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Mason Bates selected as California Symphony's 2007-2010 Young American Composer-In- Residence

Celebrated classical and electronica composer Mason Bates has been selected as California Symphony's 2007-2010 Young American Composer-in-Residence (YACR), it was announced today by Music Director Barry Jekowsky.

The recipient of both a Rome Prize from the American Academy in Rome and an American Academy in Berlin Prize, Bates

composes for a wide variety of media, with a portfolio of orchestral, chamber, theatrical, and electronic works. Though only 30 years old, he has received eight orchestral commissions to date, including from the National Symphony, the Los Angeles Philharmonic, Phoenix Symphony, Oakland Symphony and Juilliard School. Among other upcoming engagements, the National Symphony under Leonard Slatkin will reprise his *Liquid Interface* next February at Carnegie Hall, with Bates performing live electronica in the percussion section.

The Columbia-Juilliard graduate who is currently working on his doctorate at the University of California, Berkeley, is also an accomplished DJ and electronica artist who mixes a unique blend of downtempo hip-hop, trip-hop, French house, and funk at venues in San Francisco, Berlin and Rome. A member of the acclaimed Young Concert Artists of New York, both Bates' purely acoustic works and those with electronics appear on concerts across the country.

Regarded as a rising new talent, Bates has already been the subject of two major profiles, both last year, in [Symphony](#) magazine and the [San Francisco Chronicle](#). In the former, Kyle Gann noted that "Mason Bates, or someone like him, was bound to appear sooner or later...Many artists in one of these worlds have dabbled in the other. But Bates is the first to carry on two careers in tandem, and win

credibility in both arenas....The most impressive thing is how comfortably his two idioms mix.” Music critic Joshua Kosman in the *Chronicle* wrote: “Classical composers have been drawing on popular dance forms since the time of Bach and even earlier. So, in theory, there should be nothing outlandish about music that combines the sounds of a symphony orchestra with the sampled rhythmic grooves of trip-hop. But the work of Oakland composer Mason Bates can still catch a listener off guard. It’s surprising to hear these two musical strains engaging in friendly but somewhat prickly dialogue, and even more remarkable to hear the trick managed with the kind of sophistication and urgency that Bates brings to it.”

In 1991, California Symphony Music Director Barry Jekowsky had a vision of a program that would fill the gap between formal training and the reality of writing for an actual orchestra. The result: the Young American Composer-in-Residence (YACR) program, which nurtures the development of new American classical works through three-year residencies for emerging composers to hone their craft, using a professional orchestra as their laboratory. Previous YACR participants are **Kamran Ince** (1992-1993), **Christopher Theofanidis** (1994-1996), **Kevin Puts** (1996-1999), **Pierre Jalbert** (1992-2002), and **Kevin Beavers** (2003-2005).

The only hands-on training ground of its kind, the YACR program provides resident composers with three world premieres, up to four weeks of annual on-site residency with the California Symphony, reading rehearsals with each commission that gives them enough time for experimentation and revisions before a work’s public debut, direct interaction and feedback from both Jekowsky and members of the orchestra, and help in securing future commissions and positions, among other benefits. “We consider it a model for how an orchestra should work with young composers to develop their talents, business acumen and music,” says Jekowsky, who also founded the award-winning California Symphony in 1986.

Significant of its success, YACR alumni have gone on to win two of the three BBC International Masterprizes awarded to date and four Rome Prizes. As well, the program has produced 21 new American works, including the *Young American Composers Concerto for Orchestra* – the first known symphonic work created through a collaboration of composers (each YACR wrote a movement emphasizing a different family of instruments.)

“It was a tough decision,” Jekowsky says of the more than 80 applications received for this latest position. “I always look for a composer who has an individual voice, a true musician in the group who is saying something that is unique, and whom I believe will really make a huge contribution to American music in the future. And Mason fit all those criteria.

“There have been many people who have tried to blend classical and electronic pop culture, rock and roll and all of that, but it’s always been very obvious,” Jekowsky elaborates. “What I find about

Mason's music is the integration of these worlds. It's so unique. Through subtle blending, they become something new and different. He writes fascinating and engaging music."

"It's a very prestigious program with an incredible track record," says Bates of his decision to apply. "Both Chris Theofanidis and Kevin Putz, whom I know, said it's a fantastic opportunity. It's certainly a significant tradition to be apart of."

The fact that Bates lives only 20 minutes away from Walnut Creek, where the California Symphony is based, will allow him even more interaction with Jekowsky and the orchestra than his predecessors. "I've been fortunate to have had a lot of experience writing for orchestras," he says. "But even if you feel like you've had a ton of experience in this realm, there's always more to learn. It's a complicated and beautiful beast. To be involved with Barry and such an incredible group will be an amazing opportunity to try some new and different approaches, and I feel very grateful."

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Listen to Mason Bates' music at www.MasonBates.com

Read more about Mason Bates at...

- **Profile of Mason Bates in SYMPHONY Magazine March/April 2006:** http://www.symphony.org/news/room/06_mapeople.shtml
- **Profile in SAN FRANCISCO CHRONICLE March 22, 2006:** <http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/c/a/2006/03/22/DDG7RHRC461.DTL&hw=mason+bates&sn=001&sc=1000>

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