

CALIFORNIA SYMPHONY RETURNS TO LIVE PERFORMANCES, LAUNCHES 2021-22 SEASON WITH **EMPEROR**

September 18 - 19, 2021

Hofmann Theatre at the Leshner Center for the Arts

WALNUT CREEK, CA (26 August 2021) – After more than a year of offering virtual performances during the pandemic, **California Symphony** returns to live concerts next month, launching its 2021-22 season with *Emperor*, a program that presents music of comfort to Bay Area audiences. Award-winning pianist **Adam Golka** headlines the performance with Beethoven’s heroic *The Emperor Concerto* (Piano Concerto No. 5 in Eb major, Op. 73), offering music of hope and unity. Marianna Martines’ captivating *Sinfonia* and Ralph Vaughan Williams’ rarely performed *Symphony No. 5* will also be featured.

Says California Symphony Music Director Donato Cabrera, who will conduct this concert, “The music I chose for California Symphony’s 2021-22 season reflects upon and acknowledges the reality that our community has been without live music for well over a year and a half. When actively engaged with, live music has the unique ability to give us personal perspective and understanding while in a shared setting. Through our programming this season, California Symphony welcomes back our Bay Area family with open arms.”

Emperor will be presented live on stage, 7:30pm, Saturday, September 18 and 4:00pm, Sunday, September 19, at the **Hofmann Theatre at the Leshner Center for the Arts**, 1601 Civic Drive, Walnut Creek. For tickets (44-\$74) or more information, the public may visit CaliforniaSymphony.org or call the Leshner Center Ticket Office at (925) 943-7469 (open Wed – Sun, noon to 6pm).

Note: California Symphony is currently revising its COVID-19 health and safety protocols. **Vaccines and masks will now be required to attend California Symphony’s September performances of Emperor.** Details are still being worked out, so please continue to check for updates on California Symphony’s website: californiasymphony.org/COVIDsafety. Patrons will also receive further instructions via email.

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Composed during another difficult period, while Vienna was under invasion in 1809, Beethoven’s *The Emperor Concerto* was described by one critic at its premiere as “without doubt one of the most original, imaginative, most effective but also one of the most difficult of all concertos.” **Adam Golka**, who returns after appearing virtually in last season’s opener, has been praised for his “brilliant technique and real emotional depth” (*The Washington Post*). As a concerto soloist, he has appeared with dozens of orchestras, including the BBC Scottish Symphony, NACO (Ottawa), Warsaw Philharmonic, Shanghai Philharmonic, as well as the San Francisco, Atlanta, Houston, Dallas, Milwaukee, Indianapolis, New Jersey, and San Diego symphonies. One of Beethoven’s leading modern interpreters, Golka first performed all of Beethoven’s Piano Sonatas when he was 18 years old and considers the 32 masterpieces to have been his saving grace during the pandemic. Says Golka, “The reason I can’t stay away from Beethoven is that he put himself through absolute hell in an attempt to marry the rawest expressions of his subconscious to the unattainable ideals of his mind. No other composer before or since has been willing to explore this internal welfare as deeply as he did, and I constantly feel that I’ll somehow redeem myself by surrendering to the fight which is at the core of performing his works.”

A prominent composer in 18th-century Vienna, Martines received more acclaim than perhaps any other female composer of her time, making her story one of triumph, resilience, and character. She was an early pupil of the young Franz Joseph Haydn, when he was still a struggling composer, renting the attic of her family home. Martines’ enigmatic *Sinfonia*, which is highlighted in the program, is representative of the style of Haydn’s early works. Light and rhythmical, this work is harmonically simple and conforms to the prevailing usage of the three-movement (fast, slow, fast) Italian *sinfonia*. Later celebrated as the “Father of the Symphony,” Haydn became perhaps the most influential of Beethoven’s teachers, offering an interesting link between two of the works on this program. A trailblazer in many ways, Martines had a substantial impact on further generations of women, paving the way for female composers to work professionally, teach at music institutions, and write larger scale orchestral works.

The evening rounds out with English composer Ralph Vaughan Williams’ achingly beautiful, soul-soothing *Symphony No. 5*. In style, it represents a shift away from the violent dissonance of his Fourth Symphony, and a return to the gentler style of his earlier *Pastoral Symphony*. An anonymous reviewer in *The Times* said that Vaughan Williams’ *Symphony No. 5* “belongs to that small body of music that, outside of late Beethoven, can properly be described as transcendental,” adding that “this is music not only of contemplation but of benediction.” Written during the darkest moments of WWII, Vaughan Williams composed *Symphony No. 5* to console and heal a nation. California Symphony Music Director Donato Cabrera has chosen this symphony to do the same for the Bay Area community.

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California Symphony’s 2021-22 season is sponsored by Diablo Regional Arts Association (DRAA) and the Dean & Margaret Leshner Foundation. *Emperor* is sponsored by Mechanics Bank, while its May concert, the *Epic Finale*, is sponsored by KMPG.

Founded in 1986, **California Symphony** is now in its ninth season under the leadership of Music Director Donato Cabrera. It is distinguished by its vibrant concert programs that combine classics alongside American repertoire and works by living composers, and for making the symphony welcoming and accessible. The orchestra includes musicians who perform with the San Francisco Symphony, San Francisco Opera, San Francisco Ballet, and others. Committed to the support of new talent, California Symphony has launched the careers of some of today’s most well-known artists, including violinist Anne Akiko Meyers, cellists Alisa Weilerstein and Joshua Roman, pianist Kirill Gerstein and composers such as Mason Bates, Christopher Theofanidis, and Kevin Puts. California Symphony is based in Walnut Creek at the Leshner Center for the Arts, serving audiences in Contra Costa County and the wider Bay Area.

FOR CALENDAR EDITORS:

WHAT: After more than a year of offering virtual performances during the pandemic, **California Symphony** returns to live concerts next month, launching its 2021-22 season with *Emperor*, a program that presents music of comfort to Bay Area audiences. Award-winning pianist **Adam Golka** headlines the performance with Beethoven’s heroic *The Emperor Concerto* (Piano Concerto No. 5 in E♭ major, Op. 73), offering music of hope and unity. Marianna Martines’ captivating *Sinfonia* and Ralph Vaughan Williams’ rarely performed *Symphony No. 5* will also be featured. Says California Symphony Music Director Donato Cabrera, who will conduct this concert, “The music I chose for California Symphony’s 2021-22 season reflects upon and acknowledges the reality that our community has been without live music for well over a year and a half. When actively engaged with, live music has the unique ability to give us personal perspective and understanding while in a shared setting. Through our programming this season, California Symphony welcomes back our Bay Area family with open arms.”

WHEN: **7:30pm, Saturday, September 18**
4:00pm, Sunday, September 19

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

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- TICKETS:** Subscriptions for three, four, or five concerts start at \$99 and are available now.
- Single tickets \$44-\$74 and \$20 (for students 25 and under with valid Student ID) also on sale now.
- INFO:** For more information or to purchase tickets, the public may visit CaliforniaSymphony.org or call the Leshner Center Ticket Office at (925) 943-7469 (open Wed – Sun, noon to 6pm).

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- MEDIA:** Contact Sydney Albin, Carla Befera & Co.
sydney@cb-pr.com
- PHOTOS:** Downloadable high-res photos are available here:
<http://www.cbpr.co/press/emperor>