

CALIFORNIA SYMPHONY

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CALIFORNIA SYMPHONY ANNOUNCES 2024-2025 SEASON **Donato Cabrera, Artistic & Music Director**

**Showcasing the Crowning Achievements of
Composers at the Peak of their Powers**

**Featuring the Final Symphonies of
Beethoven, Brahms, Mozart, Tchaikovsky, and Bruckner
and Schubert's Unfinished Symphony**



Photo by Kristen Loken. Hi res photos available [here](#).

**Plus a World Premiere by 2023-2026 Composer-in-Residence Saad Haddad
New Works by Carlos Simon and Mason Bates
Joaquin Rodrigo's Famous Guitar Concerto
and Rarely Performed Music by Louise Farrenc and Grażyna Bacewicz**

“a performance of vividness and grace” – *San Francisco Chronicle*

**“the past decade has seen [Donato Cabrera] accomplishing great things —
revitalizing the organization with smart programs and offstage innovations,
making the California Symphony one of the region's**

most vibrant musical attractions.” – *Mercury News*

Subscriptions available now. Single tickets go on sale in July.

[CaliforniaSymphony.org](https://www.CaliforniaSymphony.org)

WALNUT CREEK, CA (February 22, 2024) – **California Symphony**, led by Artistic and Music Director **Donato Cabrera** and Executive Director **Lisa Dell**, announces its 2024-2025 season, showcasing the crowning achievements of composers at the peak of their powers in five imaginative programs over ten concerts at Hoffman Theatre at the **Leshner Center for the Performing Arts** from September 2024 to May 2025.

Illustrating California Symphony’s signature approach to creating vibrant concert programs that span the breadth of orchestral repertoire, this season features the iconic final symphonies of titans of classical music **Ludwig van Beethoven**, **Johannes Brahms**, **Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart**, and **Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky**; the unfinished masterpieces of **Anton Bruckner** and **Franz Schubert**; a Grammy-winning Disney *Fantasia*-esque concerto for film and orchestra by Bay Area composer **Mason Bates** paired with **Benjamin Britten**’s lively introduction to the ensemble; a world premiere by the orchestra’s 2023-2026 Young American Composer-in-Residence **Saad Haddad**; a recent work by Grammy-nominated composer and Kennedy Center composer-in-residence **Carlos Simon**; **Joaquin Rodrigo**’s famous tour-de-force guitar concerto *Concierto de Aranjuez*; and rarely performed music by 19th-century French composer **Louise Farrenc** and 20th-century Polish composer **Grażyna Bacewicz**.

“In celebrating the 200th anniversary of Beethoven’s Symphony No. 9, it became clear to me that an interesting journey for our audience would be to hear the final symphony of a great composer at each concert of the 2024-2025 season,” **Donato Cabrera** says. “I’ve paired these five final symphonies by Beethoven, Brahms, Mozart, Tchaikovsky, and Bruckner, with contrasting orchestral works, some of which are completely new, while others are very well known. We continue our deep commitment to living and overlooked composers by performing a diverse list of works from our current and former composers-in-residence and others throughout the season. We are re-establishing a partnership we began pre-pandemic with the San Francisco Conservatory of Music [SFCM] Chorus, as well as welcoming guitar soloist and SFCM faculty member, Meng Su. It has been a dream of mine to pair Schubert’s unfinished symphony with Bruckner’s, but performing these two extraordinary symphonies together requires a very special bond between conductor and orchestra. Indeed, very few orchestras could successfully summit both of these masterpieces, but this concert will confirm why my colleagues in the California Symphony have rightfully gained such a well-deserved national reputation.”

California Symphony believes that the concert experience should be fun and inviting, and its mission is to create a welcoming, engaging, and inclusive environment for the entire community. Through its commitment to community, imaginative programming, and support of emerging composers, California Symphony is a leader among orchestras in California and a model for regional orchestras everywhere, serving a growing number of music lovers from across the Bay Area. During the 2023-2024 season, the orchestra enjoyed a 27% increase in subscribers, meeting or exceeding pre-pandemic attendance at its concerts.

In the 2024-2025 season, California Symphony will continue to serve its community beyond the stage through its nationally recognized educational initiative **Sound Minds** and its innovative lifelong learning program **Fresh Look: The Symphony Exposed**. It will also expand its programs for vulnerable populations at **Trinity Center Walnut Creek** and initiate new community partnerships to reach more underserved youth throughout Contra Costa County.

