

# BERKELEY SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA



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**For Immediate Release**

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## **KENT NAGANO TO STEP DOWN AS MUSIC DIRECTOR, CONTINUE ROLE AS CONDUCTOR LAUREATE**

### **NAGANO TO FOUND BERKELEY ACADEMY ENSEMBLE BEGINNING IN 2007-08 SEASON**

BERKELEY, CA – January 19, 2007... **Kent Nagano** today announced that he will step down as Music Director of Berkeley Symphony at the conclusion of the 2008-09 season, which will be his 30th season in the position. Nagano will continue his long-standing association with the organization in two new roles. First, as **Conductor Laureate** of Berkeley Symphony, he will have an ongoing presence as guest conductor. Second, as **Founding Music Director** of the new Berkeley Academy Ensemble, he will continue to explore fresh artistic territory with members of Berkeley Symphony beginning in the 2007-08 season. An international search for Nagano's successor has been initiated.

"This transition represents an organic evolution in my relationship with the Berkeley musicians," Nagano stated. "As my 30th season with Berkeley Symphony approaches, it feels appropriate to open the door to new artistic leadership. At the same time, I am excited to embark upon a new era of music performance in Berkeley. The creation of Berkeley Academy Ensemble has been an aspiration for some years, and I am delighted to partner with the musicians and Board of Directors in making this dream a reality."

**Berkeley Academy Ensemble**, a program of Berkeley Symphony, will debut during the 2007-08 season with two small-format performances under the direction of Nagano. These performances will extend the artistic line Nagano has established during his tenure with the orchestra to include works for small orchestra and chamber ensembles. Berkeley Academy Ensemble will consist largely of players from Berkeley Symphony and will serve as a center for research on the latest musicological approaches to the selected repertoire.

"We are thrilled that Maestro Nagano has reaffirmed his commitment to Berkeley," said Board President Kathleen G. Henschel. "Berkeley Academy Ensemble represents a unique opportunity for growth for the organization and a new avenue for innovation for Maestro Nagano."

The Berkeley Symphony Board of Directors is forming a Music Director search committee comprised of board, staff, musicians, and community members to identify a successor for Nagano. Six candidates will be selected to lead subscription programs over the next two seasons. Nagano will conduct the remaining programs and oversee the overall artistic balance of each season.

"We look forward to our first season of discovery beginning in the fall of 2007," said Executive Director Jim Kleinmann. "Audiences and supporters will have the opportunity to observe and interact with each of the guest conductors under consideration as the next artistic leader of Berkeley Symphony."

Music Director of Berkeley Symphony since 1978, **Kent Nagano** has become one of the most in-demand conductors of the orchestral and operatic repertoire internationally. In 2006, he began his tenure as Music Director of both the Montreal Symphony and the Bavarian State Opera in Munich. Previously, he held leadership positions with the Hallé Orchestra in Manchester, Opéra National de Lyon, Los Angeles Opera, and Deutsches Symphonie Orchester in Berlin. Nagano is the recipient of three GRAMMY awards for classical music recordings.

Founded in 1969 as the Berkeley Promenade Orchestra, **Berkeley Symphony** has established a reputation for presenting major new works for orchestra alongside fresh interpretations of the classic European repertoire. Berkeley Symphony's commitment to new music has been recognized in five of the past six seasons with a prestigious Award for Adventurous Programming from the American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers (ASCAP).

In addition to its subscription concert series, Berkeley Symphony hosts free and informal *Under Construction* concerts, in which composers hear works-in-progress read for the first time, and regularly partners with Cal Performances to provide music for visiting dance troupes. Berkeley Symphony also sponsors an award-winning, yearlong Music Education Program, which reaches every public elementary school in Berkeley. San Francisco public radio station KALW 91.7 FM is Berkeley Symphony's broadcast partner, airing all Berkeley Symphony subscription concerts.

Information regarding Music Director candidates and Berkeley Academy Ensemble's inaugural season will be included when Berkeley Symphony's 2007-08 season is announced later this spring.

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