

CALIFORNIA SYMPHONY PRESENTS EXHILARATING SEASON FINALE

FRESH INSPIRATIONS

May 20–21, 2023, Leshar Center, Walnut Creek

WALNUT CREEK, CA (10 April 2023) – **California Symphony** closes its 2022-23 season with its *Fresh Inspirations* program, featuring the World Premiere of *Stargazer*, a piano concerto by the symphony's Young American Composer in Residence **Viet Cuong** (2020-2023). Cuong's new work features nationally acclaimed pianist **Sarah Cahill** as the guest soloist, rounding out an all-women line-up of soloists in the orchestra's 10th season under **Music Director Donato Cabrera**. "It is always so exciting for us to premiere our resident composer's compositions, because the composer's journey from the moment of inspiration to the printed score isn't taken alone," says Cabrera. "With our celebrated and unique orchestra readings, as well as the meaningful relationships established between the musicians, staff, and community with our resident composer, the premiere is, aside from the chance to hear something entirely new, a celebration of these connections." Also featured on the program is **Hector Berlioz's** dashing *Roman Carnival* and **William Walton's** triumphant *Symphony No. 1*. *Fresh Inspirations* will be presented **7:30pm, Saturday, May 20, 2023 and 4:00pm, Sunday, May 21, 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).

For this season finale Viet Cuong unveils *Stargazer*, using an innovative echoing effect by multiple instruments, reminiscent of modern "tape delay." Says Cuong about the work's name, "In this piece, the pianist is the Stargazer, with the piano as the telescope. Each one of the notes echoes itself, so it snowballs and creates this very lustrous texture." Acclaimed as "wildly inventive" (*The New York Times*) and "irresistible" (*San Francisco Chronicle*), Cuong's music explores the unexpected and whimsical, making surprising combinations and sounds that feel both enchanting and exceptionally satisfying. He was 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

worldwide, including a recent premiere with Grammy Award-winning ensemble Eighth Blackbird and the U.S. Navy Band.

“Viet's relationship with the orchestra has been particularly profound because while he began his tenure in the midst of the pandemic, his music has still succeeded in having a deep impact on our community and I know it will continue to do so into the future,” Cabrera adds. “It is with great excitement that we welcome a Bay Area musical icon, Sarah Cahill, to perform Viet's piano concerto, *Stargazer*.” Named a 2018 Champion of New Music by the American Composers Forum, Cahill’s dedication to working closely with composers, musicologists, and scholars to prepare scores for performance has made her a perfect partner for Cuong. Hailed as “a leading light of the new-music piano scene” (*The New York Times*) and “a brilliant and charismatic advocate for modern and contemporary composers” (*Time Out New York*), Cahill has premiered over 70 compositions for piano, with an emphasis on interpretation of works from the 20th and 21st centuries.

Composed during the tumultuous 1930s, William Walton's ***Symphony No. 1*** has come to be regarded as one of the greatest symphonies of the 20th century – but this accomplishment did not come with ease. In 1932, when Walton was primarily known for three spectacular early works (*Façade: An Entertainment*, *Belshazzar’s Feast*, *Viola Concerto*), Sir Hamilton Harty asked the British composer to write a symphony. Two years later, Walton had completed the first three movements, but hit a wall in his search for an appropriately optimistic ending. “I’ve burnt about three finales,” he wrote to a friend, “and it is only comparatively lately that I’ve managed to get going on what I hope is the last attempt.” In November 1935, the completed symphony finally received its much-anticipated premiere, and was an immediate sensation. A forceful evocation of elemental passion, raw ferocity, and heartfelt sorrow, *Symphony No. 1* has remained a favorite amongst British symphonies.

The program kicks off with Hector Berlioz’s ***Roman Carnival***, which showcases the composer’s brilliant and innovative techniques of orchestration. Scored in the French composer’s brightest colors, the work offers nine minutes of jaunty music originally intended as an overture to an opera. The 1844 premiere of *Roman Carnival* was met with tremendous success and remains one of

Berlioz's most popular pieces. From its boisterously festive opening to its all-stops-out finale, this work offers a delightful opener to this program.

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 Leshar 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 Leshar Foundation.

FOR CALENDAR EDITORS

WHAT: **California Symphony** ends its 2022-23 season on a high note with its ***Fresh Inspirations*** concerts, featuring the World Premiere of ***Stargazer***, a piano concerto by the symphony's Young American Composer in Residence **Viet Cuong** (2020-2023); **Hector Berlioz's** dashing ***Roman Carnival***; and **William Walton's** triumphant ***Symphony No. 1***. Cuong's new work will also feature nationally acclaimed pianist **Sarah Cahill** as the guest soloist, rounding out the orchestra's 10th season under **Music Director Donato Cabrera** that has showcased an all-women line-up of soloists.

WHEN: **7:30pm, Saturday, May 20, 2023**
4:00pm, Sunday, May 21, 2023

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

CONCERT: **FRESH INSPIRATIONS**
Donato Cabrera, conductor California Symphony
Viet Cuong, Composer-in-Residence
Guest Soloist: Sarah Cahill, piano

PROGRAM:
Hector Berlioz—*Roman Carnival*
Viet Cuong—*Stargazer*
Sarah Cahill, pianist
William Walton—*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).

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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/freshinspirations/>