

CALIFORNIA SYMPHONY CELEBRATES
THE WORKS OF BRILLIANT AUSTRIAN COMPOSERS IN
MAHLER'S INNER CIRCLE

March 25–26 at the Leshar Center for the Arts in Walnut Creek

WALNUT CREEK, CA (27 February 2023) – **California Symphony** explores the sphere of incredibly gifted people who influenced Gustav Mahler in its *Mahler's Inner Circle* concerts, featuring contralto **Sara Couden** performing **Alma Mahler's *Fünf Lieder***, the California Premiere of **Hans Rott's *Symphony No. 1***, and **Alexander Zemlinsky's *Lustspiel Ouverture***. This program continues the orchestra's adventurous 2022-23 season, celebrating its 10th season under **Music Director Donato Cabrera**, introducing works never before performed by the California Symphony, and featuring an all-women line-up of soloists. Says Cabrera of this program, "American audiences and musicians alike have become justifiably obsessed with the music of Gustav Mahler, particularly since Leonard Bernstein's landmark recordings with the New York Philharmonic in the 1960s. To provide greater context and a deeper understanding of Mahler's music, I'm excited to share these three compositions by people who were very close to him." *Mahler's Inner Circle* will be presented **7:30pm, Saturday, March 25, 2023** and **4:00pm, Sunday, March 26, 2023** at the **Hofmann Theatre at Leshar Center for the Arts**, 1601 Civic Drive, Walnut Creek. A 30-minute pre-concert talk and Q&A led by Cabrera will begin one hour before each performance. Information and tickets (\$49-\$79; \$20 for students 25 and under with valid Student ID) are available at [CaliforniaSymphony.org](https://www.CaliforniaSymphony.org).

Alma Mahler was an accomplished composer who relinquished her work to marry Gustav Mahler, with the five songs in her *Fünf Lieder* being the only works published during her husband's lifetime. Throughout her life, Alma became the muse of many celebrated writers, composers, and artists – from Gustav Klimt to Alexander Zemlinsky, Gustav Mahler, Walter Gropius, Oskar Kokoschka, and Franz Werfe. Klimt and Kokoschka painted her; she married Mahler, and following his death, Gropius and then Werfel. During her marriage to Mahler, she had an affair with young architect Walter Gropius, who helped her edit and publish the five songs that make up *Fünf Lieder*. They will be performed by Walnut-Creek based Sara Couden, a premiere interpreter of operatic, chamber,

and song repertoire who has appeared at major opera companies including the Metropolitan Opera and San Francisco Opera, as well as Los Angeles Philharmonic, Philharmonia Baroque Orchestra, Philadelphia Orchestra, and Seattle Symphony.

Hans Rott's *Symphony No. 1* showcases music by an intriguing composer sometimes referred to as “the greatest symphonist who never was.” Rott attended the Vienna conservatory with Gustav Mahler in late 1870s, but their fortunes diverged soon after, and Rott died in an asylum at age 25. Rott's one and only completed symphony – here being given its California premiere with these concerts by the California Symphony – bears many similarities to Mahler's works, and scholars are only now uncovering Rott's enormous influence on his celebrated friend. Said Mahler, “It is completely impossible to estimate what music has lost in him. [Rott's] genius soars to such heights even in his first symphony, written at the age of twenty.” A poignant remembrance of lost promise, *Symphony No. 1* has gained numerous admirers since its first performance in 1989.

Also featured is **Alexander Zemlinsky's** charming *Lustspiel Overture*, which was originally written for a comic play. The failed play quickly vanished, Zemlinsky's overture disappearing with it. A century later, the lighthearted work has returned to the repertory. The composer was a former tutor and suitor of Alma Mahler, said to have used the abrupt ending of that love affair as motivation to transform his budding talent into mastery. The lush melodies of *Lustspiel Overture* echo those of Brahms, who was a supporter of the young Zemlinsky. While Zemlinsky's music began to resurface during the wake of the Mahler revival in the 1960s, the restoration hasn't been easy – particularly since the Nazis erased the wildly successful and popular Jewish composer from society's collective consciousness. Here, California Symphony hopes to shed new light on this compelling treasure that was almost lost.

ABOUT CALIFORNIA SYMPHONY

Founded in 1986, **California Symphony** is now in its tenth 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.

California Symphony's 2022-23 season is sponsored by the Leshner Foundation.

FOR CALENDAR EDITORS

WHAT: **California Symphony** explores sphere of incredibly gifted people who influenced Gustav Mahler in its ***Mahler's Inner Circle*** concerts, featuring contralto Sara Couden performing **Alma Mahler's *Fünf Lieder***, the California Premiere of **Hans Rott's *Symphony No. 1***, and **Alexander Zemlinsky's *Lustspiel Ouvertüre***. This program continues the orchestra's adventurous 2022-23 season, celebrating its 10th season under **Music Director Donato Cabrera**, introducing works never before performed by the California Symphony, and featuring an all-women line-up of soloists.

WHEN: **7:30pm, Saturday, March 25, 2023**
4:00pm, Sunday, March 26, 2023

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

CONCERT: **MAHLER'S INNER CIRCLE**
Donato Cabrera, conductor
California Symphony
Guest Soloist: Sara Couden, contralto

PROGRAM:
Alexander Zemlinsky—*Lustspiel Ouvertüre*
Alma Mahler—*Fünf Lieder (Five Songs)*
Sara Couden, contralto
Hans Rott—*Symphony No. 1*

TICKETS: \$49-\$79 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 or call the Leshner Center Ticket Office at (925) 943-7469 (open Wed – Sun, noon to 6pm).

-30-

MEDIA: Contact Sydney Albin, Carla Befera & Co.
sydney@cb-pr.com

PHOTOS: Downloadable high-res photos are available here:

<http://www.cbpr.co/press/mahlerinnercircle>