

CALIFORNIA SYMPHONY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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California Symphony Continues its 2024-2025 Season with **MOZART SERENITY**

Led by Donato Cabrera, Artistic & Music Director



Photo of Meng Su courtesy of the artist and of Donato Cabrera by Kristen Loken; high resolution photos available [here](#).

In Concert February 1 at 7:30pm & February 2 at 4:00pm
At Walnut Creek's Leshar Center for the Arts

Featuring Guitar Soloist Meng Su in Rodrigo's iconic *Concierto de Aranjuez*
[Watch Meng Su in Performance](#)

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

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 **MOZART SERENITY** – two concerts combining a calming meditation by composer Carlos Simon, a world-famous Spanish guitar concerto by Joaquín Rodrigo, and Mozart's classical grandeur on Saturday, February 1, 2025 at 7:30pm and Sunday, February 2, 2025 at 4:00pm at Hofmann Theatre at the Leshar Center for the Arts (1601 Civic Drive, Walnut Creek).

Inspired by the words of theologian and former San Francisco resident Howard Thurman, Carlos Simons' *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.

“In choosing music to precede a great milestone such as Mozart’s final symphony, I decided that it was best to showcase music of a completely different and opposing style and aesthetic,” **Donato Cabrera** says. “Simon’s *Breathe* is contemplative and meditative, music that speaks softly but carries a big stick! Like the music of Arvo Pärt, Simon’s *Breathe* also has a natural forthrightness to it that is beguiling and gently invites one to just be present in the moment. With everyone in a heightened state of mind, the beginning of Rodrigo’s *Concierto de Aranjuez* should be particularly magical and poignant. I know to many guitarist’s chagrin, this is the only guitar concerto that is typically asked of them, but it’s hard to pass up each movement’s iconic melodies, sentiment, and deep emotion, and I know that our soloist, Meng Su, is the ideal soloist. There are many reasons why Mozart’s Symphony No. 41 has been considered one of the greatest achievements of Western Classical Music, but most of these reasons are best left in the textbooks. For me, and I believe for the listener, the magic that this piece possesses is that it somehow contains a facet of every aspect of human existence and experience.”

A deeply contemplative work, **Carlos Simon's *Breathe*** was inspired by Howard Thurman's *Meditations of the Heart*, a collection of meditations on the beauty of humility. Simon writes, “I was deeply inspired by one section entitled 'Still Dews of Quietness,' which urges one to 'stay put for a spell.' Through his words, I wanted to take the gesture further by writing a piece that encourages others to simply reflect and breathe.” The piece was commissioned by Bay Area-based Gabriela Lena Frank Creative Academy of Music for the San Francisco Chamber Orchestra. Simon, who is Composer-in-Residence at The Kennedy Center, was recently profiled in *The New York Times*, saying of his work, “If this music is done in the right way, if it’s being honest, it doesn’t matter whatever your language, whatever your background, whether you’re white, Black, whoever – it goes straight to you. And that’s what I always strive for, honesty, in my music.”

Spanish composer **Joaquín Rodrigo's *Concierto de Aranjuez*** was inspired by the gardens at the Royal Palace of Aranjuez, rebuilt in the 18th century. Rodrigo wrote that the concerto captures “the fragrance of magnolias, the singing of birds, and the gushing of fountains.” The piece has been performed and recorded numerous times in many forms since its premiere in 1940 – including as part of Miles Davis's *Sketches of Spain* and by jazz pianist Chick Corea as part of his composition *Spain*. California Symphony’s featured guitar soloist, Meng Su, has performed in over 30 countries and is on the faculty at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music. *Classical Guitar Magazine* reports that she has the “star potential to serve as inspiration for new generations of guitarists to come.”

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's Symphony No. 41 in C Major is his final symphony, and his longest and grandest. Mozart completed the monumental piece in a brief, two-month period over the summer of 1788, along with his Symphonies Nos. 39 and 40, creating a final trilogy of works that has puzzled scholars – we don’t know for what occasion he wrote them, since they were not commissioned by any patron for any specific performance, an anomaly in Mozart’s career. Mozart and his Jupiter Symphony were praised in a German lexicon of music in 1814 as, “. . . overpoweringly great, fiery, artistic, pathetic, sublime, Symphony in C. . . we would already have to perceive him as one of the first[-ranked] geniuses of modern times and the century just past.”

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**; **Joaquín 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 Fogelsong will begin one hour before each performance. More information is available at [CaliforniaSymphony.org](https://www.californiasymphony.org).

FOR CALENDAR EDITORS:

WHAT: California Symphony presents *Mozart Serenity*

California Symphony's first concerts of 2025, conducted by Artistic and Music Director Donato Cabrera, combine a calming meditation by composer Carlos Simon, a world-famous Spanish guitar concerto by Joaquín Rodrigo, and Mozart's classical grandeur. Inspired by the words of theologian and former San Francisco resident Howard Thurman, Simons' *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.

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, February 1, 2025 at 7:30pm
Sunday, February 2, 2025 at 4:00pm

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

CONCERT:

Mozart Serenity

7:30pm, Saturday, February 1

4:00pm, Sunday, February 2

Donato Cabrera, conductor

Meng Su, guitar soloist

California Symphony

PROGRAM:

Carlos Simon: *Breathe*

Joaquin Rodrigo: *Concierto de Aranjuez*

Meng Su, guitar

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

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](https://www.californiasymphony.org) or call the Leshher 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.

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