



M Manhattan
School of Music

**25
26**

**PERFORMANCE
SEASON**

M Manhattan
School of Music

**MSM JAZZ
ORCHESTRA:**
*A Banquet for
The Birds*

Darcy James Argue, Conductor

Aaron Diehl, piano, continuo organ

FRIDAY, APRIL 3, 2026 | 7:30 PM
NEIDORFF-KARPATI HALL

MSM JAZZ ORCHESTRA:

A Banquet for The Birds

Darcy James Argue, Conductor

Aaron Diehl, piano, continuo organ

A Banquet for the Birds was commissioned by 92NY, the NDR Big Band, and the Frankfurt Radio Big Band. All other arrangements were commissioned by the Frankfurt Radio Big Band.

PROGRAM

AARON DIEHL

Polaris

(ARR. DARCY JAMES ARGUE)

BOB DOROUGH & FRAN LANDESMAN

Nothing Like You

(ARR. DARCY JAMES ARGUE, AFTER AARON DIEHL)

AARON DIEHL

Organic Consequence

(ARR. DARCY JAMES ARGUE)

MARY LOU WILLIAMS

St. Martin de Porres

(ARR. DARCY JAMES ARGUE)

Lyrics by Anthony S. Woods

AARON DIEHL

Kaleidoscope Road

(ARR. DARCY JAMES ARGUE)

DARCY JAMES ARGUE

A Banquet for the Birds

I. The Sparrows and the Snake

II. The Most Meaningful of Birds

III. A Tangled Cry

MSM JAZZ ORCHESTRA

Darcy James Argue, Conductor

Aaron Diehl, piano, continuo organ

WINDS

Tess Overmyer, Piccolo, Flute,
Alto Flute, Soprano Saxophone,
Alto Saxophone
Newcastle, Australia

Antonio Vergara Jr., Flute, Clarinet,
Soprano Saxophone, Alto Saxophone
Clermont, Florida

Aidan O'Connor, Flute, Alto Flute,
Tenor Saxophone
River Edge, New Jersey

David Hodgson-Kugyelka,
Alto Flute, Bass Clarinet,
Tenor Saxophone
Vancouver, Canada

Joseph St Jules, Clarinet,
Bass Clarinet, Baritone Saxophone
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

BRASS

Carter Eng, Trumpet
Seattle, Washington

Kal Ferretti, Trumpet
Staten Island, New York

Jack Towse, Trumpet
Huntington, New York

Daphnis Moglia, Trumpet
Paris, France

Giovanni Martinez, Trumpet
Jacksonville, Florida

Laura Orzechoski, Trombone
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Lawson Gardner, Trombone
Asheville, North Carolina

Nanami Haruta, Trombone
Sapporo, Japan

Chase Bautista, Bass Trombone, Tuba
San Jose, California

RHYTHM SECTION

Olivier van Niekerk, Guitar
The Hague, Netherlands

Brahm Sasner, Continuo Organ,
Melodica
Lafayette, California

Evan Anderson, Continuo Organ,
Celesta, Electric Piano
Orlando, Florida

Carter Bryan, rehearsal pianist
Guilford, Connecticut

Lorenzo Wolczko, Double Bass
San Carlos, California

Alexander Tremblay, Double Bass
Providence, Rhode Island

Kabelo Mokhatla, Percussion
Kempton Park, South Africa

Gerard Pola Pastor, Percussion
Sabadell, Spain

Texts and Translations

A Banquet from the Birds, Darcy James Argue

A Banquet from the Birds draws inspiration from the following passages from Homer's *The Illiad* (translated by Emily Wilson):

I. *The Sparrows and the Snake*

Then came
a miracle—a red-backed snake, a horror
sent to the sunlight by Olympian Zeus,
slipped slithering from underneath the altar
towards the tree. The sparrow chicks were huddled
upon the highest branch beneath the leaves.
There were eight chicks, the mother was the ninth.

He ate the chicks, still piteously chirping.
Their mother, squawking in her grief, flapped round
her darling children, but the snake entwined her
and seized her by the wing and ate her up.

When he had eaten her and all her children,
then Zeus, the son of double-dealing Cronus,
who had revealed the snake, converted him
into a sign by turning him to stone.

We stood there in amazement at these marvels.
The sparrows and the snake had interrupted
the holy hecatomb, and right away
Calchas the seer spoke up.

‘Why are you silent,
long-haired Greek warriors? Wise Zeus has shown us
a marvelous divine sign, slow to come
and slow to be fulfilled, the fame of which
will never die.

Just as this snake devoured
the sparrow and her children, eight of them,
their mother making nine, so we will fight
this war at Troy for nine years. In the tenth,
we take the city with its spacious streets.’
He prophesied and now it all comes true.

