

# CALIFORNIA SYMPHONY

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## California Symphony Continues its 2024-2025 Season with *BRAHMS ODYSSEY*

Led by Donato Cabrera, Artistic & Music Director



Photo of Donato Cabrera by Stefan Cohen; high resolution photos available [here](#).

**In Concert November 2 at 7:30pm & November 3 at 4:00pm  
At Walnut Creek's Leshner Center for the Arts**

**Featuring Mason Bates's GRAMMY Award-Winning Concerto for Orchestra &  
Animated Film *Philharmonia Fantastique***

[Watch a Preview](#)

**California Symphony's 2024-2025 Season Showcases the Crowning  
Achievements of Composers at the Peak of Their Powers**

[Watch Donato Cabrera's Introduction](#)

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

WALNUT CREEK, CA – **California Symphony** and Artistic and Music Director **Donato Cabrera** continue the 2024-2025 season, showcasing the crowning achievements of composers at the peak of their powers, with **BRAHMS ODYSSEY** – two thrilling concerts that will take audience members on an odyssey through the orchestra on **Saturday, November 2, 2024 at 7:30pm** and **Sunday, November 3, 2024 at 4:00pm** at Hofmann Theatre at the **Leshar Center for the Arts** (1601 Civic Drive, Walnut Creek).

The concerts open with **Benjamin Britten's** lively ***Young Person's Guide to the Orchestra***, which uses a memorable theme to introduce different instruments in the orchestra, taking listeners on a journey through the strings, woodwinds, percussion, brass, and more. Next, 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. The performances close with **Johannes Brahms's Symphony No. 4** – a deeply emotional, poignant masterpiece which was the eminent composer's last symphony. Even though Brahms lived for more than a decade after its premiere, it was the final symphony he wrote, with many considering it to be the pinnacle of his career.

Following these concerts, on **Monday, November 4**, the California Symphony launches its first **Education Concerts** held during the school day, welcoming 1500 fourth grade students from local Title I schools in Contra Costa County to two performances at the Leshar Center. In advance of the performances, California Symphony Teaching Artists will visit classrooms to provide pre-concert music education, and the in-classroom learning will give students a deeper understanding and appreciation of music and lay the groundwork for a fun, productive, and memorable field trip.

“Over the course of my tenure with the California Symphony, the music of Johannes Brahms has figured prominently in our concerts. So, not only does performing his final symphony fit within the theme of our season, it brings to a close our survey of his symphonic output,” says **Donato Cabrera**. “When it came to pairing works with Brahms's fourth symphony, I was reminded of the old phrase, ‘The Three B's of classical music: Bach, Beethoven, and Brahms,’ and thought that it would be fun (and high time) to update it! In choosing Benjamin Britten's *Young Person's Guide to the Orchestra* and Mason Bates's *Philharmonia Fantastique*, a piece that Mason describes as a ‘concerto for orchestra and animated film,’ we will be performing two works that belong to a long tradition of works composed to showcase and introduce the incredibly powerful and unique sounds that only the instruments of the orchestra can produce.”

**Benjamin Britten's** *Young Person's Guide to the Orchestra* was commissioned in 1945 for a British documentary film, *Instruments of the Orchestra*, featuring the London Symphony Orchestra. "Britten's *Guide* is meticulously structured, exquisitely paced, and magnificently orchestrated," writes California Symphony program annotator Scott Foglesong. "After a grand statement of the theme in full orchestra, Britten takes us through 13 variations, each highlighting specific instruments."

*Philharmonia Fantastique: The Making of the Orchestra* is a 25-minute multi-media concerto from former California Symphony Resident Composer **Mason Bates** and award-winning filmmakers **Gary Rydstrom** (*Jurassic Park*, *Titanic*, *Saving Private Ryan*) and **Jim Capobianco** (*The Lion King*, *Finding Nemo*, *Inside Out*). *Philharmonia Fantastique*, like Britten's *Guide*, is also a tour through the orchestra – this time paired with an animated film guided by a magical character, Sprite. The imaginative piece won a GRAMMY in 2023. "With uncanny synchronicity, [*Philharmonia Fantastique*] transposes the composer's sweeping score into a charming chronicle of a wide-eyed young listener – a 'Sprite' – whose curiosity leads to a vibrantly colorful dive into not just the makings of an orchestra, but also the inner workings of its instruments," reports *The Washington Post*.

**Johannes Brahms's** final symphony, Symphony No. 4, was premiered in 1885 and declared to be, "New and original and yet authentic Brahms from A to Z," by the composer Richard Strauss. Brahms wrote the piece over the summers of 1884 and 1885 in the Austrian Alps, while reading a translation of Sophocles. While the symphony is lyrical and immediately captivating, it is also poignantly tragic. Scott Foglesong describes the Symphony as, "incomparably rich, sweeping and majestic," while Brahms's contemporary, Austrian music critic Eduard Hanslick wrote that it is, "like a dark well; the longer we look into it, the more brightly the stars shine back."

Illustrating California Symphony's signature approach to creating vibrant concert programs that span the breadth of orchestral repertoire, including works by American composers and by living composers, the 2024-2025 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**.

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.

Three-concert subscriptions start at \$120 and are available now. Single tickets start at \$50 and at \$25 for students 25 and under. A 30-minute pre-concert talk by lecturer Scott Foglesong will begin one hour before each performance. More information is available at [CaliforniaSymphony.org](https://CaliforniaSymphony.org).

**FOR CALENDAR EDITORS:**

**WHAT: California Symphony presents *Brahms Odyssey***

This November, California Symphony, conducted by Artistic and Music Director Donato Cabrera, takes audience members on an odyssey through the orchestra. Benjamin Britten's lively *Young Person's Guide to the Orchestra* uses a memorable 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 guided by a mischievous sprite, *Philharmonia Fantastique: The Making of the Orchestra*. We wrap up the performance with Brahms's 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.

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, starting one hour before the show.

**WHEN: Saturday, November 2, 2024 at 7:30pm  
Sunday, November 3, 2024 at 4:00pm**

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

**CONCERT:**

**BRAHMS ODYSSEY**

**7:30pm, Saturday, November 2**

**4:00pm, Sunday, November 3**

Donato Cabrera, conductor  
California Symphony

**PROGRAM:**

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

**TICKETS:** Three-concert subscriptions start at \$120 and are available now. Single tickets start at \$50 and at \$25 for students 25 and under.

**INFO:** For more information or to purchase tickets, the public may visit **CaliforniaSymphony.org** or call the Leshar Center Ticket Office at **(925) 943-7469** (open Wed – Sun, noon 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 Leshar Center for the Arts in Walnut Creek, California serves a growing number of music lovers from across the Bay Area.

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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](#).

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