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 Opening Evening Reception  
 Monday, August 8th, 4 to 6 pm



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"Mother and Child Herding Sheep" by Quincy Tahoma, watercolor, 11" x 20-3/4" image size

Paintings by **Quincy Tahoma**  
 Opening Night signing with both authors of the new book  
 Opening Evening Reception Thursday, August 18th, 4 to 7 pm



James M. Keller

## enter the chamber

**MUSIC** Santa Fe is a music-lover's town, so it's not surprising that it can claim one of the music world's finest scholars as its own. James M. Keller, who was a writer and editor on the staff of *The New Yorker* for more than 10 years before moving to Santa Fe in 2000, is the program annotator as well as a frequent lecturer for the New York Philharmonic and the San Francisco Symphony. He is also a staff writer for *The Santa Fe New Mexican's* weekly arts and culture magazine, *Pasatiempo*, and a contributing editor for *Chamber Music* magazine. It's this last sphere of musical interest that Keller has chosen to focus on in his new book, *Chamber Music: A Listener's Guide* (Oxford University Press).

"Chamber music is a special passion of mine," Keller says. "I make my living largely through symphonic repertoire, which I love, of course, but if I'm listening on my own time, I'm likely listening to chamber music." In his book, Keller—who won the prestigious ASCAP–Deems Taylor Award for feature writing for his work in *Chamber Music* magazine—provides nearly 200 highly engaging and beautifully written essays about the pieces that constitute the A-list of the chamber music repertoire, from J.S. Bach's Trio Sonata in G major (circa 1732) to Osvaldo Golijov's *The Dreams and Prayers of Isaac the Blind* (1994). A music historian by training, Keller is quick to point out that, despite

the lively anecdotes and details he provides for all of the works he covers, at the heart of the book are the pieces themselves. “This collection isn’t really the history of music, the history of chamber music, or the story of the great composers,” he says. “But rather it’s about the pieces that have gained the greatest renown and have occupied the most prominent niches in real-life performance.” Also, given that *Chamber Music* is part of Oxford’s Listener’s Guide series (which also includes *The Symphony*, *The Concerto*, and *Choral Masterworks* by Keller’s close friend and mentor, the late Michael Steinberg), this collection is “meant to have more practical use for concertgoers,” he adds. “The essays are accessible to readers or listeners who have not necessarily studied music themselves.”

The hardest part about writing *Chamber Music*—which, in June, was named book of

the month by *BBC Music Magazine*—was “deciding who was in and who was out,” Keller says. One of the greatest rewards, however, came from discovering that there were still surprises to be had. “The composer who is represented with a density that I hadn’t really thought about until it happened was Brahms,” Keller notes. “Because he threw out so much of what he wrote, of the great composers Brahms is the one who allowed the least dross to go into posterity.” Other highlights for the reader-listener include the story of Mozart’s Piano Quartet in E-flat major—“one of the summit works of all music,” Keller says, “and one that I call the little miracle piece because it came perilously close to not existing at all”—as well as the thrill of discovering messages composers embedded within their works. “Berg’s Lyric Suite for String Quartet is really a very detailed love

letter and kind of a love diary about a woman he was having an affair with,” Keller says. “He went to his grave never revealing that, and it was only much, much later that what was really going on in that piece was decoded. Now, of course, we hear it—there’s sort of a narrative that we can follow—but there are a lot of examples of such things. Chamber music is the intimate art in music, so very often composers would use it as a way of conveying something that’s rather private.”

Although *Chamber Music* had been in the works for a while, its publication seems more timely than ever, given the well-publicized troubles orchestras around the country are currently facing as they look to gain firmer financial footing. “The economic model is so different for chamber music,” Keller says. “I think, in many ways, this is a golden age for chamber music.”—Amy Hegarty

## it’s kind of a funny story

**THEATER** You don’t have to be funny or dramatic or even aspire to being the next Will Ferrell or Robert DeNiro to get into improv. Which is key, especially in a town where developing and sustaining either one—comedy or theater—has been anything but amusing. Enter—by way of Chicago (his birthplace), Baltimore (childhood stomping grounds), Harvard (major: psychology), and Los Angeles, where he worked with the Groundlings and the Upright Citizens Brigade, wrote for *Family Guy*, and taught improv and stand-up comedy for 10 years while also ghost-writing—Ben Taxy. Now 37, Taxy (pictured below, standing far left) and his former MGM executive wife, Stephanie Palmer (author of *Good in a Room*), moved to Santa Fe three years ago (“It was like a bell rang,” says Taxy of the City Different’s impact). Eager to get back on the boards and impressed by the “many talented, interesting people living here,” last October Taxy founded Santa Fe Improv.

Unlike stand-up or skits or dramatic sketches, improv relies on its performers’ trained dexterity, as they must conjure scenes (seemingly) extemporaneously, based on ideas given to them by their audience. “People benefit from improv in so many ways,” says Taxy, who began teaching classes of 15 to 20 last fall at Warehouse 21 and who’s now based at Teatro Paraguas. “Listening is key. It helps communication.

People who do improv come away with a better understanding of each other.”

And anyone and everyone can and does participate—not just actors and writers (who’re looking to hone their auditioning or thespian skills, or who’re interested in creating better characters) but software developers, engineers, nurses. “Improv’s especially good for people who work in a group environment,” says Taxy. “Fundamentally, it’s about teamwork.”

Intent on educating and building an audience, one that’ll grow as his classes and students grow—not peter out the way other theatrical ventures have—Taxy has had three SRO shows thus far and plans for more this fall and beyond. “It’s important to grow it slowly and organically,” he says. And as an endeavor, he adds, “It’s fun, inexpensive, and easy to learn. Besides, we’re a country in need of a good time.” No kidding.—DJ

For info on classes or performances, see [santafeimprov.com](http://santafeimprov.com). The show *Unscripted: A Live Comedy Event* will be held September 2–3 at 8 PM at Teatro Paraguas.



STEPHANIE TAXY