

**DONATO CABRERA EXTENDS CONTRACT AS MUSIC DIRECTOR AND
NAMED ARTISTIC DIRECTOR AT CALIFORNIA SYMPHONY'S GALA**

RHYTHMS AND REVELRY

*ADDITIONAL HIGHLIGHTS INCLUDE MAJOR RADIO ANNOUNCEMENT AND
CELEBRATION FOR LOCAL ARTS SUPPORTER BILL ARMSTRONG*

WALNUT CREEK, CA (2 May 2023) – **California Symphony** hosted a hot Havana-themed fundraising fiesta ***Rhythms and Revelry*** on April 29, with evening highlights that included major announcements about the Symphony's future with Music Director Donato Cabrera and upcoming national radio programs, as well as a celebration for arts advocate William H. Armstrong ("Bill"). Held at the elegant Claremont Hotel, ***Rhythms and Revelry*** included live entertainment by Grammy Award–winning ensemble Pacific Mambo Orchestra, a delicious three-course meal, and a high-spirited live auction. The event raised \$191,000, the most money raised at a California Symphony event since 2010 – a milestone that also coincides with Cabrera's 10th season as Music Director, 10 Young American Composers-in-Residence to date, and the 10-year anniversary of *Sound Minds*, the Symphony's El Sistema-inspired after-school music and literacy program. Proceeds from ***Rhythms and Revelry*** benefit California Symphony and its music education programs, serving local underserved students and launching the careers of young American composers.

At the event, California Symphony Board President **Barbara Hodgkinson** took the stage to make a major announcement: the extension of Music Director **Donato Cabrera's** tenure and adding Artistic Director to his title. Said Hodgkinson, "When we brought Donato on as Music Director ten years ago, we asked him to maintain our excellent repertoire, but he delivered far more than that with his rich artistry and innovative programming. Demand for our performances grew so much that we had to double our concert offerings. The Board and I are delighted that Donato will lead us for another five years. We can't wait to see what he and the orchestra will achieve next."

California Symphony Executive Director **Lisa Dell** adds, "I'm so proud of the team Donato and I make. Our respective visions are complementary, and working together is so inspiring. There are

many more ideas, projects, and funding opportunities in progress, which makes this such an exciting time for the future of California Symphony.”

Said **Noah Strick**, a California Symphony second violinist and Chairman of its Player’s Committee, “On behalf of the Musicians of the California Symphony, we strongly support the California Symphony Board of Directors in this decision and look forward to another five years working with Donato as our Artistic and Music Director.”

Reflecting on the extension of his contract and the additional title of Artistic Director, Donato Cabrera remarked, “I am incredibly honored that the California Symphony’s Board of Directors has extended my contract for another five years and humbled that they have added the title of Artistic Director. This addition will allow me to both broaden the scope and refine the message of where the California Symphony will go next. I am beyond excited to continue exploring this vast musical landscape with my inspiring and talented colleagues in the orchestra.” Cabrera went on to say, “My partner in leadership, Lisa Dell, not only gives wings to the orchestra’s mission and my artistic vision, but continually finds new pathways for the orchestra to shine in a way that sets us apart from the rest. Our staff, Theresa Madeira, Eric Barreto, CeCe Salinas, Cory Schumann, Michel Taddei, Drew Ford, and Toni Hessler are simply the best. Our dynamic Board of Directors always provides a clear pathway of support and guidance. In short, I’m so thankful to be a part of this amazing team and am so excited for what we will achieve.”

Said Cabrera about California Symphony’s first-ever national radio series, which launched at the beginning of the 2022-23 season, “We’re not just performing our programs to audiences at the Leshher Center. Our radio initiative is focused on sharing the works we commission from our Composer-In-Residence program as well as works by living composers. The series was heard by over half a million listeners from California to New York on over 60 radio stations.” He adds, “The nationally syndicated WFMT Radio Network was so impressed with the excitement around our new series that they invited us to participate in an even bigger national program that they produce.” Funds raised at the event will enable California Symphony to be part of WFMT’s 2024 Orchestra Series which is broadcast to more than 300 U.S. radio stations and includes concert re-broadcasts from the San Francisco Symphony, LA Phil, Milwaukee Symphony, and more.