II. *The Most Meaningful of Birds*

Now Agamemnon stood there and called out,
raising his voice so all the Greeks could hear him,

“For shame, you cowards! This is a disgrace!
You Greeks are only good at looking pretty!
Where now are all the boasts you made at Lemnos?
Your claims to be the best of men were empty!

You gorged on carcasses of straight-horned cattle
and glugged down punch bowls brimming full of wine,
and claimed each one of you could stand and challenge
a hundred or two hundred Trojan fighters
But now you cannot face a single one!
Hector will soon destroy our fleet with fire!

O father Zeus, when have you ever treated
any almighty leader so unfairly?
Has any other been so cursed, so tricked,
deprived by you of such a massive win?

During my journey here on my great warship
propelled by many men at oar, I tell you
I never skipped a single sacred altar
of yours. I sacrificed on all of them.
I burned the fat and thighs of many oxen
as offerings, because I longed to sack
the well-built town of Troy.

Now grant me, Zeus,
this wish at least—to let these men survive.
Let them escape and do not let the Trojans
annihilate the Greeks, as they are doing.”

He spoke through floods of tears, and father Zeus
was sorry for him. Bowing down his head
he granted that the army would be safe,
not massacred.

Immediately he sent
an eagle, the most meaningful of birds,

whose talons held a fawn, a swift deer's child.
The eagle dropped the fawn beside the altar
on which the Greeks made sacrifice to Zeus
from whom all holy voices come. The Greeks
recognized that the eagle came from Zeus.
Their zest to fight in battle was renewed.
They rushed with greater force against the Trojans.

III. *A Tangled Cry*

Behind them, the two warriors named Ajax
held back the enemy, just as a ridge,
extending all across the plain and topped
with trees, holds back the water—cruel floods
of mighty rivers, which it forces back,
driving their currents down across the lowland—
their surging strength cannot break down the ridge—
just so, the two named Ajax constantly
forced back the Trojan fighters, who pursued
relentlessly, and two the most of all,
glorious Hector and Aeneas, son
of great Anchises.

As a cloud of starlings
or jackdaws, with a tangled cry of horror,
screech, when they see a hawk come bringing slaughter
to smaller birds— just so the young Greek fighters,
screeching with fear and horror, ran away
from Hector and Aeneas, and forgot
their eagerness to fight, and as they fled,
many fine weapons fell around the ditch.
And yet there was no ending of the war.

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ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Darcy James Argue, Composer and Conductor

Darcy James Argue, “one of the top big band composers of our time” (*Stereophile*), is best known for Secret Society, an 18-piece group “renowned in the jazz world” (*The New York Times*). Argue brings an outwardly anachronistic ensemble into the 21st century through his “ability to combine his love of jazz’s past with more contemporary sonics” and is celebrated as “a syncretic creator who avoids obvious imitation” (*Pitchfork*). Acclaimed as an “innovative composer, arranger, and big band leader” by *The New Yorker*, Argue’s accolades include multiple GRAMMY nominations and a Latin GRAMMY Award, a Guggenheim Fellowship, a Doris Duke Artist Award, and countless commissions and fellowships.

Dynamic Maximum Tension, Argue’s latest album with Secret Society and his label debut on Nonesuch Records, is named after the three words that inventor and futurist R. Buckminster Fuller combined to form his personal brand: “Dymaxion” — a term reflecting Bucky’s desire to get the most out of his materials, the utopian vision of his designs, and his quest to improve the pattern of daily life. The album has been called “his best to date: a work of stunning eclecticism and complexity, but thoroughly accessible, elastic with swing” by Fred Kaplan of *Slate*, and “simply some of the most exciting music being made right now” by Stereogum’s Phil Freeman. *Dynamic Maximum Tension* was named one of the best albums of 2023 by *DownBeat*, NPR, and numerous other outlets, and earned Argue his fourth consecutive GRAMMY nomination for Best Large Jazz Ensemble Album.

Argue’s affinity for blurring genres and deftly weaving sociopolitical ideas into ambitious, culturally resonant work is exemplified in the “stunningly original” (*Wall Street Journal*) song cycle *Ogresse*, a collaboration with GRAMMY-winning vocalist Cécile McLorin Salvant, and in the multimedia performance *Real Enemies*, a “breathtaking” (*JazzNu*) production co-created with writer-director Isaac Butler and filmmaker Peter Nigrini that premiered in 2015 at the BAM Next Wave Festival.

