

Founders

“An idiosyncratic quintet featuring versatile chamber music players who double as singers and songwriters” (**The New Yorker**), Founders was awarded both **First Prize** and Audience Choice Award at the 2020 *SAVVY Chamber Competition*. Merging the talents of conservatory trained musicians in New York City, Founders is re-defining the role of the classical ensemble for the next generation.

In 2021, Founders released their second album to critical acclaim, **Songs for the End of Time, Vol. 1** - a full length arrangement of Olivier Messiaen’s *Quartet for the End of Time*. Written and premiered in 2019, Founders sought to bring attention to Messiaen’s historical masterpiece, using their own contemporary musical language, combining jazz, Eastern European folk, Gregorian chant and singing sacred texts. “Almost miraculously, Founders have restored the earthiness of Messiaen’s music without compromising its deeply spiritual and profoundly Catholic sensibility.” (**The Wire**)

Founders began in 2014 through the collaborative efforts of **Ben Russell** (*violin/vocals*) **Brandon Ridenour** (*trumpet/piano*). From the beginning, they pioneered bringing the composer back onto the stage, assembling an ensemble of prize-winning performers, writers and arrangers. In 2015 they co-produced their first album, **You & Who** which the **New York Music Daily** stated, “Their excellent debut album... is like nothing else out there right now.”

In 2018, Founders recorded selected works from their **American Excursions** program, highlighting composers, folk musics, and poets from American history. The program features the music Samuel Barber, Duke Ellington, Louis Armstrong, alongside the poetry of E. A. Poe, Gertrude Stein, Emily Dickinson, and Maya Angelou. This multifaceted project celebrates the rich diversity of American culture, while accentuating the unique strength of Founders as a composing ensemble.

Founders passionately advocates training the next generation of musicians to expand their breadth of creative possibilities. Founders are frequently artists in residence at schools where they present various workshops including **Crucial Habits for Songwriters/Composers**; **Innovative Arranging**; and **The Classical Improvisor**. Accentuating the synergy of classical music and everything after it, Founders enjoy sharing their unique take on music with students and audiences worldwide.