California Symphony also honored local icon **Bill Armstrong** and his unparalleled efforts in advancing the arts in the community, beginning with a heartfelt video message from **Walnut Creek Mayor Cindy Silva**. This was followed by remarks by **California Symphony Board President Barbara Hodgkinson** and a proclamation presented by **Mayor Pro Tem Loella Haskew**. Through the assembled comments, it was made clear that over the past five decades Armstrong has dedicated himself to Walnut Creek in nearly all respects – from serving as Mayor as well as terms on both the Walnut Creek Planning Commission and City Council, to leadership on California Symphony’s Board of Directors (Board President from 2013-2020, Board Treasurer since 2020). He was also instrumental in the creation of the Leshner Center for the Arts. “There’s no question in my mind that Bill, through his work over the last 50 years, is one of the handful of individuals who helped to make Walnut Creek what it is today,” said Silva. “Bill’s work gave the community a template to follow on how to partner with the city on community projects.”

The *Rhythms and Revelry* committee prepared an unforgettable evening that raised funds to support the California Symphony and its nationally recognized education programs. Guests indulged in fine dining and delectable wines and danced to the Pacific Mambo Orchestra inside the Empire Ballroom. Also providing music for the evening were California Symphony Concertmaster **Jennifer Cho** and Assistant Principal Violinist **Alexandra Simpson**. **Adeline Vargas, Angelee Montances, and Daniela Santos**, a trio of alumni from *Sound Minds* that were among the first to join at Downer Elementary School in San Pablo in 2012, credited the program for enriching their lives and future paths. In addition to performing at the gala, they shared exciting news of their acceptance to Sacramento State, UC Santa Cruz, and UCLA, respectively. An electrifying live auction was helmed by auctioneer **Damon Casatico** with guests snapping up a luxe Italian villa escape; a getaway to Mexico; a weekend trip to Napa; a farm-to-table dinner prepared by Concertmaster **Jennifer Cho**; a paella party hosted by California Symphony Board Member **Mike Elmore**, featuring Principal Timpanist **Alex Orfaly** as the evening’s chef; and more.

Among the guests enjoying the festivities was California Symphony Music and Artistic Director **Donato Cabrera** of San Francisco; San Francisco Symphony Trustee **Jerome Guillen** and **Jeremy Gallaher**, 2022 San Francisco Symphony gala co-chair, of Portola Valley; San Francisco Ballet supporters **Rada and Kent Brooks** of San Francisco; and members of the *Rhythms and Revelry*

committee, who spent countless hours on this thrilling gala: co-chairs **Laura Glenn** of Sausalito and **Jacqueline Mills** of San Francisco, and committee members **Barbara Hodkinson** and **Sharon Simpson** of Orinda; **Julie Basque**, **Mary Ellen Rockdale**, and **Susan Weinstein** of Walnut Creek, **Abigail Dye** of Pleasant Hill; **Jack and Jennifer Pohlman** of Danville; **Michael Weiner** of Alamo; **Marcia Wilson** of Davis; and **Nicholas Kanozik** of Richmond.

Tables at the event were hosted by civic and social leaders including: **Sharon Simpson**, **Bill Armstrong** and **Navid Armstrong** of Walnut Creek, **Julie Basque**, **Mike Elmore** of Alamo, **Laura and Andrew Glenn**, **Jacqueline Mills**, and **Jack and Jennifer Pohlman**.

Founded in 1986, **California Symphony** is now in its tenth season under the leadership of Music Director Donato Cabrera, which concludes May 20-21 with performances of its concert finale, *Fresh Inspirations*, including a world premiere by its Young American Composer-in-Residence Viet Cuong. The Symphony 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.

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PHOTOS: Downloadable high-res photos available here:
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