Celebrating their 20th anniversary this year, Secret Society maintains a busy touring schedule, with European, Canadian, and South American tours, global festival performances, and five appearances at the legendary Newport Jazz Festival. In 2024, Argue was named Composer-in-Residence for the Frankfurt Radio Big Band. He has toured with the Metropole Orkest, the Danish Radio Big Band, the NDR Big Band, the Jazzgroove Mothership Orchestra, and many

others. His music was featured by the Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra in their Contemporary Jazz Masterpieces concert.

Argue has topped the Composer of the Year, Arranger of the Year, and Big Band of the Year categories in the *DownBeat* International Critics Poll. He has been commissioned by the MAP Fund, the Fromm Music Foundation, 92NY, the Newport Festival Foundation, the Jerome Foundation, BAM, and the Jazz Gallery, as well as ensembles including the NDR Big Band, the Danish Radio Big Band, the Canadian National Jazz Orchestra, NYO Jazz, the Hard Rubber Orchestra, the West Point Jazz Knights, and the Orquestra Jazz de Matosinhos. He is the recipient of grants and fellowships from the New York Foundation for the Arts, New Music USA, Composers Now, the Mid Atlantic Arts Foundation, the Aaron Copland Fund for Music, the Canada Council for the Arts, and MacDowell.

Aaron Diehl, piano, continuo organ

Pianist Aaron Diehl has quietly re-defined the lines between jazz and classical, and built a global career around his nuanced, understated approach to music-making. Praised for his “melodic precision, harmonic erudition, and elegant restraint” (*The New York Times*), and his “traditional jazz sound with a sophisticated contemporary spin” (*The Guardian*), Diehl has performed with musical giants such as Wynton Marsalis, Cécile McLorin Salvant, Tyshawn Sorey, and Philip Glass, and has been a soloist with the New York Philharmonic, the Los Angeles Philharmonic, the San Francisco Symphony, and the Cleveland Orchestra, working with conductors like Yannick Nézet-Séguin, Marin Alsop, and Alan Gilbert. In 2023, Diehl was named as the Artistic Director of 92NY’s Jazz in July Festival, succeeding the legendary Bill Charlap.

A leader in contemporary jazz, the *Philadelphia Inquirer* exclaimed that “there’s an entire world of jazz in Aaron Diehl’s playing...he makes the case that jazz is not one style or genre but many, gliding gorgeously among decades of artistic influences.” With an expansive, orchestral, lyrical approach to the piano that channels predecessors like Ahmad Jamal, Erroll Garner, Art Tatum and Jelly Roll Morton, Diehl has headlined the Monterey, Detroit, and Newport Jazz Festivals, and had residencies at Jazz at Lincoln Center, the Village Vanguard, SF Jazz, and many more. He counts among his mentors towering figures such as John Lewis, Kenny Barron, Fred Hersch, Marcus Roberts, and Eric Reed.

Diehl’s creative vision draws equally from the Classical music tradition, with *DownBeat Magazine* stating “Diehl gracefully melds two worlds, merging the improvisational spirit of jazz with the compositional intricacies of Western classical music.” Diehl has performed with top orchestras across the US, at leading venues like Carnegie Hall, Lincoln Center, The Hollywood Bowl, the Elbphilharmonie, and Tanglewood. He has collaborated with classical stars ranging from Inon Barnatan to J’Nai Bridges to The Knights, and his compositions have been commissioned by the Monterey Jazz Festival, Glenmorangie Scotch, and others.

In the 2023-24 season, Diehl and his trio, featuring bassist David Wong and drummer Aaron Kimmel, open the New Jersey Symphony’s season with a program that includes Still’s *Out of the Silence* and Ellington’s *New World A-Comin’*. The trio also makes its St. Louis Symphony Orchestra debut with a performance of Mary Lou Williams’s *Zodiac Suite*. As the 2024 Resonate Festival artist-in-residence, Diehl will explore the theme of musical intersections, with works by John Lewis, Mary Lou Williams’ *Zodiac Suite* and Johann Sebastian Bach’s Harpsichord Concerto No. 1 in D minor, conducted by Eric Jacobsen. In

the spring, Diehl joins the Los Angeles Philharmonic for the world premiere of Timo Andres's new piano concerto, conducted by John Adams.

During the 2022-23 season, Diehl was featured alongside Bill Charlap and Kenny Barron as part of 92NY's "Three Generations at the Piano" program during Charlap's penultimate season as the *Jazz in July* music director. Diehl would later go on to perform alongside fellow pianists Isaiah J. Thompson and Caelan Cardello as part of Charlap's final season. As Kaufman Music Center's 2022 Artist-in-Residence, Diehl presented a recital program that included Sir Roland Hanna's lesser known 24 Preludes. He would later go on to present the 24 Preludes in a trio performance at Tanglewood. Diehl also performed *Zodiac Suite* with the Philadelphia and Cleveland Orchestras under the batons of Cristian Măcelaru and Jader Bignamini, respectively.

