

BERKELEY SYMPHONY



JOANA CARNEIRO
MUSIC DIRECTOR

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE / March 23, 2017

Contact: Jean Shirk

jean@shirkmedia.com / 510-332-4195

<http://www.berkeleysymphony.org/about/press/>

Berkeley Symphony performs Shostakovich's epic Symphony No. 13, "Babi Yar," with bass soloist Denis Sedov May 4 at Zellerbach Hall, and guest conductor Christian Reif leading the Orchestra



(l to r: Christian Reif, by Gregory F. Reed; Denis Sedov, by Pavel Antonov; Marika Kuzma, courtesy of the artist).

BERKELEY, CA (March 23, 2017) – Guest conductor Christian Reif will lead [Berkeley Symphony](#) in Shostakovich's evening-long, epic Symphony No. 13, "Babi Yar," on [Thursday, May 4 at 8 pm](#) at Zellerbach Hall. The Orchestra is joined for the Berkeley Symphony's season finale performance by bass Denis Sedov and a men's chorus comprised of alumni of the UC Berkeley Chamber Chorus, the Pacific Boychoir Academy, and members of the St. John of San Francisco Russian Orthodox Chorale, led by chorusmaster Marika Kuzma. Reif is stepping in for Berkeley Symphony Music Director Joana Carneiro, who recently gave birth to triplets.

Tickets for the Berkeley Symphony concert on May 4 start at \$15 and are available at www.berkeleysymphony.org or by phone at (510) 841-2800, ext. 1.

"Babi Yar" (a reference to the site of the massacre of Russian Jews by German soldiers during World War II) is Shostakovich's magnificent stand against anti-Semitism, including settings of poems by Yevgeny Yevtushenko. The composer is reported to have told one interviewer: "It would be good if Jews could live peacefully and happily in Russia, where they were born. But we must never forget about the dangers of anti-Semitism and keep reminding others of it, because the infection is still alive

and who knows if it will ever disappear. That's why I was overjoyed when I read Yevtushenko's "Babi Yar"; the poem astounded me. It astounded thousands of people. Many had heard about Babi Yar, but it took Yevtushenko's poem to make them aware of it. They tried to destroy the memory of Babi Yar, first the Germans and then the Ukrainian government. But after Yevtushenko's poem, it became clear that it would never be forgotten. That is the power of art. People knew about Babi Yar before Yevtushenko's poem, but they were silent. And when they read the poem, the silence was broken. Art destroys silence."

German conductor [Christian Reif](#) joined the San Francisco Symphony as its Resident Conductor and Wattis Foundation Music Director of the San Francisco Symphony Youth Orchestra in the 2016-17 season. Prior to that appointment, he was the Conducting Fellow with the New World Symphony for the past two seasons. Reif led the Berkeley Symphony in January in Beethoven's Symphony No. 4 and Mason Bates' Cello Concerto, with Joshua Roman as soloist, and he debuts this season with the Kitchener-Waterloo Symphony in Canada. In addition to his duties as the SFS Resident Conductor, Reif led the SF Symphony in a concert version of Humperdinck's *Hänsel und Gretel*, and is curating its March Soundbox concerts. Highlights of Reif's 2015-16 season included leading the Munich Chamber Opera in performances of Mozart's *La finta semplice* and the Tanglewood Music Center Orchestra in Shostakovich's Symphony No. 14 with Dawn Upshaw, Sanford Sylvan and TMC Singers. As part of efforts to bridge cultures through music, he led the Deutsche Staatsphilharmonie Rheinland-Pfalz in the world premiere of Mehmet C. Yesilçay's *Lieder aus der Fremde*, which addresses the current European refugee crisis. With this same orchestra, Reif makes his debut at the international festival Heidelberger Frühling in April, conducting Mozart's *Jupiter* Symphony and Mahler's *Lied von der Erde* with Michelle DeYoung and Toby Spence.

Reif is a member of Germany's prestigious Conductor's Forum (*Dirigentenforum*), and was a Conducting Fellow at Tanglewood Music Center in the summers of 2015 and 2016. This past summer, he stepped in for Seiji Ozawa, conducting the Seiji Ozawa International Academy Switzerland. He has also repeatedly worked as assistant and cover conductor for the Los Angeles Philharmonic, for the Boston Symphony Orchestra, and for Alan Gilbert at the *New York Phil Biennial*. His enthusiasm in performing contemporary music has led to many world premieres; among them are Michael Gordon's *El Sol Caliente*, a city symphony in honor of Miami Beach's centennial, and also concertos for DJ and orchestra, performed at the PULSE events of the New World Symphony, when the concert hall is transformed into a nightclub.

