

CALIFORNIA SYMPHONY CONCLUDES ITS SEASON WITH

## EPIC FINALE

*Featuring the live premiere of Young American Composer-in-Residence Viet Cuong's "Next Week's Trees" and cellist Nathan Chan in Edward Elgar's emotionally charged Cello Concerto*

May 14 – 15, 2022 in Hofmann Theatre at the Leshner Center for the Arts

WALNUT CREEK, CA (15 April 2022) – **California Symphony**, led by Music Director **Donato Cabrera**, concludes its 2021-22 season May 14-15, 2022 with a spectacular **EPIC FINALE**, featuring the symphony's live premiere of Young American Composer-in-Residence **Viet Cuong's** *Next Week's Trees*. Taking its name from American poet Mary Oliver's *Walking to Oak-Head Pond and Thinking of the Ponds I Will Visit in the Next Days and Weeks*, Cuong describes the work as "a gentle reminder of the uncertainty of the future, the confident hope of the present, and the propulsive force of life that drives us through any doubt that a new day will arrive." This work was presented online in May 2021, and now receives its long-awaited in-person premiere at California Symphony.

Also on the program is internationally acclaimed Bay Area native **Nathan Chan**, Assistant Principal Cellist of the Seattle Symphony, performing Edward Elgar's beloved **Cello Concerto**, a contemplative work that is considered a masterpiece. Chan's history with California Symphony Music Director Donato Cabrera dates back over a decade, when Chan performed with the San Francisco Symphony Youth Orchestra under Cabrera, who served as the ensemble's Wattis Foundation Music Director from 2009-2016. Chan discovered his talent for music at an early age through conducting, emulating the styles of conductors he saw on music videos before the age of two. A year later, he made his debut as a conductor leading the San Jose Chamber Orchestra in a set of Mozart variations, despite not yet being able to read music. In 2006, Chan appeared in *The Music in Me*, a documentary that aired on HBO and won the Peabody Award. Three years later, he was featured in *The World's Greatest Musical Prodigies*, a three-part British series documenting a global search for talented musicians, in which Chan gave the World Premiere of the *Velesslavista Quadruple Concerto*, composed by Alexander Prior. Chan has performed as a soloist with San Francisco Symphony, the Royal Philharmonic, Albany Symphony, Reno Philharmonic, and Hong Kong Chamber Orchestra.

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Cabrera, who has known Chan since he was a teenager, says “Nathan brings an exuberance and excitement to music and playing the cello that is reminiscent of another great interpreter of Elgar’s *Cello Concerto*, Jacqueline du Pré.”

While many associate Edward Elgar with his famous composition, *Pomp and Circumstance*, he was also Britain’s most influential composer in the early 1900s. Elgar’s *Cello Concerto*, his final full-scale work, offered his British listeners a deeply poignant reflection on the futility of war, completed after World War I’s armistice. While achingly melancholic, its ending offers a bravado that calls to mind the fortitude of the British people as they emerged from that dark period.

The program rounds out with Tchaikovsky’s epic ***Symphony No. 5***, written as an allegory of a hero’s journey from darkness to light. This deeply personal work offers up a piece full of soaring tunes and heart-on-sleeve emotion, taking listeners on a journey through troubles into joy and ecstasy – and giving them some of the greatest music ever written. Using a recurring melody to represent the idea of fate, *Symphony No. 5* transforms from dark and menacing in the first movement to joyous and triumphant by the fourth and final movement – ending the evening on a high note. “What Tchaikovsky’s epic *Symphony No. 5* achieves in terms of its emotional heights and depths (and in just 45 minutes) is similar to what Tolstoy achieves in his novel, *War and Peace*, or Pushkin achieves in his play, *Eugene Onegin*,” says Music Director Cabrera. “The transformative nature that everyone experiences when conducting, playing, or hearing this symphony is nothing short of life-altering.”

**Note:** The World Premiere of Viet Cuong’s second commission for California Symphony, ***Chance of Rain***, originally announced for this program has been postponed to a later date to be announced.

