

# CALIFORNIA SYMPHONY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Press contact: Christina Jensen, Jensen Artists

646.536.7864 x1 | [christina@jensenartists.com](mailto:christina@jensenartists.com)

## California Symphony's 2025-2026 Season Continues with SCHUBERT IN VIENNA

A lively genre-blending program exploring how and why Vienna became the musical capital of the world

Featuring the classical elegance of instrumental selections from Mozart's *Don Giovanni*, Friedrich Gulda's outrageous multi-genre Cello Concerto with soloist Nathan Chan, and Franz Schubert's Symphony No. 9 "The Great"



Photo of Donato Cabrera with the California Symphony by Kristen Loken; photo of Nathan Chan by Mike Grittani; high resolution photos available [here](#).

**Led by Donato Cabrera, Artistic & Music Director**

**In Concert January 24 at 7:30pm & January 25, 2026 at 4:00pm  
At Walnut Creek's Leshner Center for the Arts**

**Tickets & Information: [www.californiasymphony.org](http://www.californiasymphony.org)**

WALNUT CREEK, CA – California Symphony and Artistic and Music Director Donato Cabrera continue the 2025-2026 season with **SCHUBERT IN VIENNA** – a lively, genre-blending program featuring the classical elegance of instrumental selections from **W.A. Mozart's *Don Giovanni***, **Friedrich Gulda's Cello Concerto** with soloist **Nathan Chan** (an outrageous mix of jazz, rock, blues, classical, and improvisation), and **Franz Schubert's Symphony No. 9 "The Great"** on **Saturday, January 24, 2026 at 7:30pm** and **Sunday, January 25, 2026 at 4:00pm** at Hofmann Theatre at the Leshner Center for the Arts (1601 Civic Drive, Walnut Creek).

California Symphony's first concerts of 2026 tell the story of how and why Vienna became the musical capital of the world. The program begins with instrumental excerpts from Mozart's brilliantly witty and melody-filled opera *Don Giovanni* in an 1803 arrangement for the Harmonie (wind ensemble) of Mozart's day, when bands of wind players would roam the streets of Vienna to promote coming performances at the opera house. Friedrich Gulda's Cello Concerto, performed by Bay Area native Nathan Chan, is a fusion of jazz, rock, and European folk dance performed with a modified Harmoniemusik wind ensemble with the addition of a jazz rhythm section of guitar, bass, and drum set. Franz Schubert's Symphony No. 9 – aptly known as “The Great” – is a grand and majestic journey through soaring melodies and lively folk rhythms, all of which are first introduced by the harmoniemusik section of the orchestra.

“Like any historical endeavor, performing music of the past, whether it was composed two hundred years ago or last week, requires a passion and desire for context,” says Donato Cabrera. “These concerts explore the why and how of Vienna being the musical capital of 18th and 19th century Europe. Before the dawn of modern media, the opera houses of Vienna used the wind sections of their orchestra to act as musical billboards throughout the city, playing musical snippets from whatever opera was playing at the time. These wind ensembles, called *Harmonie* in German, became all the rage when the Holy Roman Emperor, Joseph II, declared that there be a “Court Harmonie” in 1782, and this popularity lasted well into the 19th century. I've always been fascinated by Schubert's ‘Great’ C-major symphony. One of its many interesting traits is that the Harmonie section of the orchestra (winds and brass) introduce all of the themes, from the opening horn call, to the final exuberant melodies of the last movement. Building a concert around this symphony became a labor of love. I have known of these *Harmonie* arrangements of the tunes from Mozart's operas for many years and they are a perfect counterweight to Schubert's towering symphony. Sandwiched in between is Gulda's quirky and completely iconoclastic take on the cello concerto, with the Harmonie ensemble acting as the backing band to the Hendrix-like solo lines of the cello. And I couldn't think of a more perfect piece to welcome back our friend, Nathan Chan.”

The program opens with Harmonie arrangements of **Mozart's masterpiece *Don Giovanni***, offering a taste of one of the composer's most psychologically complex works. Written in 1787, this "opera of operas" (as composer Richard Wagner later described it) blends comedy and melodrama in its tale of the infamous libertine Don Juan. The woodwinds of the California Symphony enjoy the spotlight in selections from the opera in an 1803 arrangement for Harmonie.

Cellist Nathan Chan, praised by the *San Francisco Chronicle* as having a "mastery of musical narrative [that] unfolds with unerring clarity," joins the California Symphony for **Friedrich Gulda's innovative Cello Concerto**. The concerto breaks convention with its eclectic fusion of styles, from lyrical Romanticism to rock and jazz-inflected rhythms. Gulda described it as including “jazz, a minuet, rock, a smidgen of polka, a march, and a cadenza with two spots where the star cellist must improvise.” Chan, recently named to *Forbes'* 30 Under 30 list in Seattle, has harnessed the power of technology and social media to draw new audiences to classical music, with over 35 million views across YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok.

California Symphony's January concerts culminate with **Schubert's monumental Symphony No. 9 in C major**, known as "The Great." This expansive work, which was not performed until ten years after the composer's death, is a towering achievement of the Romantic era. With its “heavenly length” (as famously described by composer Robert Schumann), glorious melodies, and triumphant spirit, the symphony showcases Schubert's ability to create music of both intimate beauty and grand architectural scale.

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 Leshar 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](https://CaliforniaSymphony.org) or call the Leshar Center Ticket Office at (925) 943-7469 (open Wed – Sun, 12pm to 6pm).

#### **FOR CALENDAR EDITORS:**

**WHAT:** California Symphony's first concerts of 2026 tell the story of how and why Vienna became the musical capital of the world. The lively, genre-blending program features the classical elegance of instrumental selections from W.A. Mozart's *Don Giovanni*, Friedrich Gulda's Cello Concerto with soloist Nathan Chan (an outrageous mix of jazz, rock, blues, classical, and improvisation), and Franz Schubert's Symphony No. 9 "The Great," a grand and majestic journey through soaring melodies and lively folk rhythms.

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 award-winning instructor Scott Foglesong, one hour before the show.

#### **WHEN:**

Saturday, January 24, 2026 at 7:30pm

Sunday, January 25, 2026 at 4pm

#### **WHERE:**

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

#### **CONCERT:**

##### **SCHUBERT IN VIENNA**

Donato Cabrera, conductor  
California Symphony

#### **PROGRAM:**

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart: Excerpts from *Don Giovanni* (1787)

Friedrich Gulda: Cello Concerto (1980)

Nathan Chan, cello

Franz Schubert: Symphony No. 9 ("The Great") (1824-26)

**TICKETS:** Single tickets start at \$50 and at \$25 for students 25 and under. For more information or to purchase tickets, visit [CaliforniaSymphony.org](https://CaliforniaSymphony.org) or call the Leshar 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 Lesher 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 Lesher Foundation.*

###