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[millertheatre.com](http://millertheatre.com)

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"Rarely are audiences granted this kind of insight into a composer's process."

— *The New York Times*



## Miller Theatre at Columbia University School of the Arts

today launches the 6th and final episode of its

**MISSION: COMMISSION** podcast (Season Two)

and reveals recordings of the 3 final pieces written for Parker Quartet by

**OSCAR BETTISON • VIJAY IYER • KATE SOPER**

Since the podcast began on April 19, audiences have had rare access to the creative journeys of these 3 composers as they write newly commissioned pieces of music in just 6 weeks.

**Media is invited to review the podcast in its totality and/or the resulting compositions by Bettison, Iyer, and Soper.**

**JUMP TO EPISODES**

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*Mission: Commission* is hosted by **MELISSA SMEY**,  
Executive Director of Miller Theatre

Produced by **GOLDA ARTHUR** (*Vox, Marketplace, BBC World Service*)

Available for free at [missioncommissionpodcast.com](https://missioncommissionpodcast.com),  
[Apple Podcasts](#), [Spotify](#), or wherever you get your podcasts

# mission: commission



Vijay Iyer

Kate Soper

Oscar Bettison

**New York, NY** — Today marks the conclusion and final reveal of Season Two of [MISSION: COMMISSION](#), the acclaimed free weekly podcast from [Miller Theatre at Columbia University](#).

Since April 19, 2022, the podcast has followed three strikingly different composers—[Oscar Bettison](#), [Vijay Iyer](#), and [Kate Soper](#)—across a six-week deadline, from the blank page to the double bar. Each was asked to compose a new work for the Grammy Award-winning [Parker Quartet](#), and check in weekly with podcast host **Melissa Smey** (Miller's Executive Director) to discuss how their piece is developing—a dialogue that ventures into

joy, grief, frustration, and humor. Ultimately, the podcast lifts the curtain to reveal the inner lives of composers as they work, demystifying the process of how classical music gets made. And three more pieces of vibrant chamber music have been added to the world.

**Recordings of the final pieces are released today as bonus episodes:**

- **ALL KEENS AND SLOW AIRS** by **Oscar Bettison**;
  - **ROOM FOR GHOSTS** by **Vijay Iyer** (Iyer joins the Parker Quartet on piano);
  - **TELEPHONE** by **Kate Soper** (Soper joins the Parker Quartet as soprano).
- Telephone* was made possible with lead commissioning support from Sean T. Buffington.

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"New works might be given a brief introduction from the stage, a program note or some advance press. What often gets lost is the story of creation — the hiccups and dead ends, the thrill of discovery. And that is central to 'Mission: Commission,' a collection of audio diaries and interviews with Melissa Smey, the Miller Theater's executive director."

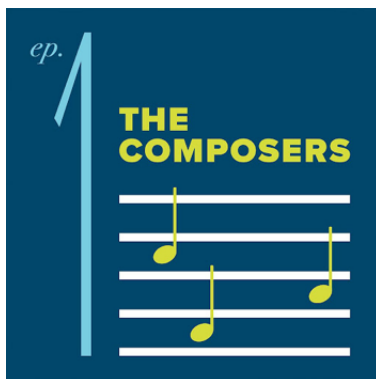
— ***The New York Times***

"This is a brilliant idea, its intention to demystify 'how composers compose'."

— ***The Sunday Times (UK)***

## **MISSION: COMMISSION EPISODES**

**(Season Two)**



### **Episode 1: The Composers**

An introduction to our composers—Oscar Bettison, Vijay Iyer, and Kate Soper—as they begin their creative journey to compose a new piece of classical music in 6 weeks for *Mission: Commission*.

### **Episode 2: Dear Diary...**

Journey into the inner worlds of our three composers so you can understand more about the real people making the music. We go deeper in understanding how each



composer thinks as they document their process through audio diaries—sometimes words, sometimes music, sometimes both.



### Episode 3: What even is form?

To navigate the terrain of classical music, you need some trail markers, and that's where form comes in. It's the underlying structure of the way things happen in music. Composers today don't always want to follow the age-old rules of form. How do our composers think about form as they work on their pieces?