BEETHOVEN’S NINTH

Saturday, September 21, 2024 at 7:30pm

Sunday, September 22, 2024 at 4pm

Louise Farrenc: Overture No. 2 in E-flat

Ludwig van Beethoven: Symphony No. 9

Laquita Mitchell, soprano; Kelley O’Connor, mezzo-soprano; Nicholas Phan, tenor;

Allen Michael Jones, bass; San Francisco Conservatory of Music Chorus, Eric Choate, Director

California Symphony launches its season with two thrilling concerts marking the 200th anniversary of Beethoven's Symphony No. 9, a monumental masterpiece that celebrates our shared humanity. The concerts open with a vivacious and powerful overture by pioneering 19th-century French composer Louise Farrenc, who was well known during her lifetime but whose work is only now being performed widely. Instantly recognizable, Beethoven's final symphony is widely regarded as one of the greatest masterpieces in classical music. Four internationally acclaimed singers with Bay Area connections – Laquita Mitchell, soprano; Kelley O'Connor, mezzo-soprano; Nicholas Phan, tenor; and Allen Michael Jones, bass – join the California Symphony and the San Francisco Conservatory of Music (SFCM) Chorus. Powerful and uplifting, the work's final movement *Ode to Joy* has become an enduring anthem for unity.

BRAHMS ODYSSEY

Saturday, November 2, 2024 at 7:30pm

Sunday, November 3, 2024 at 4pm

Benjamin Britten: *Young Person's Guide to the Orchestra*

Mason Bates: *Philharmonia Fantastique – The Making of the Orchestra*

Johannes Brahms: Symphony No.4, Op. 98, E minor

California Symphony's November concerts take audience members on an odyssey through the orchestra. Benjamin Britten's lively *Young Person's Guide to the Orchestra* uses a catchy theme to introduce different instruments in the orchestra, making it a great way to learn about the symphony. Former California Symphony Resident Composer Mason Bates invokes the spirit of Disney's classic *Fantasia* in his Grammy-winning concerto for orchestra and animated film, *Philharmonia Fantastique: The Making of the Orchestra*, guided by a mischievous sprite. Brahms' Symphony No. 4 – his final symphony – is a deeply emotional, poignant masterpiece. Even though Brahms lived for more than a decade after its premiere, it was the last symphony he wrote, with many considering it to be the pinnacle of his career.

MOZART SERENITY

Saturday, February 1, 2025 at 7:30pm

Sunday, February 2, 2025 at 4pm

Carlos Simon: *Breathe*

Joaquin Rodrigo: *Concierto de Aranjuez*

Meng Su, guitar

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart: Symphony No.41, K.551, C Major ("Jupiter")

California Symphony's first concerts of 2025 combine a calming meditation by composer Carlos Simon, a world-famous Spanish guitar concerto by Joaquin Rodrigo, and Mozart's classical grandeur. Inspired by the words of theologian and former San Francisco resident Howard Thurman, Simon's *Breathe* is a serene appeal to "stay put for a while." For music lovers and guitar enthusiasts alike, Rodrigo's iconic *Concierto de Aranjuez*, performed with the stunningly virtuosic San Francisco-based guitarist Meng Su, features evocative melodies and distinctive Spanish guitar solos, designed to transport listeners to another time and place. A majestic, intricate, exuberant masterpiece, Mozart's final symphony, his Symphony No. 41, is one of his most celebrated and frequently performed works, showcasing a genius at the height of his powers. The work is commonly known as the "Jupiter" Symphony for the Roman god because of its grand scale.

TCHAIKOVSKY PASSION

Saturday, March 22, 2025 at 7:30pm

Sunday, March 23, 2025 at 4pm

Saad Haddad: World Premiere (Commissioned by California Symphony)

Grażyna Bacewicz: Piano Concerto

David Fung, piano

Piotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky: Symphony No. 6 ("Pathétique")

California Symphony's March concerts feature music that is full of emotion and high drama, concluding with Tchaikovsky's powerful final symphony, Symphony No. 6. The concerts begin with the world premiere of Composer-in-Residence Saad Haddad's second commission for the orchestra. Haddad's music frequently delves into the relationship between the West and the East by transferring the performance techniques of traditional Arab instruments to Western symphonic instruments. Pianist David Fung, praised by *The Washington Post* for his "poetic and exquisitely sculpted interpretations," makes his California Symphony debut as soloist in 20th century Polish composer Grażyna Bacewicz's Piano Concerto. Bacewicz incorporates Polish folk themes in this work which features intense moments of drama and a demanding and virtuosic solo piano part. Tchaikovsky's sixth and final symphony is also known as the "Pathétique," but the composer originally called it the "Passionate." Grand, sweeping, and with themes recognizable from movies and pop culture, it is one of the Russian melody master's most popular and frequently performed works.

