

CALIFORNIA SYMPHONY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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California Symphony's 2025-2026 Season Continues with BEETHOVEN'S *EROICA*

Celebrating the Triumph of the Human Spirit with
Jessie Montgomery's *Overture*, Mozart's Piano Concerto No. 21
featuring Soloist Robert Thies, and Beethoven's Symphony No. 3,
"Eroica"



Photos by Kristen Loken; high resolution photos available [here](#).

Led by Donato Cabrera, Artistic & Music Director
In Concert November 15 at 7:30pm & November 16 at 4:00pm
At Walnut Creek's Leshner Center for the Arts

Tickets & Information: www.californiasymphony.org

WALNUT CREEK, CA – California Symphony and Artistic and Music Director Donato Cabrera continue the 2025-2026 season with BEETHOVEN'S *EROICA* – two concerts celebrating the triumph of the human spirit featuring Jessie Montgomery's *Overture*, Mozart's Piano Concerto No. 21 performed by the orchestra with GRAMMY-nominated pianist Robert Thies, and Beethoven's monumental Symphony No. 3, "Eroica" on Saturday, November 15, 2025 at 7:30pm and Sunday, November 16, 2025 at 4:00pm at Hofmann Theatre at the Leshner Center for the Arts (1601 Civic Drive, Walnut Creek).

Full of rich harmonies, GRAMMY-winning composer Jessie Montgomery's *Overture* from 2022 blends elements of jazz, American classical music, and Baroque rhythms. Nicknamed the *Elvira Madigan* concerto because of its use in the 1967 Swedish film, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's Piano Concerto No. 21 features one of classical music's most famous and serene melodies, performed by Robert Thies, praised by the *Los Angeles Times* as, "A pianist of unerring warm-toned refinement, revealing judicious glimmers of power." Ludwig van Beethoven's Symphony No. 3 – the *Eroica* Symphony – changed the game for symphonic music: A bold and powerful celebration of struggle, triumph, and humanity, the composition marks the point where Beethoven truly began to push boundaries, introducing the emotional depth and drama that later culminated in the grandeur of the Ninth.

Donato Cabrera says, “Jessie Montgomery’s music has become a welcome and frequent visitor to the California Symphony stage. Her music has a unique rhythmic vitality, while at the same time exhibiting a deep sonority. Like all great composers, Ms. Montgomery seamlessly incorporates the sounds and styles that are not only surrounding her in the moment, but she also uses sounds and styles from the past, and from all genres. Her *Overture* is a great example of this beautiful cornucopia. One of the oddest titles to be posthumously given to a piece of music - let’s face it, few now have seen the movie, *Elvira Madigan* - Mozart’s Piano Concerto No. 21 is brimming with his free and easy musical atmosphere, I am very excited to welcome back Robert Thies to play this exquisite concerto with us as he brings a sense of style and tone to the piano that is simply unmatched. While the *Eroica* isn’t Beethoven’s first symphony, it is the symphony that announced Beethoven’s arrival as the next great composer. I am always thrilled beyond measure to conduct this particular work because it is so dramatic in nature. It is like an opera without words.”

Jessie Montgomery is a GRAMMY® Award-winning composer, violinist, and educator whose work interweaves classical music with elements of vernacular music, improvisation, poetry, and social consciousness. Her profound works have been described as “turbulent, wildly colorful, and exploding with life” (*The Washington Post*), and she was named 2025 Classical Woman of the Year by the nationally broadcast radio program *Performance Today*. Montgomery describes her *Overture* as, “a one-movement orchestral tutti steeped in harmonic textures inspired by a fusion between jazz and American classical harmonies, Baroque rhythmic gestures, and polyphonic tension.”

Mozart composed his **Piano Concerto No. 21** in 1785 during one of the most productive periods of his life, when he was writing piano concertos at an astonishing rate for his own performances as a soloist in Vienna. The work balances Mozart’s characteristic elegance with moments of playful virtuosity, creating a conversation between piano and orchestra. For these performances, California Symphony welcomes back piano soloist Robert Thies, an artist renowned for his consummate musicianship and poetic temperament. Thies first captured worldwide attention in 1995 when he won the Gold Medal at the Second International Prokofiev Competition in St. Petersburg, Russia. With this victory, he became the only American pianist to win first prize in a Russian piano competition since Van Cliburn’s famed triumph in Moscow in 1958.

