



**BERKELEY SYMPHONY ANNOUNCES *READING IS INSTRUMENTAL*
IN PARTNERSHIP WITH BERKELEY PUBLIC LIBRARY AND BERKELEY PUBLIC LIBRARY
FOUNDATION**

Weekly Musical Storytime Readings Begin September 25 and Feature Guest Readers Rita Moreno, Andy Samberg, Maxine Hong Kingston and Earl Kingston, Marcus Semien, Thacher Hurd, Joseph Young and Michael Kwende.



Berkeley, CA – September 23, 2020 – Berkeley Symphony announced today the launch of *Reading Is Instrumental*, a brand new weekly musical storytime series for children and adults alike, hosted by the Berkeley Public Library and co-produced by Berkeley Symphony and the Berkeley Public Library Foundation. Featuring musical accompaniment performed by musicians of the Berkeley Symphony, the series will showcase an all-star roster of guest readers hailing from Berkeley and beyond, including award-winning actress Rita Moreno; *The Lonely Island* comedian/actor and former Saturday Night Live cast member Andy Samberg; Chinese American author Maxine Hong Kingston and actor Earl Kingston; Oakland Athletics’s shortshop Marcus Semien; children’s author and illustrator Thacher Hurd; Berkeley Symphony Music Director Joseph Young; and Berkeley Public Library children’s librarian Michael Kwende. Each weekly episode will be posted live on the Berkeley Public Library Facebook Page on Fridays at 11:00 a.m., beginning Friday, September 25 with Rita Moreno and continuing Friday, October 2 with Maxine Hong Kingston and Earl Kingston. The order of all subsequent episodes will be announced online at a later date.

With a fitting tribute to the musical theme of the series, Maestro Young will read *My Family Plays Music* by Judy Cox, the story of a young girl that explores diverse genres and instruments with her own musical family. Berkeley Symphony musicians will bring each story in the series to life through a series of musical accompaniments curated by Artistic Director Rene Mandel and designed to enhance the storytime experience.

“Berkeley Symphony is proud to partner with the Berkeley Public Library Foundation on this exciting new project that combines the art of story-telling with live music performance,” said Music Director Joseph Young.

“The series encapsulates two of my lifelong passions: bringing music to young people and creating community enrichment through shared stories and experiences. There is no better time for our friends and family to come together virtually and see that arts are alive and well in Berkeley.”

Multi-award-winning actress Rita Moreno opens the series on **Friday, September 25, 2020 at 11:00 a.m.** with one of the most enduring children’s classics, *The Runaway Bunny* by Margaret Wise Brown, a book that has been continuously in print since it was first published in 1942. Best known for her star performance as Anita in *West Side Story*, Rita Moreno has since become a Bay Area audience favorite with appearances in productions with the Berkeley Repertory Theatre including the 2011 one-woman show *Rita Moreno: Life Without Makeup*.



The series continues on **Friday, October 2, 2020 at 11:00 a.m.** with author and Professor Emerita at UC Berkeley Maxine Hong Kingston and husband Earl Kingston for a reading of *Baby’s Got the Blues* by Carol Diggory Shields, a humorous story about the trials of babyhood that tips its cap to legendary blues artist B.B. King. Born in Stockton, Ms. Hong Kingston studied at UC Berkeley during the 1960s where she met Earl Kingston, an actor best known for his roles in such TV shows as *Magnum P.I.* and *Hawaii Five-O*. Ms. Kingston is the author of the 2011 book-length poem *I Love a Broad Margin to My Life*, among many others, and a recipient of the National Medal of Arts.



Oakland Athletics’s shortstop and third baseman Marcus Semien will surprise audiences with a special story from his own family bookshelf. A former St. Mary’s College High School and UC Berkeley student, Marcus Semien has played for the Oakland A’s since 2015 following a one-year stint at the Chicago White Sox and has been nominated for Gold Glove on multiple occasions.

