

CALIFORNIA SYMPHONY

CALIFORNIA SYMPHONY CELEBRATES THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF DIVERSE CULTURES TO THE AMERICAN IDENTITY



**IN CONCERT SEPTEMBER 30–OCTOBER 1, 2023
AT WALNUT CREEK'S LESHER CENTER FOR THE ARTS**

*Launching a season of performances honoring trailblazing composers and unique artists.
Subscriptions and single tickets are available now.*



WALNUT CREEK, CA (30 August 2023) – **California Symphony** and Artistic and Music Director **Donato Cabrera** celebrate the diverse cultural influences that shape the American story in California Symphony's 2023-24 season opener ***Copland—American Traditions***. Says Cabrera, "I am incredibly proud and excited to open the 2023-24 season – my eleventh leading the orchestra as Music Director and my first as Artistic Director. The music for this concert was chosen to showcase the incredibly

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diverse and inspiring musical landscape that has always been an integral part of the great American experiment. From a Shaker hymn to the Blues to the sounds of a Mariachi band, the audience will be transported through music to practically every corner of this great country.”

Copland—American Traditions will be presented Saturday, September 30, 2023 at 7:30 p.m. and Sunday, October 1, 2023 at 4:00 p.m. in the Hofmann Theatre at the **Leshner Center for the Arts**, 1601 Civic Drive, Walnut Creek. A 30-minute pre-concert talk and Q&A led by lecturer Scott Fogelsong will begin one hour before each performance. Information and tickets (\$45-\$90; \$20 for students 25 and under with valid Student ID) are available at [CaliforniaSymphony.org](https://www.CaliforniaSymphony.org).

The concert launches with the Bay Area premiere of **Juan Pablo Contreras’** inspiring **MeChicano**, co-commissioned by California Symphony through New Music USA’s Amplifying Voices Program and premiered in 2022 by Donato Cabrera with the Las Vegas Philharmonic. Contreras has made a substantial mark in classical music in a short period, becoming the youngest Mexican classical composer nominated for a Latin Grammy Award in 2019 and the first Mexican composer to sign a record deal with Universal Music. *MeChicano*, the first piece Contreras penned after becoming a U.S. citizen, celebrates Mexican-American communities that have flourished around the nation, including in the Bay Area. Contreras describes *MeChicano* as “a very fun and danceable piece that celebrates Mexican Americans.” The Arizona Daily Star hailed the work as “A sonic cross-culture kaleidoscope that borrowed equally from Mexican music styles – toe-tapping cumbias, flashes of mariachi, and Tejana polka – and quintessential American – jazz and rock.”

The concert continues with a performance of Grammy Award–winning composer **Wynton Marsalis’** unique **Violin Concerto in D**. Considered one of the greatest musicians of all time, Marsalis’ composition weaves elements of gospel music, blues, and jazz from his native New Orleans into this genre-bending violin concerto. California Symphony performs the piece with guest soloist **Kelly Hall-Tompkins**, a talented virtuoso and social justice advocate, described by *The New York Times* as a “versatile violinist who makes music come alive.” Hall-Tompkins founded Music Kitchen in 2005 to bring professional musicians together with those experiencing homelessness “to share the inspirational, therapeutic, and uplifting power of music with New York City’s disenfranchised homeless shelter population.” While in Walnut Creek, she will also perform a free recital at the Trinity Center, which provides essential safety net services and assistance to vulnerable populations.

Also featured on the concert program is **Ruth Crawford Seeger’s** playful **Rissolty Rossolty**, which marries the composer’s passion for folk music with her love of classical music and was performed just a few times during Crawford Seeger’s lifetime. A remarkable American pioneer, Crawford Seeger was the first woman awarded a Guggenheim Foundation Fellowship in composition (1930).

The program concludes with **Aaron Copland’s Appalachian Spring Suite**, originally commissioned by dancer and choreographer Martha Graham as “music for an American ballet.” The composition was an instant success, with Copland awarded the 1945 Pulitzer Prize for Music. Offering a distinctive American voice in music, the *Appalachian Spring Suite* amplifies the pioneer spirit with famous quotes from the Shaker hymn *Simple Gifts*.

