

THE KNIGHTS

the ground beneath our feet





the ground beneath our feet

**I. STEVE REICH: DUET FOR
TWO VIOLINS & STRINGS (6:03)**

Ariana Kim, Violin

Guillaume Pirard, Violin

**J.S. BACH: CONCERTO FOR VIOLIN
& OBOE IN C MINOR, BWV 1060R**

2. I. Allegro (4:42)

3. II. Adagio (4:31)

4. III. Allegro (3:22)

Johnny Gandelsman, Violin

Adam Hollander, Oboe

**IGOR STRAVINSKY: CONCERTO
IN E-FLAT, "DUMBARTON OAKS"**

5. I. Tempo giusto (4:49)

6. II. Allegretto (4:22)

7. III. Con moto (6:05)

**COLIN JACOBSEN / SIAMAK AGHAEI:
CONCERTO FOR SANTUR, VIOLIN,
& ORCHESTRA**

Siamak Aghaei, Santur

Colin Jacobsen, Violin

8. Prelude: Invocation of a Bakhshi (3:31)

9. Part I: Twisting, the Vine is
Strengthened (3:56)

10. Part II: The Circle Tends Inward... (7:12)

11. Part III: And Outward (11:40)

**12. THE KNIGHTS: ...THE GROUND
BENEATH OUR FEET (15:07)**

Collaboratively written by Alex Sopp,
Michael P. Atkinson, Zach Cohen,
Shawn Conley, Colin Jacobsen,
and Johnny Gandelsman.

Featuring "Fade Away," music, lyrics,
and vocals by Christina Courtin.

**JOSEPH HAYDN: SYMPHONY NO. 8
IN G MAJOR, "LE SOIR"**

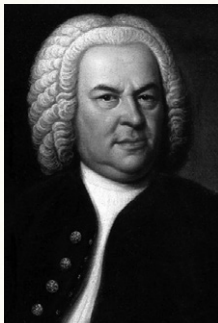
13. IV. La Tempesta: Presto (5:01)

NOTES ON THE ALBUM by THE KNIGHTS

This album is a celebration of the *concerto grosso*, a musical conversation in which two or more instruments are invited to lead a dialogue with the larger whole. A form with its roots in the Baroque period and reaching an apotheosis in the likes of **J.S. Bach (1685-1750)**, represented here by his Violin and Oboe Concerto, the combination of virtuosity and intricate interaction that are hallmarks of the *concerto grosso* has attracted composers ever since.

The *concerto grosso* has always been a product of distinct personalities. From Corelli forward, composers wrote music that played to the strengths of their friends, colleagues, and employers. By revisiting this format today, we explore the amalgamation of personalities and perspectives that is The Knights, with individual voices coming to the fore throughout the album. Taking direct inspiration from Bach are **Steve Reich's (1937-)** Duet for Two Violins and Strings and **Igor Stravinsky's (1882-1971)** "Dumbarton Oaks" Concerto, which was named after the historic estate where this live recording took place, seventy-five years later. Following Stravinsky's masterpiece are two new *concerti grossi* by members of The Knights, grounded in myriad traditions from East to West: the world premiere of a Concerto for Santur, Violin, and Orchestra by myself (1978-) and Siamak Aghaei (1974-), and ...*the ground beneath our feet*, a final party in which members of the ensemble riff on the repeated bass line of an ancient dance.

—COLIN JACOBSEN



BACH



STEVE REICH

For me, Steve Reich's **Duet for Two Violins and Strings (1993)** instantly evokes joy. There is a sublime uplift that comes from the marriage of such seamless orchestral accompaniment and the passing of Reich's joyful melodic motives. Although the work is brief in comparison to many others in his output, Reich creates a sense of complexity and simplicity all the same. The sometimes dizzying trade of canonic gestures between the two solo instruments is magnified by the fact that they are indeed two of the same instrument; the unchanging timbres almost produce a surround-sound effect. I have, at times, felt as though Reich is channeling ideas of the past, tapping into the language and qualities of the Baroque and Renaissance eras, with a particular nod to J.S. Bach. Perhaps there is a lesson of human connectedness that we can take from looking back in this way. Written in honor of Yehudi Menuhin, the piece has multiple layers on both a musical and spiritual level. I will leave my thoughts with a wonderful sentence written by Jeremy Grimshaw: "The piece thus embodies an homage drawing both on Reich's lingering fascination with the rational grace of audible musical processes, as well as his ability to imbue strict procedure with a sense of lyricism and expressivity."