Comedian/actor Andy Samberg, a Berkeley native and graduate of Berkeley High School, will read a new book by his friend and fellow *The Lonely Island* member Jorma Taccone called *Little Fox and the Wild Imagination*. Along with Akiva Schaffer, Samberg and Taccone formed *The Lonely Island* after meeting in junior high and graduating college. The group was hired to write for Saturday Night Live and has since written, directed and starred in multiple feature-length films.





Son of children’s book creators Clement Hurd and Edith Thacher Hurd, talented illustrator and author Thacher Hurd will read one of his own books *Mama Don’t Allow*, a musical story about a swamp band featuring alligators that love the saxophone. *Mama Don’t Allow* is one of more than 25 books that Thacher Hurd has written and was chosen as a Rainbow Feature Selection as well as winning the Boston



Globe Horn Book Award. Finally, the series concludes with a reading of *Thank You, Omu!* by Oge Mora featuring Berkeley Public Library’s children’s librarian Michael Zwende.

“Storytime is one of the keys to literacy. Music and words together are a magical combination,” notes Kathy Huff, Berkeley Pubic Library Foundation Executive Director. “We are incredibly grateful for all who have agreed to help make this fun program happen during these exceptional times. We all need stories and music to keep our spirits up, but our kids and families who are at home need them now more than ever.”

For more information, please visit <http://berkeleysymphony.org>

CALENDAR EDITORS, PLEASE NOTE:

Berkeley Symphony and Berkeley Public Library Foundation Present

Reading is Instrumental

September 25-November 6, 2020

Friday, September 25, 2020, 11:00 a.m., Berkeley Public Library Facebook Page

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Friday, October 2, 2020, 11:00 a.m., Berkeley Public Library Facebook Page

Author Maxine Hong Kingston and actor Earl Kingston read *Baby’s Got the Blues* by Carol Diggory Shields.

The order of all subsequent episodes will be announced at a later date, and will feature Oakland Athletics’s shortshop Marcus Semien; comedian/actor Andy Samberg; children’s author and illustrator Thacher Hurd; Berkeley Symphony Music Director Joseph Young and Berkeley Public Library children’s librarian Michael Kwende.

ABOUT BERKELEY SYMPHONY

The Berkeley Symphony is unique among Bay Area and American orchestras for its commitment to

innovation, community, and excellence. Founded in 1971 in the intellectual and artistic nexus of Berkeley, California, the Orchestra is committed to premiering and commissioning new music and champions women composers, sustained by the supportive musical environment of Berkeley, the East Bay, and the San Francisco Bay Area. From the outset, the people behind Berkeley Symphony's culture and programming were attuned to the culturally diverse people and the heady creative climate of their home city. In the 2019-2020 season, Berkeley Symphony entered a new era under the leadership of Joseph Young, the Orchestra's fourth Music Director in its nearly 50-year history, following a highly successful February 2019 debut that was acclaimed by critics and audiences alike. In addition to building on the Orchestra's artistic innovation, creativity and adventurous programming, Maestro Young is committed to amplifying the voices of underrepresented composers and artists as well as continuing to tell diverse stories that reflect the local Berkeley community.

For more information, please visit: <http://www.berkeleysymphony.org>.

ABOUT THE BERKELEY PUBLIC LIBRARY FOUNDATION

The Berkeley Public Library Foundation supports library innovation and excellence. Grants from the Foundation amplify public investment by providing resources to help the Berkeley Public Library advance all forms of literacy. The Foundation outfits and refurbishes library buildings, resources dynamic new projects to advance STEM literacy, the culinary arts, and reading for all ages. The Foundation works to secure literacy centered technology to keep the library creative, flexible, and ready to serve the public in an ever-changing digitized and interconnected world. As a cultural connector since 1997, it has showcased more than 600 regional authors at events, including its signature Annual Authors Dinner gala fundraiser. The Foundation partners with the Friends of the Library, and many individuals, businesses, and other foundations to make a great public library extraordinary.

For more information, please visit: <http://www.bplf.org>

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Rita Moreno / Mark Hill

Maxine Hong Kingston & Earl Kingston / credit Maxine Hong Kingston

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