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134 henry street • new york, ny • 10002

212 206 1450 • [aleba@alebaco.com](mailto:aleba@alebaco.com)

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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

**PRESS CONTACTS**

Aleba Gartner, 212/206-1450; [aleba@alebaco.com](mailto:aleba@alebaco.com)

Lauren Bailey Cognetti, [lrb2113@columbia.edu](mailto:lrb2113@columbia.edu)

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

— *The Sunday Times (UK)*

**MILLERTHEATRE**  
COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF THE ARTS

**Miller Theatre at Columbia University  
School of the Arts**

launches Season Two of its six-episode free weekly podcast

***Mission: Commission***

**Launch: Tuesdays, April 19 - May 24**

**[LISTEN TO THE TRAILER](#)**

The much-praised reality podcast follows a new group of composers  
as they create newly commissioned pieces of music in six weeks  
(Completed works revealed at the end of the series)

*featuring*

**OSCAR BETTISON  
VIJAY IYER  
KATE SOPER**

Each composer will write for the  
**PARKER QUARTET**

**Hosted by MELISSA SMEY, Executive Director of Miller Theatre**

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

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

**Media:** To receive an advance of the complete first episode,  
please email [aleba@alebaco.com](mailto:aleba@alebaco.com)

**From Miller Theatre Executive Director Melissa Smey:**

“Commissioning new work is at the heart of Miller Theatre’s mission, and we are grateful for the opportunity to welcome three new composers for Season Two of *Mission: Commission*, our audio podcast. Composers Oscar Bettison, Vijay Iyer, and Kate Soper have been so generous to share their time and insights into what it has meant to create new work during tumultuous times. We explore themes of isolation, loss, and grief, as well as hope and optimism. Their final works are incredibly powerful, as are the stories of their creation. I hope listeners enjoy this behind-the-scenes opportunity to experience how classical music gets made.”

# mission: commission



Vijay Iyer

Kate Soper

Oscar Bettison

"Presenting newly commissioned pieces by a broad range of living composers has always been fundamental to the programming philosophy at Columbia University's Miller Theatre. Now a new podcast, 'Mission: Commission,' illuminates the evolution of three such works, from conception to fruition."

— *The New Yorker*

[Miller Theatre at Columbia University](#) launches the second season of its podcast [Mission: Commission](#) starting **Tuesday, April 19, 2022**. The six-episode, free weekly podcast demystifies the process of how classical music gets made, providing rare access to the creative process of three world-class composers: [Oscar Bettison](#), [Vijay Iyer](#), and [Kate Soper](#).

Season One featured three composers writing new pieces of music in six weeks, and in this season, Miller features three new composers embarking on this creative journey. Bettison, Iyer, and Soper compose while documenting the process through audio diaries and weekly discussions with podcast host **Melissa Smey** (Miller's Executive Director). Recordings of the final pieces will be shared at the conclusion of the podcast.

All three composers will write for the same ensemble: the Grammy Award-winning [Parker Quartet](#), called "something extraordinary" by *The New York Times*. Vijay Iyer will write a piano quintet with himself as pianist and Kate Soper will write a quintet with herself as vocalist/narrator.

"*Mission: Commission* is breaking new ground.

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

— **The New York Times**

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**Listen to the *Mission: Commission* Season Two podcast trailer [here](#).**

"Composition is a real exercise in forced patience."

— **Oscar Bettison in *Mission: Commission Season Two***

"It's actually almost like a physiological or like bodily kind of response, like, my ear doesn't like that, or my gut says stop or...my heart wants more of this. It's like listening to your own responses in that way. How do you then answer those calls?"

— **Vijay Iyer in *Mission: Commission Season Two***

"It just happens that's the kind of composer I am. I really like writing for a new music soprano who likes to talk and will do whatever I want and can play some instruments. So then it's like, great! I have one! It's me."

— **Kate Soper in *Mission: Commission Season Two***

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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.

The Parker Quartet is currently in its eighth year as Blodgett Artists-in-Residence at Harvard University where they serve as faculty members in the music department. Recent season highlights have included performances at the Philadelphia Chamber Music Society, Lake Champlain Chamber Music Festival, Bard Summerscape, and Music Toronto, and virtual concerts for Chamber Music Northwest, Rockport Chamber Music Festival, and the National Gallery. Upcoming appearances include San Antonio Chamber Music Society, Konzerthaus Berlin, Deutschlandfunk in Cologne, Germany, and premieres of works by Jeremy Gill and Felipe Lara.

The Quartet recently released its debut recording on ECM New Series with music of Kurtág and Dvořák. In response to the album, Gramophone wrote, "If you wanted to make the point that 21st-century string quartet-playing is defined by a virtuosity so agile that it's indistinguishable from the process of emotional expression, you'd be hard pushed to find a better illustration than this new album from the Parker Quartet..."

Other recent recordings include music of Beethoven for the Monte Carlo Spring Festival, Mendelssohn for Nimbus Records, Bartók for Zig-Zag Territoires, and Ligeti for Naxos, for which they received a GRAMMY Award for Best Chamber Music Performance.

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## Melissa Smey

*Host, Co-Creator, and Producer*



Melissa Smey (photo by Adrienne Stortz)

**Melissa Smey** is Associate Dean and Executive Director at Columbia University School of the Arts, where she leads the Arts Initiative, Miller Theatre, and oversees the Lenfest Center for the Arts. Passionately dedicated to creating new work and fostering audience development, Smey has commissioned and premiered over 40 new works from leading international composers including Marcos Balter, Chaya Czernowin, Tyshawn Sorey, Augusta Read Thomas, and John Zorn, launched a visual art commissioning program for the theater's lobby, produced free concerts serving tens of thousands of audience members, and commissioned critically acclaimed chamber operas from Hannah Lash and Missy Mazzoli. In 2020, she created *Live from Columbia*, a free series of streaming concerts that attracts a global audience for Miller's programming. A two-time recipient of the ASCAP-Chamber Music America Award for Adventurous Programming for her work at Miller Theatre and one of Musical America's 2019 Top-30 Professionals of the Year, Smey has served as speaker and panelist for organizations including the American Academy in Berlin, Canadian New Music Network, Chamber Music America, The Juilliard School, Manhattan School of Music, National Endowment for the Arts, New York State Council on the Arts, New York University, Philadelphia New Music Project, and Works and Process at the Guggenheim. Smey is also the co-creator and host of the acclaimed podcast *Mission: Commission*, which demystifies the process of how classical music gets made.

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## Producer Golda Arthur and the Team



Golda Arthur (photo by Adrienne Stortz)

***Mission: Commission*** is produced by **Golda Arthur**, an independent podcast

showrunner, audio producer, and journalist. She has launched and run many podcasts at Vox Media including [\*Land of the Giants: The Rise of Amazon\*](#) and the daily news show [\*Today Explained\*](#). During her time at *Marketplace*, she was showrunner for the award-winning narrative technology podcast [\*Codebreaker\*](#). Prior to her work in the U.S. she worked in London for the BBC World Service in audio reporting, producing, and editing.

The full *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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## Miller Theatre

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

Miller Theatre at Columbia University is the leading presenter of new music in New York City and one of the most vital forces nationwide 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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**Council on  
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The Aaron Copland  
Fund for Music 



*Kate Soper's commissioned work was made possible with lead support from Sean T. Buffington.*

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For further information, press tickets, 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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