—ARIANA KIM

The **Concerto for Violin and Oboe (1736)** by Johann Sebastian Bach is most definitely a masterpiece. Sadly, it is not definitely a concerto for violin and oboe, since there are no extant scores with



SIAMAK AGHAEI



IGOR STRAVINSKY

these instrumentations (the original instrumentation of Bach's famous Double Violin Concerto is similarly dubious). Bach's manuscripts include a version of this concerto for two harpsichords dated 1736. It was not until the 1920s that two editions based on the alleged original versions were published, one in D Minor and one in C Minor.

It does seem reasonable from the harpsichord arrangement, in which the two parts were written in very different registers and styles, that there would have been an earlier instrumentation of the piece, likely with a string and wind instrument in conversation. Regardless of which key or instrumentation is used, the music itself is glorious, and the oboe and violin both enter the fray and soar above Bach's rich contrapuntal textures.

—ADAM HOLLANDER

Igor Stravinsky's irresistible **Concerto in E-flat, "Dumbarton Oaks," (1938)** decidedly straddles the old and new worlds. Commissioned in America, it was the composer's last work entirely written in Europe. In 1937, Mildred Barnes Bliss, a leading figure in American arts and culture, approached Stravinsky about writing a work modeled on Bach's Brandenburg Concerti. The premiere would celebrate her thirtieth wedding anniversary and take place at "Dumbarton Oaks," the magnificent Federal-style estate just outside Washington, DC, that she and her husband, Robert Woods Bliss, owned.

In response, Stravinsky immersed himself in Bach's music, regularly playing it on the piano. "Whether or not the first theme of my first movement is a conscious borrowing from the third of the Brandenburg set, I do not know," he recalled. "What I can say is that Bach would most certainly have been delighted to loan it to me; to borrow in this way was exactly the sort of thing he liked to do."

—JAMES ROE

The Concerto for Santur, Violin, and Orchestra (2013) is the third result of a friendship and collaboration that go back almost fifteen years to the summer of 2000, when Siamak and I met for the first time at Tanglewood as part of the Silk Road Ensemble. After years of touring together; playing the music of another master Persian musician and friend, Kayhan Kalhor; listening to other members of the Silk Road Ensemble share their virtuosity; discovering a shared love of Radiohead; visiting Siamak's home in Iran; and listening to field recordings that Siamak had made of folk musicians throughout Iran, we became obsessed with one melody from a musician with whom Siamak had studied and recorded. This became the backbone of the piece *Ascending Bird*, which we have performed extensively with the Silk Road Ensemble, Brooklyn Rider, and The Knights.

With the courage gained from that experience, we decided to create another piece for the Silk Road Ensemble, *The Wind Will Take Us*, in which Siamak created incredible melodic material that he played and sang, and which I orchestrated for the Ensemble. I have long enjoyed the sonority of the santur, the trapezoidally-shaped hammered dulcimer with a history that long precedes our Western classical instruments, and Siamak's incredible virtuosity on it. Like the piano, one questions whether it is a percussion or melodic instrument—and the answer is probably similar. It's both. The santur and the violin can be in wonderful dialogue—and with the Concerto, the goal is to integrate that dialogue into the larger orchestral whole in the Western classical tradition of the "party-within-the-party" *concerto grosso*. Given the current challenges in the diplomatic relations between the US and Iran, Siamak and I met in the middle to work. My teacher and mentor, Vera Beths, and her husband, Anner Bylsma, graciously offered the use of their home in Amsterdam, where Siamak and I improvised, experimented, and dreamed up this piece.





