

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE - February 21, 2008 - Walnut Creek, CA



15-year-old classical guitar prodigy to perform with the California Symphony on March 9 & 11

Program to also include Emmy-winning Bay Area flamenco dancer Yaelisa

Just weeks after his Carnegie Hall debut in New York, broadcast live on PBS Television's "From the Top," 15-year-old classical guitar prodigy Travis Johnson will solo with the California

Symphony under music director Barry Jekowsky at the Leshner Center for the Arts in Walnut Creek on March 9 and 11, 2008. Johnson, who lives in Oregon, will perform Giuliani's *Guitar Concerto, Op. 30 in A Major* on an instrument handcrafted specially for him by noted luthier Jeffrey R. Elliott.

In 2005, at the age of only 12, Johnson was suddenly thrust into the international spotlight by winning first place in the prestigious Guitar Foundation of America's First Annual Youth Solo Guitar Competition. A year later, he was named a Davidson Fellow, received a coveted Jack Kent Cook Scholarship, and became a semi-finalist in Pepperdine University's Parkening International Youth Solo Guitar Competition.

"It's very rare to have someone this young so accomplished on classical guitar, and Travis is absolutely remarkable and a virtuoso. There are adults who don't come close to his artistry. And to be able to play a work as demanding as Giuliani's guitar concerto is simply extraordinary," says Jekowsky, who recently conducted Johnson with the Reno Philharmonic, marking his professional orchestral debut.

The March 9 and 11, 2008, program – called “Passion of Movement” – will also feature the award-winning Bay Area flamenco artist Yaelisa dancing to Falla’s *Three Cornered Hat Suite No. 2*, and the symphony orchestra performing Lou Harrison’s *Elegy, to the Memory of Calvin Simmons*, written as a tribute to the brilliant young conductor of the Oakland Symphony who died in a boating accident in 1982, and Tchaikovsky’s *Symphony No. 5*.

In 1997, Jekowsky led the California Symphony to critical acclaim with the recording of its first CD – Lou Harrison: A Portrait,” featuring Al Jarreau (DECCA/ARGO) – which garnered rave national and international reviews and was named “CD of the Month” in *Gramophone* magazine, the classical music industry’s most prestigious publication. In 2005, music from the CD was featured prominently in the documentary film, “Deacon of Death,” by Dutch filmmaker Jan van den Berg.

The *Los Angeles Times* has called Yaelisa a "luminary" among flamenco dancers for her extraordinary rhythmic ability, which radiates nothing less than pure emotion infused with sensuality. Raised by her Spanish mother, also a Flamenco performer, Yaelisa was surrounded by the rhythms, gestures and vocal laments of the art form from birth. Trained by many of the great Spanish masters, she has spent extensive periods during the last 12 years living and performing in Spain, and has toured throughout the world. Yaelisa is the recipient of an Emmy Award for Choreography in 1993 for the PBS program, "Desde Cadiz a Sevilla," and a Choreography Fellowship from the National Endowment for the Arts in 1996.

Johnson, who attends Gladstone High School in the Portland area, first appeared on NPR’s “From the Top” in 2006. The youngest of four children, all of them musically gifted, Johnson began playing the ukulele at the age of five. He switched to classical guitar at the age of eight, when he began studying under the tutelage of Marylhurst University professor Peter Zisa, a former child prodigy who has performed at master classes conducted by such luminaries as Maestro Andres Segovia.

Sponsored by Bank of America, Chevron, and City National Bank, both concerts will be held at the Leshar Arts Center in Walnut Creek. Dates and times: Sunday, March 9, 2008, at 4 pm. Tuesday, March 11, at 7:30 pm. Tickets: \$39 - \$59. Purchase online at www.LesharArtsCenter.org or by calling (925) 943-SHOW. For more information, visit www.CaliforniaSymphony.org.

DETAILS

WHAT: "Passion of Movement," featuring 15-year-old classical guitar prodigy Travis Johnson performing Giuliani's *Guitar Concerto, Op. 30 in A Major*; award-winning Bay Area flamenco artist Yaelisa dancing to Falla's *Three Cornered Hat Suite No. 2*, and the symphony orchestra performing Lou Harrison's *Elegy, to the Memory of Calvin Simmons*, written as a tribute to the brilliant young conductor of the Oakland Symphony who died in a boating accident in 1982, and Tchaikovsky's *Symphony No. 5*.

DATES: Sunday, March 9, 2008, at 4 pm. Tuesday, March 11, 2008, at 7:30 pm.

WHERE: Hofmann Theatre, Leshar Center for the Arts, 1601 Civic Drive, Walnut Creek, CA

TICKET PRICES: \$39 - \$59

TO PURCHASE: call (925) 943-SHOW or purchase online at www.LesharArtsCenter.org

MORE INFORMATION: www.CaliforniaSymphony.org

Event supported by Bank of America, Chevron, and City National Bank.

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