

CALIFORNIA SYMPHONY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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High Drama and a World Premiere are Featured in California Symphony's TCHAIKOVSKY PASSION

Led by Donato Cabrera, Artistic & Music Director



Photo of David Fung by Studio D2 for Steinway and Sons; Donato Cabrera by Kristen Loken; Saad Haddad by Bess Adler; high resolution photos available [here](#).

**In Concert March 22 at 7:30pm & March 23 at 4:00pm
at Walnut Creek's Leshner Center for the Arts**

**Featuring Piano Soloist David Fung in Grażyna Bacewicz's Piano Concerto,
the World Premiere of Composer-in-Residence Saad Haddad's Fantasia for
Strings, and Tchaikovsky's Final Symphony, Symphony No. 6**

**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 **TCHAIKOVSKY PASSION** – two concerts featuring music that is full of drama and high emotion on **Saturday, March 22, 2025 at 7:30pm** and **Sunday, March 23, 2025 at 4:00pm** at Hofmann Theatre at the **Leshner Center for the Arts** (1601 Civic Drive, Walnut Creek). Centered around **Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky's** powerful final symphony, Symphony No. 6, the concerts will also include the world premiere of Composer-in-Residence **Saad Haddad's** second commission for the orchestra *Fantasia for Strings*, and the California Symphony debut of pianist **David Fung** as soloist in **Grażyna Bacewicz's** rarely heard virtuosic Piano Concerto.

Saad Haddad, who is California Symphony's Young American Composer in Residence from 2024-2026, writes music that frequently delves into the relationship between the West and the East by transferring the performance techniques of traditional Arab instruments to Western symphonic instruments. His *Fantasia for Strings* takes inspiration from English composer Ralph Vaughn Williams' famous *Fantasia on a Theme by Thomas Tallis*, fused with Arab *maqam* or melodic structure. Pianist David Fung, praised by *The Washington Post* for his "poetic and exquisitely sculpted interpretations," joins the orchestra as soloist in Polish composer Grażyna Bacewicz's Piano Concerto. 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.

"While programming an entire season around the final symphonies of well-known composers was exhilarating, it is always a particular challenge to find the right tone and arc when programming a concert in and around Tchaikovsky's uniquely final symphony, the *Pathétique*," says Donato Cabrera. "Using the original definition of pathetic as a guide immediately led me to the compositions of Grażyna Bacewicz. Her music is not new to the California Symphony and this powerful Piano Concerto will be brilliantly performed by our guest soloist, David Fung. The concert begins with our composer-in-residence Saad Haddad's *Fantasia for Strings* – its emotional and dramatic atmosphere is a perfect companion to both the Bacewicz and Tchaikovsky."

Saad Haddad writes of his new piece, *Fantasia for Strings*, that he took a "snapshot" of Ralph Vaughan Williams' *Fantasia on a Theme by Thomas Tallis* and created "an entire soundscape of my own aesthetic based on his." He explains, "The role of the solo string quartet is to evoke the Vaughan Williams theme within the framework of the Arab *maqam* system, while the rest of the orchestra plays in an aesthetic closer to the original Vaughan Williams. So there is an internal dialogue going on between the two groups." The two groups trade back and forth until they both merge together and the two styles – Arabic and European – sound as one.

Grażyna Bacewicz was one of the first women composers to achieve national prominence in Poland. In the 1930s, she studied in Paris with the pioneering composer Nadia Boulanger, who taught many other great 20th century composers. Despite taking care of her sister who was wounded and her own family, Bacewicz composed and premiered new works at private concerts

in Nazi-occupied Warsaw during the Second World War. She composed her Piano Concerto in 1949, and it was premiered that year by the Warsaw Philharmonic Orchestra. Bacewicz incorporates Polish folk themes in this work which features intense moments of drama and a demanding and virtuosic solo piano part. In his notes for this program, Scott Fogelsong describes Bacewicz's music, writing, "Her long-overlooked music is well worth exploring: beautifully crafted, vital and passionate, it carves out a stylistic journey from the Gallic influences of her youth to the dark complexities of her late years."

Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky's final symphony, Symphony No. 6, is nicknamed the *Pathétique* Symphony and premiered just nine days before his death. As Fogelsong explains, "*Pathétique* plotlines have been conjured up throughout the work's century-plus history: suicide note, presentiment of death, death wish, despair of being homosexual in a violently anti-gay culture." However, the composer originally named the symphony *Pateticheskaya*, meaning passionate or emotional, and was in good health when he composed the piece. Tchaikovsky wrote to his nephew Vladimir 'Bob' Davydov of the work, "I certainly regard it as easily the best – and especially the most 'sincere' – of all my works, and I love it as I have never before loved one of my musical offspring."

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 2024-2026 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**.

Season tickets are now available for California Symphony's 2025-2026 season. Read the season announcement [here](#).

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. A free 30-minute pre-concert talk by lecturer Scott Fogelsong will begin one hour before each performance. More information is available at CaliforniaSymphony.org.

FOR CALENDAR EDITORS:

WHAT: California Symphony presents *TCHAIKOVSKY PASSION*

California Symphony's March concerts, conducted by Artistic and Music Director Donato Cabrera, 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 *Fantasia for Strings*, 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 Arabic 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.

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, March 22, 2025 at 7:30pm

Sunday, March 23, 2025 at 4:00pm

WHERE: Hofmann Theatre at the Leshar Center for the Arts

1601 Civic Drive, Walnut Creek

CONCERT:

Tchaikovsky Passion

7:30pm, Saturday, March 22

4:00pm, Sunday, March 23

Donato Cabrera, conductor

David Fung, piano soloist

California Symphony

PROGRAM:

Saad Haddad: *Fantasia for Strings* (World Premiere)

Grażyna Bacewicz: Piano Concerto

David Fung, piano

Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky: Symphony No. 6 (*Pathétique*)

TICKETS: 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](https://www.californiasymphony.org).

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