COLIN JACOBSEN

The Concerto was co-commissioned by the Hopkins Center for the Arts at Dartmouth College and by Mela Haklisch. The world premiere took place at the Hopkins Center on October 4, 2013.

—COLIN JACOBSEN

Orchestral composition has historically worked in one direction: composers write the music and orchestras interpret what is on the page. With *...the ground beneath our feet* (2013), we wanted to upset this usual arrangement by drawing on our individual expressive ideas and collaborative synergies to compose a piece from inception to

final interpretation. We wanted to make the process of making music an organic effort that would draw on our separate and collective strengths and thereby make each part of the score our own.

The focal point was the *Ciaccona* by the Italian Baroque composer Tarquinio Merula—specifically the four-bar ground bass line Merula repeats throughout. Originating in Spain, a *ciaccona* is a musical composition in which a bass line is repeated over and over while melodic material moves above it. Listening to The Knights' *...the ground beneath our feet*, you will hear sections influenced by salsa, Irish reels, gypsy, raga, and free jam, all tied together by Merula's bass line in its different incarnations. *...the ground beneath our feet* is not a fixed composition, but will vary as the musicians who are its composers change and evolve. We hope that this collectively composed piece weaves our diverse voices into a unique musical whole, greater than the sum of its parts.

—ZACH COHEN

COLIN JACOBSEN, VIOLIN / COMPOSER

As the *Washington Post* observes, violinist and composer Colin Jacobsen is "one of the most interesting figures on the classical music scene." A founding member of two game-changing, audience-expanding ensembles—the string quartet Brooklyn Rider and the orchestra The Knights—he is also a touring member of Yo-Yo Ma's venerated Silk Road Project. An eclectic composer who draws on a range of influences, he was named one of the top 100 composers under 40 by NPR listeners. Also active as an Avery Fisher Career Grant-winning soloist, Jacobsen and his brother, cellist Eric Jacobsen, were recently selected to receive a prestigious and substantial United States Artists Fellowship.

In 2005, Jacobsen founded Brooklyn Rider with fellow violinist Johnny Gandelman, violist Nicholas Cords, and his brother Eric. Hailed as "one of the wonders of contemporary music" (*Los Angeles Times*), the quartet combines true new-music chops and genre-bending innovation with an equal mastery of the classics, and has presented a wealth of world

premieres and toured extensively across North America, Asia, and Europe, in venues ranging from clubs and rock festivals to Lincoln Center and Carnegie Hall. It was to foster the intimacy and camaraderie of chamber music on the orchestral stage that the two Jacobsen brothers founded The Knights. The "consistently inventive, infectiously engaged indie ensemble" (*New York Times*) has appeared at New York venues ranging from Carnegie Hall, Lincoln Center, and the 92nd Street Y to Central Park and (Le) Poisson Rouge.

Colin Jacobsen's work as a composer developed as a natural outgrowth of his chamber and orchestral collaborations. Jointly inspired by encounters with leading exponents of non-western traditions and by his own classical heritage, his most recent compositions for Brooklyn Rider include *Three Miniatures*—"vivacious, deftly drawn sketches" (*New York Times*), which were written for the reopening of the Metropolitan Museum of Art's Islamic art galleries. Jacobsen collaborated with Iran's Siamak Aghaei to write a Persian folk-inflected composition, *Ascending Bird*, which he performed

as soloist with the YouTube Symphony Orchestra at the Sydney Opera House, in a concert that was streamed live by millions of viewers worldwide. His work for dance and theater includes music for Compagnia de' Colombari's theatrical production of Walt Whitman's *Song of Myself*.