### Episode 4: Answering the Call

The composers are deep in the work: writing, rewriting, tinkering with the myriad details that make the piece what it is, and what it will be. But what guides their decisions about how to shape the piece, or what direction to take it in?



### Episode 5: Blu Tack, Growls, and M&Ms

The composers rehearse or prepare for rehearsal with the Parker Quartet, and the pieces start to come to life.

### Episode 6: What we make is who we are



As the creative journey comes to an end, we hear reflections on genre and why these pieces defy categorization.

THE *MISSION: COMMISSION* TEAM:

**Golda Arthur**, *Producer*

**Melissa Smey**, *Co-Creator, Producer & Host*

**Adrienne Stortz**, *Co-Creator & Producer*

**Lauren Cognetti**, *Co-Creator & Assistant Producer*

**Taylor Ricco**, *Assistant Producer*

**Erick Gomez**, *Sound Designer & Engineer*

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**Oscar Bettison**

[oscarbettison.com](https://oscarbettison.com)



Oscar Bettison (Photo by Kyle Dorosz for Miller Theatre)

Bettison's music lives, thrillingly, on a razor's edge between unpredictability and a groove wrought of full-bodied play.

Born on the United Kingdom's Channel Islands to Spanish and British parents, Bettison

was fascinated from an early age by the interplay between the “weird, hazy, tenuous aural image” in his imagination and the wild effort to wrestle it onto the page. After studying in Amsterdam with Louis Andriessen and Martijn Padding, he learned to embrace this creative discomfort, crashing through challenges with fantastic, imaginative twists. As Bettison has said: “It’s not that refinement is a bad thing. But there are times when it can get in the way.”

Watershed ensemble works like *O Death* and *B&E (with aggravated assault)* drew attention from press and audiences for their free-spirited play and integration of popular musical styles. Bettison was recognized with a Guggenheim Fellowship in 2017.

Bettison continues to find inspiration in experimenting with different forms of music, composing more for orchestra in recent years: *Remaking a Forest* for Oregon Symphony premiered in 2019, *Pale Icons of Night*—his first violin concerto—for Courtney Orlando and Alarm Will Sound debuted in 2018, and *Lights in Ashes* (an orchestral reimagination of a movement from *O Death*) was premiered by the New World Symphony in 2017. Bettison’s first opera, *The Light of Lesser Days*, premiered in September 2021 in the Netherlands with the Asko|Schönberg ensemble.

Bettison currently lives in New Jersey and is chair of the Composition Department of John Hopkins University’s Peabody Institute.

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**Vijay Iyer**  
[vijay-iyer.com](http://vijay-iyer.com)





Vijay Iyer (Photo by Kyle Dorosz for Miller Theatre)

Described by *The New York Times* as a “social conscience, multimedia collaborator, system builder, rhapsodist, historical thinker and multicultural gateway,” Vijay Iyer has carved out a unique path as an influential, prolific, shape-shifting presence in twenty-first-century music. A composer and pianist active across multiple musical communities, Iyer has



created a consistently innovative, emotionally resonant body of work over the last twenty-five years, earning him a place as one of the leading music-makers of his generation. He has received a MacArthur Fellowship, a Doris Duke Performing Artist Award, a United States Artist Fellowship, a Grammy nomination, the Alpert Award in the Arts, and two German “Echo” awards, and was voted *Downbeat*’s “Jazz Artist of the Year” four times in the last decade.

Iyer’s musical language is grounded in the rhythmic traditions of South Asia and West Africa, the African American creative music movement of the ‘60s and ‘70s, and the lineage of composer-pianists from Duke Ellington and Thelonious Monk to Alice Coltrane and Geri Allen. He has released twenty-four albums of his music, most recently *UnEasy* (ECM Records, 2021), a trio session with drummer Tyshawn Sorey and bassist Linda May Han Oh; *The Transitory Poems* (ECM, 2019), a live duo recording with pianist Craig Taborn; *Far From Over* (ECM, 2017) with the award-winning Vijay Iyer Sextet; and *A Cosmic Rhythm with Each Stroke* (ECM, 2016) a suite of duets with visionary composer-trumpeter Wadada Leo Smith.

