciplines while constantly looking for new ways to connect with audiences. For his work as a founding member of two innovative and influential ensembles – the string quartet Brooklyn Rider and orchestra The Knights – Jacobsen was selected from among the nation's top visual, performing, media, and literary artists to receive a prestigious and substantial United States Artists Fellowship. He is also active as an Avery Fisher Career Grant-winning soloist and has toured with Silkroad since its founding by cellist Yo-Yo Ma in 2000 at Tanglewood. As a composer he has written pieces for an eclectic mix of artists including pianist Emanuel Ax, singers Anne-Sofie Von Otter and Jamie Barton, banjo player Bela Fleck, mandolinist Avi Avital, clarinetist Kinan Azmeh, choreographers John Heginbotham and

Brian Brooks, theater group Compagnia de' Colombari and the Brooklyn Youth Chorus. Starting in the 2022/23 season, Jacobsen assumes the position of Artistic Director of Santa Fe Pro Musica, an organization with which he has had a fruitful long term association as a guest soloist and leader.



Just 40 years old and already well-established as one of classical music's most exciting and innovative young conductors, **Eric Jacobsen** combines fresh interpretations of the traditional canon with cutting-edge

collaborations across musical genres. Hailed by the *New York Times* as "an interpretive dynamo," Eric, as both a conductor and a cellist, has built a reputation for engaging audiences with innovative and collaborative programming.

Eric is artistic director and co-founder of The Knights, the uniquely adventurous NYC-based chamber orchestra. The ensemble, founded with his brother, violinist Colin Jacobsen, grew out of late-night music reading parties with friends, good food and drink, and conversation. As conductor, Jacobsen has led the "consistently inventive, infectiously engaged indie ensemble" (*New York Times*) at venues throughout New York City and surrounding areas, at major summer festivals, and on tour nationally and internationally. Under Jacobsen's baton, The Knights have developed an extensive recording collection, which includes the critically acclaimed albums *Azul*, with longtime collaborator Yo-Yo Ma, as well as a recent featuring Gil Shaham in performances of the Beethoven and Brahms Violin Concertos.

Eric is also Music Director of the Virginia Symphony Orchestra and the Orlando Philharmonic Orchestra, continuing to pioneer both orchestra's programming and

community engagement in new and exciting directions.

Eric brings joy, storytelling, and a touch of humor to what he describes as “musical conversations” that delight audiences around the world, including those who don’t traditionally attend classical music concerts. Jacobsen is married to Grammy-winning, singer-songwriter Aoife O’Donovan and they have a five-year-old daughter, Ivy Jo.



Described by the *Viborg Folkeblad* as a “true virtuoso...[that] left the audience almost breathless,” violinist **Alex Gonzalez** (he/him) enjoys a versatile career as a chamber musician, ensemble leader, and

educator. An avid chamber musician, Alex has enjoyed performances at notable venues domestically and abroad including Carnegie Hall, the National Gallery of Art, Queen Elizabeth Hall, Mount Moiwa Forest Gallery, Kirsten Kjærs Museum, Lund University, and Oxford University. His performances have been broadcast on BBC Radio 3, WQXR, and the SkyArts Television Network. Alex has appeared at numerous music festivals including the Chatsworth Arts Festival, Sitka Music Festival, and the Thy Chamber Music Festival as well as their bi-annual Autumn Tour. Additionally, Alex was a recipient of the John Celentano Award for Excellence in Chamber Music upon graduation from the Eastman School of Music.

Alex became a member of The Knights in 2020 after spending several seasons as a guest musician with the ensemble. Alex is also a longtime member and current concertmaster of the Sphinx Virtuosi, touring extensively around the United States and abroad with the ensemble. He has also performed with various ensembles including the Saint Paul Chamber

Orchestra, Minnesota Orchestra, and Cabrillo Festival Orchestra, among others. Alex has enjoyed collaborations with the Chineke! Foundation, appearing across the United Kingdom and Europe as both guest concertmaster and chamber musician with various Chineke! ensembles. A former member of the New World Symphony, Alex regularly served as concertmaster to Michael Tilson Thomas and other distinguished guests. Additionally, he was honored to perform as part of a celebration to MTT at the 2019 Kennedy Center Honors.

Alex currently serves on the faculty of the University of Colorado Boulder College of Music as Assistant Professor of Violin. He has previously taught at Carnegie Hall’s National Youth Orchestra Program (NYO2), the Sphinx Performance Academy at both the Juilliard School and the Cleveland Institute of Music, and as guest faculty for the Iberacademy in Medellín, Colombia. He has also enjoyed giving solo and chamber music masterclasses at North Carolina School of the Arts, Montclair State University, University of Oregon, and the Cleveland Institute of Music, among others.

Alex completed his formal studies at the Eastman School of Music, Rice University, and Carnegie Mellon University. His principal mentors include Shakeh Ghoukasian, Oleh Krysa, Paul Kantor, and Cyrus Forough. Alex performs on a violin made for him by Mario Miralles in 2017, the commission of which was made possible in part by a Sphinx MPower Artist Grant.



Alex Sopp is a musician and artist living in Brooklyn. As the flutist of *yMusic*, The Knights, NOW Ensemble, and the Berlin-based group *Between Worlds Ensemble*, the *New York Times* has

praised her playing as “exquisite” and

“beautifully nuanced.” Comfortable in many genres, Alex has commissioned, premiered, toured, and recorded extensively with some of the most exciting composers and songwriters of our time, including Paul Simon, Nico Muhly, Sufjan Stevens, Ben Folds, Jónsi of Sigur Ros, Philip Glass, Andrew Norman, Bruce Hornsby, Son Lux, Gabriel Kahane, St. Vincent, Anohni, Judd Greenstein, José González, My Brightest Diamond, The Dirty Projectors, and The National. A sought-after soloist, Alex made her Carnegie Hall debut with the New York Youth Symphony, has appeared as a soloist with the New York Philharmonic, The Oregon Symphony, and the Cincinnati Symphony, and has commissioned and premiered concerti with The Knights at Carnegie Hall.

In addition to playing the flute, Alex is a singer and a visual artist. She will release a record of her original songs later this year - stay tuned! She was a member of Paul Simon's band for his "Farewell Tour", providing flute, whistles, and vocal harmonies to the iconic songwriter's body of work. Her voice can be heard on many of the records her groups have collaborated with. Alex grew up in St. Croix, Virgin Islands and studied at The Juilliard School.