SIAMAK AGHAEI, SANTUR / COMPOSER

Siamak Aghaei, an Iranian santur (hammered dulcimer) virtuoso and composer, is not only deeply engaged with the tradition of Persian classical music, but is working actively to expand its borders and the context in which his instrument is heard. His studies began at the age of eight within the Organization for the Preservation and Publication of Iranian Traditional Music and continued with some of Iran's most eminent santur masters, including Meshkatian and Shenasa. He has a deep knowledge of the Radif (the system of modal music upon which Persian classical music is based) from extensive studies with masters Lotfi and Kiani, and he received his degree in music from the University of Tehran.

It is through Aghaei's work with various ensembles outside of Iran that he has brought the santur to an increasingly diverse audience. He has engaged with the European musical avant garde, performing with the Atlas Ensemble and Ed Spanjard in Amsterdam. His collaboration with the Labyrinth Ensemble and Ross Daly throughout Europe brought together various ancient Mediterranean musical traditions. With the Oriental Ensemble and Nassir Shamma, he has found common ground between Persian and Arabian musical languages. Aghaei has also performed as part of the Silk Road Ensemble, founded by cellist Yo-Yo Ma.

Within Iran, Siamak Aghaei continues to lead an active musical life. He is an Assistant Professor of Music at the University of Tehran, and founded the ensembles Gusheh as well as Santur Navazan, which is a unique ensemble of newly designed santurs to further explore colors and sound worlds. Aghaei lives in Tehran, performs frequently with the renowned vocalist Salar Aghili, and has a deep affection for cats.

CHRISTINA COURTIN, VOCALS / COMPOSER

Christina Courtin is a multi-instrumentalist, singer, and songwriter living in Brooklyn, New York. She has released three solo recordings of original genre-bending music, one self-titled on Nonesuch (2009), another entitled *Varsity* on Hundred Pockets Records (2013), and one self-released EP under the moniker *Pilot Violet* (2014).

As a member of The Knights, she has been a part of the release of six albums and shared a 2011 Juno award. A Juilliard graduate in violin performance, she has written and performed music for national television and radio audiences, has strong regional followings in sophisticated hotbeds of music worldwide, and has a dedicated NYC following for her work in voice, violin, viola, and guitar. She has had many pieces commissioned for her as a performer, including Yotam Haber's *New Ghetto Music* and Michael Ward-Bergeman's *Three Roads*. As a composer, she has contributed work to the Five Boroughs Songbook Festival, the *Brooklyn Rider Almanac*, and Kimball Gallagher's

88-Concert Tour, with a world premiere in Antarctica. Dawn Upshaw performed Christina's song "Gypsy Girl" during her residency in Austin, Texas in the spring of 2014.

When Christina isn't writing and singing her own material, she performs regularly as a side man and session musician in and around NYC. She has teamed up with Fun., Dirty Projectors, Sara Watkins, Nick Cave, Paul McCartney, Breastfist, Nick Thune, Marianne Faithful, Yo-Yo Ma, Sufjan Stevens, Antony and the Johnsons, Marc Ribot, Iron and Wine, Sara Bareillas, and Teddy Thompson. Christina was recently a visiting professor at Dartmouth, teaching songwriting and composition. She is working on completing her third large body of work.

JOHNNY GANDELSMAN, VIOLIN

Johnny Gandelsman's musical voice reflects the artistic collaborations he has been a part of since moving to the United States in 1995. Through his work with such artists as Yo-Yo Ma, Bono, Osvaldo Golijov, David Byrne,

Bela Fleck, Kayhan Kalhor, Suzanne Vega, James Levine, Mark Morris, Alim Qasimov and Fargana Qasimova, Nigel Kennedy, and Martin Hayes, Gandelsman has been able to integrate a wide range of creative sensibilities into his own point of view. Combining his classical training with a desire to reach beyond the boundaries of the concert hall and a voracious interest in the music of our time, Johnny has developed a unique style amongst today's violinists, one that, according to the *Boston Globe*, possesses "a balletic lightness of touch and a sense of whimsy and imagination."