Premiered in 1805, **Beethoven’s Symphony No. 3, the *Eroica***, was revolutionary not only in its emotional scope but also in its sheer scale. At nearly 50 minutes, it was almost twice as long as any symphony that had come before it. Beethoven originally dedicated the work to Napoleon Bonaparte, whom he admired as a champion of democratic ideals, but famously tore up the dedication page when Napoleon crowned himself Emperor. The funeral march in the second movement is powerfully beautiful, and the final movement demonstrates Beethoven’s unparalleled ability to transform simple themes into profound musical statements.

Illustrating California Symphony’s signature approach to creating vibrant concerts, rich in storytelling and spanning the breadth of orchestral repertoire, the 2025-2026 season explores evocative programmatic music including **Maurice Ravel’s *Boléro***, **Modest Mussorgsky’s *Pictures at an Exhibition***, and **Valentin Silvestrov’s *Stille Musik***; the fruitful intersection of jazz and classical in music by **Jessie Montgomery**, **Friedrich Gulda**, and **George Gershwin**; the monumental symphonies of **Ludwig van Beethoven**, **Franz Schubert**, **Jean Sibelius**, and **Alexander Borodin**; the timelessness of **Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart** including excerpts from *Don Giovanni*; and world-class soloists in riveting concertos including pianist **Robert Thies** in Mozart’s Piano Concerto No. 21, **Nathan Chan** in Friedrich Gulda’s Cello Concerto, violinists **Jennifer Cho** and **Sam Weiser** in **Arvo Pärt’s *Tabula Rasa***, and pianist **Sofya Gulyak** in **Sergei Rachmaninoff’s Piano Concerto No. 3**.

This season, California Symphony continues 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 continue community partnerships to reach more underserved youth throughout Contra Costa County.

Founded in 1986, California Symphony has been led by Donato Cabrera since 2013. 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.

Single tickets start at \$50 and at \$25 for students 25 and under. Season subscriptions and single tickets are available now. More information is available at CaliforniaSymphony.org or call the Leshner Center Ticket Office at (925) 943-7469 (open Wed – Sun, 12pm to 6pm).

FOR CALENDAR EDITORS:

WHAT: California Symphony and Artistic and Music Director Donato Cabrera celebrate the triumph of the human spirit. These concerts open with the rich harmonies of GRAMMY-winning composer Jessie Montgomery's *Overture* and continue with Mozart's Piano Concerto No. 21 featuring pianist Robert Thies, closing with Ludwig van Beethoven's towering Symphony No. 3 – the *Eroica*, a bold, powerful celebration of struggle, triumph, and humanity.

California Symphony takes the stuffiness out of the concert experience: Take selfies at the photo booth, order a signature cocktail, and sip at your seat. Tickets include a free 30-minute pre-concert talk by Artistic and Music Director Donato Cabrera, starting one hour before the show.

WHEN:

Saturday, November 15, 2025 at 7:30pm

Sunday, November 16, 2025 at 4:00pm

WHERE:

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

CONCERT:

BEETHOVEN'S *EROICA*

Donato Cabrera, conductor

California Symphony

PROGRAM:

Jessie Montgomery: *Overture* (2022)

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart: Piano Concerto No. 21 (1785)

Robert Thies, piano

Ludwig van Beethoven: Symphony No. 3 (*Eroica*) (1804)

TICKETS: Single tickets start at \$50 and at \$25 for students 25 and under. For more information or to purchase tickets, visit CaliforniaSymphony.org or call the Leshner Center Ticket Office at (925) 943-7469 (open Wed – Sun, 12pm to 6pm).

PHOTOS: Available [here](#)

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.

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 2025-26 season is sponsored by the Leshner Foundation.

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