**EPIC FINALE** is sponsored by KPMG. California Symphony’s 2021–22 season is sponsored by Diablo Regional Arts Association (DRAA) and the Dean & Margaret Leshner Foundation.

**EPIC FINALE** will be presented live on stage, 7:30pm, Saturday, May 14 and 4:00pm, Sunday, May 15, 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](https://www.CaliforniaSymphony.org) or call the Leshner Center Ticket Office at (925) 943-7469 (open Wed – Sun, 12:00pm to 6:00pm). A free 30-minute pre-concert talk with Donato Cabrera starts one hour before each performance.

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***Patrons must be fully vaccinated, and masks are required.*** For more information, please visit [californiasymphony.org/COVIDsafety](http://californiasymphony.org/COVIDsafety).

Acclaimed as “wildly inventive” (*The New York Times*) and “irresistible” (*San Francisco Chronicle*), Viet Cuong’s music explores the unexpected and whimsical, making surprising combinations and sounds that feel both enchanting and exceptionally satisfying. He was recently featured in *The Washington Post*’s “21 for ’21: Composers and performers who sound like tomorrow.” Works by the American composer have been commissioned and performed on six continents by musicians and ensembles including the New York Philharmonic, Eighth Blackbird, Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra, Sō Percussion, Alarm Will Sound, Atlanta Symphony Orchestra, Sandbox Percussion, Albany Symphony, PRISM Quartet, Orchestra of St. Luke’s, and Dallas Winds, among others. His music has been featured in venues across the nation – from Carnegie Hall to the Lincoln Center, Kennedy Center, National Gallery of Art, and Library of Congress. Cuong’s works for wind ensembles have amassed hundreds of performances worldwide, including at Midwest Clinic, World Association for Symphonic Bands and Ensembles (WASBE), and College Band Directors National Association (CBDNA) conferences. Cuong is an Assistant Professor of Music Composition and Theory at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas and holds degrees in Music Composition from Princeton University (MFA/PhD). During his studies, Cuong held the Daniel W. Dietrich II Composition Fellowship at Curtis, Naumburg and Roger Sessions Fellowships at Princeton, as well as the Evergreen House Foundation scholarship at Peabody Institute, where he was also awarded the Peabody Alumni Award (the Valedictorian honor) and Gustav Klemm Award. Cuong’s music has been awarded the Barlow Endowment Commission, ASCAP Morton Gould Composer Award, Theodore Presser Foundation Award, Suzanne and Lee Ettelson Composers Award, Cortona Prize, New York Youth Symphony First Music Commission, Boston GuitarFest Composition Prize, and the Walter Beeler Memorial Prize.

Conductor Donato Cabrera is dedicated to adventurous programming, particularly works that reflect California Symphony’s communities, and relishes his work with living composers. He is committed to conducting music by American composers, supporting young artists in the early stages of their careers, and commissioning world premieres from talented resident composers. In 2013, Cabrera was appointed the second Music Director in California Symphony history. A California native, Cabrera served as Resident Conductor of the San Francisco Symphony and Wattis Foundation Music Director of the San Francisco Symphony Youth Orchestra from 2009-2016, and is one of only a handful of conductors that have led performances with the San Francisco Symphony, San Francisco Opera, and San Francisco Ballet. In 2010, the Consulate-General of Mexico recognized Cabrera in San Francisco as a Luminary of the Friends of Mexico Honorary Committee for his contributions to the community.

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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:

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**WHEN:** **7:30pm, Saturday, May 14**  
**4:00pm, Sunday, May 15**

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

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**TICKETS:** Single tickets \$44-\$74 and \$20 (for students 25 and under with valid Student ID)

**INFO:** For more information or to purchase tickets, the public may visit [CaliforniaSymphony.org](http://CaliforniaSymphony.org) or call the Leshner Center Ticket Office at (925) 943-7469 (open Wed – Sun, 12:00pm to 6pm).

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**MEDIA:** Contact Sydney Albin, Carla Befera & Co.  
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**PHOTOS:** Downloadable high-res photos are available here:  
<https://cbpr.co/press/epicfinale/>