Johnny was born in Moscow into a family of musicians. His father Yuri is a professor of viola at Michigan State University, his mother Janna is a pianist, and his sister Natasha is a violinist as well. Johnny lives in Brooklyn with his partner Amber Star and their two children, Julius Ivry and Raiya Leone.

ADAM HOLLANDER, OBOE

Born in the Bronx, oboist Adam Hollander enjoys the challenges of being a twenty-first century performing artist. Drawn to the oboe at a very young age, Adam has performed on

three continents. Whether bringing avant garde oboe fireworks to China or playing Beethoven on tour through Europe, Adam is equally at home. After studies at the Curtis Institute and Yale University, Adam has served on the faculty of Post University and Portland State University.

ARIANA KIM, VIOLIN

Noted by the *New York Times* for giving "the proceedings an invaluable central thread of integrity and stylishness," violinist Ariana Kim made her New York recital debut at Carnegie's Weill Hall in 2008 and is a newly appointed professor at Cornell University. At sixteen, Ariana made her debut with the St. Paul Chamber Orchestra, and at twenty-four was appointed acting concertmaster of the Louisiana Philharmonic in New Orleans. She went on to receive her doctorate from The Juilliard School under the tutelage of Robert Mann and was shortly thereafter appointed as a professor at the University of Indianapolis. Ariana's work as a soloist has included many of the preeminent violin concertos with orchestras such as the Richmond Symphony

(VA), Indianapolis Symphony Festival Orchestra, Indianapolis Chamber Orchestra, Louisiana Philharmonic Orchestra, and Orbón Chamber Orchestra (Spain), among others. An avid chamber musician of both the contemporary and traditional literature, Ariana marks her ninth season as a member of the New York contemporary music ensemble Ne(x)tworks, with whom she improvises, performs, composes, and records. The ensemble made their European debut at the John Cage Centennial Festival in Berlin in 2012. Ariana also marks her ninth season with The Knights and her tenth with the Chamber Music Society of Minnesota, where recent collaborations have included performances with Leon Fleisher, Fred Sherry, Charles Neidich, Samuel Rhodes, and Nobuko Imai. Ariana currently co-resides in Ithaca and New York City, where she loves to be surrounded by family, friends, and great food.

GUILLAUME PIRARD, VIOLIN

Guillaume Pirard has played with The Knights since 2000. He began his violin studies in Belgium at the age of eight and received a First

Prize in Violin Performance from the Brussels Royal Conservatory of Music at sixteen. Guillaume continued his studies at the Mannes School with Todd Phillips and at The Juilliard School with Hyo Kang. He then studied with Vera Beths and Anner Bylisma in Holland, and with Mira Glodeanu in Brussels, focusing on Baroque violin. Guillaume is the recipient of the Belgian Young Soloists Foundation and the SPES Foundation Award. He lives in Brooklyn.

THE KNIGHTS

The Knights are an orchestral collective, flexible in size and repertory, dedicated to transforming the concert experience. Engaging listeners and defying boundaries with programs that showcase the players' roots in the classical tradition and passion for musical discovery, The Knights have, as the *New Yorker* observes, "become one of Brooklyn's sterling cultural products...known far beyond the borough for their relaxed virtuosity and expansive repertory."

Recent concerts have included a multimedia performance at Brooklyn's Roulette,

marking the first of a series of New York City residencies to be undertaken by the group over the next three seasons with support from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. Other highlights include the Caramoor Fall Festival, where The Knights served as curators and gave three performances featuring saxophonist Joshua Redman and violinist Gil Shaham; the ensemble's debut at Carnegie Hall in the New York premiere of the Steven Stucky/Jeremy Denk opera *The Classical Style*; a collaboration with The National's Bryce Dessner, broadcast on WNYC's "New Sounds Live"; a residency at the University of Georgia; an East Coast tour with banjo virtuoso Bela Fleck; and a European tour with soprano Dawn Upshaw, featuring performances in Salzburg, Baden-Baden, Darmstadt, and at Vienna's legendary Musikverein. The Knights recently debuted at the Tanglewood and Ojai Music Festivals, and have collaborated with Yo-Yo Ma, Itzhak Perlman, Dawn Upshaw, Jeremy Denk, the Mark Morris Dance Group, and pipa virtuoso Wu Man, among others. Recordings include an all-Beethoven disc released in January 2013 by Sony Classical (their third project with the label), and 2012's "smartly programmed" (NPR) *A Second of Silence* for Ancalagon.