UNFINISHED BRUCKNER

Saturday, May 3, 2025 at 7:30pm

Sunday, May 4, 2025 at 4pm

Franz Schubert: Symphony No. 8, D.759, B minor (Unfinished)

Anton Bruckner: Symphony No. 9 (Unfinished)

California Symphony concludes its 2024-2025 season with a striking pair of unfinished masterpieces, each marking the pinnacle of achievement for the composer. The orchestra will perform the two surviving movements of Franz Schubert's haunting and beautiful Symphony No. 8. Declining health, hesitation over how to continue the piece, work overload, or even that the pages were completed but ultimately lost . . . theories abound, but no one really knows why Schubert never finished it. The three completed movements of Anton Bruckner's Symphony No. 9 conclude the program, showcasing his signature big symphonic sound, iconic themes, and brass fanfares. Featuring one of the largest ensembles to take the stage during the season, Bruckner's unfinished Symphony No. 9 makes a fittingly epic grand finale to California Symphony's 2024-2025 season.

Concert Details:

Location for All Performances: Hofmann Theatre at the Leshner Center for the Arts; 1601 Civic Drive; Walnut Creek, CA

Ticket Information: Subscriptions for three, four, or five concerts start at \$99 and are available now, with single tickets (\$45-90) and student tickets (\$20 for students 25 and under with valid Student ID) going on sale in July. For more information or to purchase tickets, visit CaliforniaSymphony.org or call the Leshner Center Ticket Office at (925) 943-7469 (open Wednesday-Sunday, 12-6pm).

About the California Symphony:

Founded in 1986, California Symphony has been led by Artistic and Music Director Donato Cabrera since 2013. It is distinguished by its vibrant concert programs that span the breadth of orchestral repertoire, including works by American composers and by living composers. Its concert season at the Leshner Center for the Arts in Walnut Creek, California serves a growing number of music lovers from across the Bay Area.

California Symphony believes that the concert experience should be fun and inviting, and its mission is to create a welcoming, engaging, and inclusive environment for the entire community. Through this commitment to community, imaginative programming, and its support of emerging composers, California Symphony is a leader among orchestras in California and a model for regional orchestras everywhere.

Since 1991, California Symphony's three-year Young American Composer-in-Residence program has provided a composer with a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to collaborate with the orchestra over three consecutive years

to create, rehearse, premiere, and record three major orchestra compositions, one each season. Every Composer-in-Residence has gone on to win top honors and accolades in the field, including the Rome Prize, Pulitzer Prize, Grammy Awards, and more.

The orchestra's nationally recognized educational initiative Sound Minds impacts students' trajectories by providing instruction for violin or cello and musicianship skills. Sound Minds has proven to contribute directly to improved reading and math proficiencies and character development, as students set and achieve goals, learn communication and problem-solving skills, and gain self-confidence. Inspired by the El Sistema program of Venezuela, the program is offered completely free of charge to the students and families of Downer Elementary School in San Pablo, California.

Through its innovative adult education program Fresh Look: The Symphony Exposed, California Symphony provides lifelong learners a fun-filled introduction to the orchestra and classical music. Led by celebrated educator and California Symphony program annotator Scott Foglesong, these live classes are held over four weeks in the summer annually and are available to stream online year-round.

In 2017, California Symphony became the first orchestra with a [public statement](#) of a commitment to diversity. Its website is available in both Spanish and English.

Reaching far beyond the performance hall, since 2020 the orchestra's concerts have been broadcast nationally on multiple radio series through Classical California (KUSC/KDFC) and the WFMT Radio Network, reaching over 1.5 million listeners across the country.

For more information, visit [CaliforniaSymphony.org](https://www.californiasymphony.org).

California Symphony's 2024-25 season is sponsored by the Leshner Foundation.

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