Iyer is also an active composer for classical ensembles and soloists. His works have been commissioned and premiered by the Brentano Quartet, Imani Winds, Bang on a Can All-Stars, Silkroad Ensemble, International Contemporary Ensemble, Orpheus Chamber Orchestra, LA Philharmonic, American Composers Orchestra, and virtuosos Matt Haimowitz, Claire Chase, Shai Wosner, and Jennifer Koh, among others. He recently served as composer-in-residence at London’s Wigmore Hall, music director of the Ojai Music Festival, and artist-in-residence at New York’s Metropolitan Museum of Art. A tireless collaborator, he has written big-band music for Arturo O’Farrill and Darcy James Argue, remixed classic recordings of Talvin Singh and Meredith Monk, joined forces with legendary musicians Henry Threadgill, Reggie Workman, Zakir Hussain, and L. Subramanian, and developed interdisciplinary work with Teju Cole, Carrie Mae Weems, Mike Ladd, Prashant Bhargava, and Karole Armitage.

A longtime New Yorker, Iyer lives in central Harlem with his wife and daughter. He teaches at Harvard University in the Department of Music and the Department of African and African American Studies. He is a Steinway artist.

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**Kate Soper**  
[katesoper.com](https://katesoper.com)



Kate Soper (Photo by Matt Zugale for Miller Theatre)

Kate Soper is a composer, performer, and writer whose work explores the integration of drama and rhetoric into musical structure, the slippery continuums of expressivity, intelligibility and sense, and the wonderfully treacherous landscape of the human voice. She has been hailed by *The Boston Globe* as "a composer of trenchant, sometimes discomfiting, power" and by *The New Yorker* for her "limpid, exacting vocalism, impetuous theatricality, and mastery of modernist style."

A Pulitzer Prize finalist, she has received awards from the Guggenheim Foundation, The Koussevitzky Foundation, and the American Academy of Arts and Letters, among others. Praised by *The New York Times* for her "lithe voice and riveting presence," she performs frequently as a new music soprano and has been featured as a composer/vocalist on the MATA Festival, Miller Theatre Composer Portraits series, Chicago Symphony Orchestra's MusicNOW series, and the LA Philharmonic's Green Umbrella series.

As a writer of fiction and non-fiction, she has been published by *McSweeney's Quarterly Concern*, *The Massachusetts Review*, and *PAJ*.

She is the Iva Dee Hiatt Professor of music at Smith College and a co-director of Wet Ink, a new music ensemble dedicated to seeking out adventurous music across aesthetic boundaries.

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**Parker Quartet**  
[parkerquartet.com](http://parkerquartet.com)





Parker Quartet (Photo by Olivier Roller)

[Kee-Hyun Kim](#), cello; [Jessica Bodner](#), viola; [Daniel Chong](#) & [Ken Hamao](#), violins

Inspiring performances, luminous sound, and exceptional musicianship are the hallmarks of the Grammy Award-winning Parker Quartet. Renowned for its dynamic interpretations and polished, expansive colors, the group has rapidly distinguished itself as one of the preeminent ensembles of its generation, dedicated purely to the sound and depth of their music. The Quartet has appeared at the world's most important venues since its founding in 2002.

The Quartet has been influential in projects ranging from the premiere of a new octet by Zosha di Castri alongside the JACK Quartet at the Banff Centre for Arts and Creativity and the premiere of Augusta Read Thomas's *Helix Spirals*, a piece inspired by the Meselson-Stahl DNA replication discovery, to the "Schubert Effect," in collaboration with pianist Shai Wosner at the 92nd Street Y. Other recent highlights include appearances at Carnegie Hall, the Library of Congress, the Slee Series in Buffalo, and New York's Lincoln Center Great Performers series. The Quartet also continues to be a strong supporter of their friend and frequent collaborator Kim Kashkashian's project *Music for Food* by participating in concerts throughout the U.S. for the benefit of food banks and shelters.

The Quartet has recorded Dvořák's Viola Quintet for ECM Records, joined by Kim Kashkashian, as well as Kurtág's *Six Moments Musicaux* and *Officium breve in memoriam*.