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, who are also founding members of the string quartet Brooklyn Rider, serve as artistic directors of The Knights, with Eric Jacobsen as conductor.

The Knights' roster boasts remarkably diverse talents, including composers, arrangers, singer-songwriters, and improvisers, who bring a range of cultural influences to the group, from jazz and klezmer to pop and indie rock music. The unique camaraderie within the group retains the intimacy and spontaneity of chamber music in performance.

Artistic Directors

Colin Jacobsen
Eric Jacobsen

Violin

Colin Jacobsen, *concertmaster*
Christina Courtin
Johnny Gandelsman
Ariana Kim
Guillaume Pirard
Amie Weiss

Viola

Kyle Armbrust
Max Mandel
Miranda Sielaff

Cello

Alex Greenbaum
Eric Jacobsen

Bass

Shawn Conley
Grey Fulmer

Flute

Alex Sopp

Oboe

Michelle Farah
Adam Hollander

Clarinet

Agnes Marchione

Bassoon

Edward A. Burns

Horn

Michael P. Atkinson
Jason Sugata

Harpsichord

Paolo Bordignon

Percussion

Shane Shanahan

Executive Director

Liz Mahler

Director of Production & Operations

Yako Stavrolakes

Interns

Jesse Diener-Bennett
Sarah Segner

Photography

Gabe Palacio, Sarah Small
(The Knights)
Alice Arnold (Reich)
Todd Rosenberg (Jacobsen)

Cover Art


Alex Sopp

Design

Gabriele Wilson

Board of Trustees

Mela Haklisch, *President*
Doug Lasdon, *Vice President*
Audrey Francis, *Secretary*
Guillaume Cuvelier, *Treasurer*
Michael P. Atkinson
Colin Jacobsen
Eric Jacobsen
Joanne Lipman
Graham Parker
Susan W. Rose
Gary L. Wasserman



An Immersive Music Project

Produced by Jesse Lewis

Recording Engineers: Jesse Brayman and Jesse Lewis

Mastering Engineers: Kyle Pyke and Jesse Lewis

Recorded live at Dumbarton Oaks, Washington, DC, October 7-8, 2013.

Recorded with Danish Pro Audio 4006-TL and Schoeps 2S Microphones,
and Merging Technologies Horus and Pyramix production system.

The Knights gratefully acknowledge the support of Mela Haklisch, whose unwavering generosity and leadership have helped bring this project to life.

Special thanks to Connie Steensma, Senator Kirsten Gillibrand, and Senator Jeanne Shaheen; Margaret Lawrence, Ted Levin, Stephanie Pacheco, and Erin Smith at the Hopkins Center, Dartmouth College; Jeffrey Haydn and Paul Rosenblum at Caramoor; Valerie Stains and the staff of Dumbarton Oaks; Christopher London, Stephen Judson, and the Naumburg Orchestral Concerts; Mary Pat Buerkle; Max Lefer, Sophia Karkowski, and the good people at 21C Media Group; Anner Bijlsma, Vera Beths, Katja Herbers, and Carine Bijlsma; Eddie Jacobsen and Susan Bloom; Ronnie Mahler; Maile Okamura, Aoife O'Donovan, and Jesse Strauss; the entire Warner team; and to The Knights' Board of Trustees for their tireless support.

© & © 2015 The Knights under exclusive license to Parlophone Records Limited,
A Warner Music Group Company.





THE
knights

THEKNIGHTSNYC.COM



STEREO DDD

© & © 2015 The Knights under exclusive license to Parlophone
Records Limited, A Warner Music Group Company.