Opera News hails bass [Denis Sedov](#) for his ability to "seduce with his voice as well as with his presence." A native of St. Petersburg, in the 2016-17 season he joins the St. Petersburg Festival "All Together Opera" for his debut in the title role of Glinka's *Ruslan and Ludmila*, the Shanghai Symphony Orchestra for Commendatore in *Don Giovanni*, and Opéra de Baugé in France for Publio in *La clemenza di Tito*. Sedov also gives performances with the Academy of Vocal Arts. Last season, he sang Ramfis in *Aida* with Estonian National Opera; Salieri in Rimsky-Korsakov's *Mozart and Salieri* with the Israel Chamber Orchestra; Bach's *Mass in B minor* with the Saint Petersburg Symphony; and Shostakovich's Symphony No. 14 with the Jerusalem Camerata Orchestra.

Sedov made his Metropolitan Opera debut as Colline in *La bohème* after having been one of very few non-American singers ever invited to join the company's prestigious Lindemann Young Artist Development Program. He has since joined the company Orlick in *Mazeppa* and on tour in Japan for its production of *Don Giovanni*. Other American engagements include Nourabad in *Les pêcheur de perles* with Washington National Opera; Raimondo in *Lucia di Lammermoor* with Pittsburgh Opera; Giorgio in *I puritani* with Seattle Opera; Escamillo in *Carmen* and Achilla in *Giulio Cesare* with San Francisco Opera; Sarastro in *Die Zauberflöte* with Atlanta Opera; and Assur in *Semiramide* with Minnesota Opera. He also has performed with the San Francisco Symphony, Cleveland Orchestra, and Los Angeles Philharmonic, among other orchestras.

Marika Kuzma is Professor Emeritus at UC Berkeley, serving as director of choirs from 1990-2015. She has gained wide acclaim as a versatile conductor, leading her student choirs in works from Mozart, Verdi, Messiaen, and in premieres of new works. Under her direction, the University Chorus was invited to perform with professional ensembles such as the Berkeley Symphony, Midsummer Mozart Festival, and Oakland Symphony. She prepared the Chamber Chorus for frequent collaborations with Philharmonia Baroque Orchestra under Nicholas McGegan and Jane Glover and the Mark Morris Dance Group. As guest conductor, she has led choirs including the Montreal Symphony Chorus, St. Lawrence Choir, the Oakland Symphony Chorus, the Oklahoma City University Chorus, University Singers at the University of Virginia, and Handel Society of Dartmouth College.

Well-established as a presenter of major contemporary orchestral works, [Berkeley Symphony](#) continues its steadfast commitment to presenting original and unique programs with new music commissioned by living composers, many of whom have developed an ongoing creative and collaborative relationship with the Symphony. Since its 1979-80 season, Berkeley Symphony has performed 65 world premieres, 28 U.S. premieres, and 21 West Coast premieres. In recognition of its leadership in commissioning and creating new music, the Orchestra has received the prestigious ASCAP Adventurous Programming Award in 10 of the past 13 seasons. In December, Berkeley Symphony and composer Anna Clyne were awarded a three-year Music Alive grant for a composer residency, beginning in 2017, one of only five U.S. orchestra-composer pairings selected by New Music USA and the League of American Orchestras for the honor. The residency is designed to involve Clyne in a far-reaching, immersive collaboration with Berkeley Symphony, involving the creation of new work, collaboration with other Berkeley arts institutions, music education, community outreach and multidisciplinary activities.

CALENDAR EDITORS, PLEASE NOTE:

Thursday, May 4, 2017 at 8 pm – [REMEMBRANCE](#)

Zellerbach Hall, UC Berkeley campus, Bancroft Way at Dana Street, Berkeley

Christian Reif, *guest conductor*

Denis Sedov, *bass*

Alumni of UC Berkeley Chamber Chorus, alumni of the Pacific Boychoir Academy, and members of the St. John of San Francisco Russian Orthodox Chorale, Marika Kuzma, *chorusmaster*
Berkeley Symphony

Shostakovich: Symphony No.13, "Babi Yar"

TICKETS: Tickets for the Berkeley Symphony concert start at \$15 and are available at www.berkeleysymphony.org or by phone at (510) 841-2800, ext. 1. A pre-concert talk, free to ticketholders, begins at 7 pm.