



CHAMBER MUSIC CONCERTS

OREGON CENTER FOR THE ARTS
AT SOUTHERN OREGON UNIVERSITY

Chamber Music Concerts Opens the 2026-27 Season with the Fry Street Quartet with Toby Appel, Viola & Monica Ohuchi, Piano

"a triumph of ensemble playing" *The New York Times*

What's the difference between a violin and a viola? The viola burns longer! This (terrible) old joke that pokes fun at the viola is the basis for a piece on the first Chamber Music Concerts performance of the 2026-27 season by the Fry Street Quartet on Friday, October 2 at 7:30pm at the Southern Oregon University Music Recital Hall.

The Fry Street Quartet is joined by violist Toby Appel and pianist Monica Ohuchi to redeem the much-maligned viola in *The Viola Burns Longer* by Kenji Bunch, a Portland-based composer whose music has been performed by over 60 American orchestras. "Mr. Bunch was a fiddle player and vocalist for 15 years with the band Citigrass. He developed a deep interest in vernacular American music and improvisation...and is a frequent collaborator with jazz, pop, folk country, rock and experimental musicians" (*Biography*).



Bunch creates some of the liveliest crossover styles in contemporary music, and he writes the following about *The Viola Burns Longer*: "It is a suite of four short vignettes for solo viola with piano and string quartet. Reclaiming the familiar punchline of a well-worn viola joke ('What's the difference between violin and viola?'), this work envisions the viola as a mythical creature of great beauty and supernatural power..."

In addition to Bunch, the concert also includes Mozart's String Quartet in E-flat Major, K. 428 and Dvorák's sublime and rarely-heard String Quintet in E-flat Major, Op. 97, featuring the quartet and Appel. Dvorák was a violist, and the instrument shines in this work, with frequent solos and dominant themes.

Celebrated for a “blend of technical precision and scorching spontaneity” (*The Strad*), the Fry Street Quartet is a dynamic ensemble at the forefront of 21st-century chamber music. Winners of the Grand Prize at the Fischhoff National Chamber Music Competition, the quartet has captivated audiences from Carnegie Hall to London, Sarajevo, Jerusalem, and across the United States. Their pioneering performance project *Rising Tide: The Crossroads Project* — a transdisciplinary collaboration with physicist Dr. Robert Davies — was performed over 60 times across the U.S. and internationally, and featured by *The New York Times*, NPR’s *All Things Considered*, *Yale Climate Connections*, and *Reuters*.

Toby Appel is a frequent guest with The Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, and Monica Ohuchi is a piano soloist with an active international career.

Tickets are just \$5 for SOU students, and SOU employees may attend for \$10. Call the CMC Office at 541-552-6154 or email schmidtj@sou.edu to purchase discounted tickets. More information is available at ChamberMusicConcerts.org. Don’t miss the pre-concert lecture at 6:30pm. (Fry Street photos credit: Duston Todd)