Under the auspices of the Monte Carlo Festival Printemps des Arts, they recorded a disc of three Beethoven quartets, released in 2019. The Quartet's recording featuring Mendelssohn's Quartets Op. 44, Nos. 1 and 3, was widely lauded by the international press, and their debut commercial recording of Bartók's String Quartets Nos. 2 and 5 for Zig-Zag Territoires won praise from *Gramophone*: "The Parkers' Bartók spins the illusion of spontaneous improvisation...they have absorbed the language; they have the confidence to play freely with the music and the instinct to bring it off." Their Naxos recording of György Ligeti's complete works for string quartet won the 2011 Grammy Award for Best Chamber Music Performance (the last string quartet to win this category).

Recent collaborations include those with acclaimed artists like violist Kim Kashkashian, violinist Nadja Salerno-Sonnenberg, pianists Anne-Marie McDermott, Orion Weiss, Vijay Iyer, and Shai Wosner, in addition to members of The Silk Road Ensemble, Kikuei Ikeda of the Tokyo String Quartet, clarinetist and composer Jörg Widmann, and clarinetists Anthony McGill and Charles Neidich.

Founded and currently based in Boston, The Parker Quartet is now in its seventh year as faculty members of Harvard University's Department of Music in the group's role as Blodgett Artists-in-Residence. The Quartet's numerous residencies have included serving as Artists-in-Residence at the University of St. Thomas (2012–2014), Quartet-in-Residence at the University of Minnesota (2011–2012), Quartet-in-Residence with the St. Paul Chamber Orchestra (2008–2010), and as the first-ever Artists-in-Residence with Minnesota Public Radio (2009–2010). Currently, they are also in-residence at the University of South Carolina School of Music.

The Parker Quartet's numerous honors include winning the Concert Artists Guild Competition, the Grand Prix and Mozart Prize at France's Bordeaux International String Quartet Competition, and Chamber Music America's prestigious Cleveland Quartet Award.

The Parker Quartet's members hold graduate degrees in performance and chamber music from the New England Conservatory of Music and The Juilliard School. From 2006–2008, the Quartet was part of the New England Conservatory's prestigious Professional String Quartet Training Program. Some of their most influential mentors include the original members of the Cleveland Quartet as well as Kim Kashkashian, György Kurtág, and Rainer Schmidt.

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## Columbia University School of the Arts

[arts.columbia.edu](https://arts.columbia.edu)

Columbia University School of the Arts awards the Master of Fine Arts degree in Film, Theatre, Visual Arts and Writing and the Master of Arts degree in Film Studies; it also offers an interdisciplinary program in Sound Arts. The School is a thriving, diverse community of talented, visionary and committed artists from around the world and a faculty comprised of acclaimed and internationally renowned artists, film and theatre directors, writers of poetry, fiction and nonfiction, playwrights, producers, critics and scholars. In 2015, the School marked the 50th Anniversary of its founding. In 2017, the School opened the Lenfest Center for the Arts, a multi-arts venue designed as a hub for the presentation and creation of art across disciplines on the University's new Manhattanville campus.

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## Miller Theatre

[millertheatre.com](http://millertheatre.com)

Miller Theatre at Columbia University is the leading presenter of new music in New York City and a vital force for innovative programming. In partnership with Columbia University School of the Arts, Miller is dedicated to producing and presenting unique events, with a focus on contemporary and early music, jazz, opera, and multimedia performances. Founded in 1988, Miller Theatre has helped launch the careers of myriad composers and ensembles over the years, serving as an incubator for emerging artists and a champion of those not yet well known in the United States. A four-time recipient of the ASCAP/Chamber Music America Award for Adventurous Programming, Miller Theatre continues to meet the high expectations set forth by its founders—to present innovative programs, support the development of new work, and connect creative artists with adventurous audiences.

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The Aaron Copland  
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For further information, scores, photos, and to arrange interviews,  
please contact Aleba & Co. at 212/206-1450 or [aleba@alebaco.com](mailto:aleba@alebaco.com).

For photos, please contact Lauren Bailey Cognetti, [lrb2113@columbia.edu](mailto:lrb2113@columbia.edu)



PR for musical trailblazers



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