In September 2023, Diehl released his recording of Mary Lou Williams's *Zodiac Suite* with The Knights, a Brooklyn-based orchestral collective led by conductor Eric Jacobsen. As the first-ever studio recording of Mary Lou Williams's *Zodiac Suite*, it has been touted as "a joyous, enchanting creation... a triumph" (*The Guardian*) with Diehl lauded as "a contemporary champion" (*The New York Times*) and "a perfect choice to preside over this landmark recording" (*The Wall Street Journal*). The album features Diehl's trio and guest artists saxophonist Nicole Glover, clarinetist Evan Christopher, trumpeter Brandon Lee, and soprano Mikaela Bennett. The critically-acclaimed album is Diehl's fourth recording on Mack Avenue Records, following 2020's *The Vagabond*, 2015's *Space Time Continuum*, and his 2013 label debut, *The Bespoke Man's Narrative*.

Diehl was born in Columbus, Ohio, where he grew up listening to his grandfather, pianist and trombonist Arthur Baskerville. His family nurtured Diehl's undeniable musical talents from a young age and in 2002, a 16-year-old Diehl competed in Jazz at Lincoln Center's Essentially Ellington competition, where he placed as a finalist. It was there that he attracted the attention of Wynton Marsalis, who invited Diehl to join his septet for a European tour. After studying at Julliard under the direction of Kenny Barron, Eric Reed and Oxana Yablonskaya, Diehl was awarded the 2011 American Pianists Association's Cole Porter Fellowship. Diehl, who holds commercial single and multi-engine pilot certifications, inherited a lifelong love of flying from his father who was himself an avid pilot. Diehl has been a Steinway Artist since 2016.

ABOUT THE MSM JAZZ ARTS PROGRAM

Manhattan School of Music was one of the first conservatories in the United States to acknowledge the importance of jazz as an art form by establishing undergraduate and graduate degree programs in jazz. The program, which celebrated its 40th anniversary in 2024–25, is one of the richest of its kind, combining systematic and rigorous conservatory training with a myriad of performance and networking opportunities in New York City. In addition to a wide variety of more than 20 small combos, student ensembles include the Jazz Orchestra, the Jazz Composers' Big Band, and the Studio Orchestra. The program is under the leadership of Dean of Jazz Arts Jim Saltzman (DMA '18).

Students study with a faculty drawn from the highest ranks of the jazz world and are provided opportunities to play for and observe world-renowned guest artists. Master classes in recent years have been presented by Terence Blanchard (trumpet), Billy Childs (piano, composition), Buster Williams (bass), Ron Carter (bass), Christian Scott (trumpet), Barry Harris (piano), Stefon Harris (BM '95, MM '97) (vibraphone), Maria Schneider (composition), Vijay Iyer (piano), Jason Moran (MM '97) (piano), Christian McBride (bass), Jimmy Heath (tenor saxophone), Gary Burton (vibraphone), and Wycliffe Gordon (trombone).

Every concert season, prominent guest artists are featured with our large ensembles, providing enriched performance experiences for students. Guest artists have included Omar Thomas, Jim McNeely, Jane Monheit (BM '99), Candido, Dave Liebman, Randy Weston, Joe Lovano, Bob Mintzer, Randy Brecker, Paquito D'Rivera, and Miguel Zenón (MM '01).

Jim Saltzman, Dean of Jazz Arts

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ABOUT MANHATTAN SCHOOL OF MUSIC

Founded as a community music school by Janet Daniels Schenck in 1918, today MSM is recognized for its more than 1,000 superbly talented undergraduate and graduate students who come from more than 50 countries and nearly all 50 states; its innovative curricula and world-renowned artist-teacher faculty that includes musicians from the New York Philharmonic, the Met Orchestra, and the top ranks of the jazz and Broadway communities; and a distinguished community of accomplished, award-winning alumni working at the highest levels of the musical, educational, cultural, and professional worlds.

The School is dedicated to the personal, artistic, and intellectual development of aspiring musicians, from its Precollege students through those pursuing doctoral studies. Offering classical, jazz, and musical theatre training, MSM grants a range of undergraduate and graduate degrees. True to MSM's origins as a music school for children, the Precollege Division is a professionally oriented Saturday music program dedicated to the musical and personal growth of talented young musicians ages 8 to 18. The School also serves some 2,000 New York City schoolchildren through its Arts-in-Education Program, and another 2,000 students through its critically acclaimed Distance Learning Program.

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