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Composer Juan Pablo Contreras (b. 1987, Guadalajara, Mexico) is a Latin GRAMMY®-nominated composer who combines Western classical and Mexican folk music in a single soundscape. His works have been performed by 40 major orchestras in the United States, Mexico, Austria, Slovakia, Colombia, Spain, Argentina, and Venezuela. He is the winner of the 2023 Vilcek Prize for Creative Promise in Music and is celebrated as the first Mexican-born composer to sign a record deal with Universal Music, serve as Sound Investment Composer with Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra, and win the BMI William Schuman Prize.

Winner of a Naumburg International Violin Competition Prize and the Sphinx Medal of Excellence, featured in the Smithsonian Museum for African-American History, and as a New York Times “New Yorker of the Year,” Kelly Hall-Tompkins is a violin soloist entrepreneur. As founder of Music Kitchen, Hall-Tompkins is a pioneer of social justice, bringing top artists in over 100 concerts coast to coast in homeless shelters and presenting the World Premiere of *Forgotten Voices Song Cycle* in association with Carnegie Hall. Hall-Tompkins is also a contributor to “Music and Human Rights” on Routledge Press.

California Symphony’s 2023-24 season is sponsored by the Leshner Foundation. The season-opening concerts are sponsored by Zellerbach Family Foundation, New Music USA, and Mechanics Bank. Season subscriptions for three, four, or five concerts start at \$99 and are available now, along with single tickets (\$45-90, and \$20 for students 25 and under). More information is available at CaliforniaSymphony.org. Tickets include a free 30-minute pre-concert talk, starting one hour before the performance.

Founded in 1986, **California Symphony** is in its eleventh season under the leadership of Artistic and Music Director Donato Cabrera. It is distinguished by its vibrant concert programs that combine classics alongside American repertoire and works by living composers and for making the symphony welcoming and accessible. The orchestra includes musicians who perform with the San Francisco Symphony, San Francisco Opera, San Francisco Ballet, and others. Committed to developing new talent, California Symphony has launched the careers of some of today’s most well-known artists, including violinist Anne Akiko Meyers, cellists Alisa Weilerstein and Joshua Roman, pianist Kirill Gerstein, and composers Mason Bates, Christopher Theofanidis, and Kevin Puts.

FOR CALENDAR EDITORS:

WHAT: **California Symphony**, under the artistic direction of **Donato Cabrera**, launches its 2023-24 season with a captivating concert that beautifully intertwines the rich tapestry of Black, folk, and Mexican music. Titled ***Copland—American Traditions***, the program serves as a celebration of the cultural influences that have shaped the American story with music by Aaron Copland, Wynton Marsalis, and more.

WHEN: **Saturday, September 30, 2023 at 7:30 p.m.**
Sunday, October 1, 2023 at 4:00 p.m.

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WHERE: **Hofmann Theatre at the Leshner Center for the Arts**
1601 Civic Drive, Walnut Creek

CONCERT:

**COPLAND—AMERICAN
TRADITIONS** (*23-24 Season
Opener*)
7:30pm, Saturday, Sept. 30
4:00pm, Sunday, Oct. 1
Donato Cabrera, conductor
California Symphony
Kelly Hall-Tompkins, violin

PROGRAM:
Juan Pablo Contreras—
MeChicano
Wynton Marsalis—*Violin
Concerto in D*
Kelly Hall-Tompkins, violin
Ruth Crawford Seeger—*Rissolty
Rissolty*
Aaron Copland— *Appalachian
Spring Suite*

TICKETS: Subscriptions for three, four, or five concerts start at \$99 and are available now. Single tickets are \$45-90 and \$20 (for students 25 and under with valid Student ID).

INFO: For more information or to purchase tickets, the public may visit [CaliforniaSymphony.org](https://californiasymphony.org) or call the Leshner Center Ticket Office at **(925) 943-7469** (open Wed – Sun, noon to 6pm).

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PHOTOS: Available [here](#).