



JOSEPH YOUNG / MUSIC DIRECTOR

# Literary Soundscapes

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# Berkeley Symphony 23/24 Season



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# Message from the Music Director

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Welcome to the third concert of our 2023/24 season, *Literary Soundscapes*, where we will explore the expressive powers of symphonic music and the written word. Through this program, we'll experience the literary worlds of renowned poets Walt Whitman and Langston Hughes, blending orchestral colors with vocal expression.

At the heart of this program is music that transcends genre and time period to pay homage to musical evolution and shared experiences. Joel Puckett's *There Was a Child Went Forth* transports us back to childhood—the world needs some of that wonder right now. Laura Karpman's iconic setting of Langston Hughes's jazz-poetry reminds us that we can jam to poetry, jazz, and hip hop, and we can honor orchestral music at the same time. In Karpman's

score—created in collaboration with legendary soprano Jessye Norman—Hughes's text is spectacularly sung and spoken by a slate of incredible soloists. To round out the program, Mendelssohn's playful take on Shakespeare invites us to dream. This music is an eclectic mix that I hope Bay Area audiences find relatable and refreshing.

We cherish the opportunity to make music together with you, and we thank you for making Berkeley Symphony a part of your community.

—Joseph Young

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# Today's Program

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**Joseph Young** *Conductor*

**Joel Puckett**

*There Was a Child Went Forth*

(West Coast Premiere)

**Nicholas Phan** *tenor*

**Laura Karpman**

*Ask Your Mama: 12 Moods for Jazz, Part 1*

Dedication

1. Cultural Exchange

2. Ride, Red, Ride

3. Shades of Pigmeat

**Clairedee** *jazz vocals*

**Arianna Rodriguez** *soprano*

**Olivia Johnson** *mezzo-soprano*

**Wendel Patrick** *narrator*

## Intermission

**Felix Mendelssohn** *Overture to A Midsummer Night's Dream*

**Laura Karpman**

*Ask Your Mama: 12 Moods for Jazz, Part 3*

8. Is It True?

9. Ask Your Mama

10. Bird In Orbit

11. Jazztet Muted

12. Show Fare, Please

**Clairedee** *jazz vocals*

**Arianna Rodriguez** *soprano*

**Olivia Johnson** *mezzo-soprano*

**Wendel Patrick** *narrator*

Today's concert is being recorded for broadcast on KALW 91.7 FM at a later date.

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# Program Notes

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## Joel Puckett

Born in Atlanta in 1977; currently resides in Baltimore

## *There Was a Child Went Forth*

Composed: 2023

First performance: April 30, 2023, at the Music Center at Strathmore in Bethesda, Maryland, with tenor Nicholas Phan and the President's Own Marine Band Chamber Orchestra led by Jason Fettig. Berkeley Symphony is performing the West Coast premiere.

Duration: c. 18 minutes

In addition to solo tenor, scored for flute, oboe, clarinet, bassoon, 2 horns, trumpet, 2 percussionists, piano, harp, and strings

**“**If the name Joel Puckett isn't etched into your brain, it should be,” declared the veteran critic David Patrick Stearns in a review of the composer's *I Enter the Earth*, a piece for a cappella choir from 2015. Puckett grew up in a musical family in the Atlanta area—his father was a professional tuba player—and sang in choirs as a child, including under the legendary Robert Shaw. Initially he planned to pursue a professional career as a singer. But he discovered that he was most fulfilled “in a place where I was creating rather than recreating things. So I started focusing deeply on writing music.”

Puckett earned his doctorate at the University of Michigan, where Michael Daugherty, William Bolcom, and Bright

Sheng were among his mentors. Along with his career as a sought-after composer, Puckett teaches composition and theory at the Peabody Conservatory in Baltimore. His catalogue ranges from compositions for chamber and wind ensembles to choral, orchestral, and stage works. Puckett's 2009 concerto for flute and wind ensemble, *The Shadow of Sirius*, draws inspiration from his love of poetry (here, the eponymous work by W.S. Merwin) and has received more than 200 performances to date. His debut opera, *The Fix*, which dramatizes the rise and fall of the 1919 Chicago White Sox, garnered an enthusiastic response when it premiered at Minnesota Opera in 2019.

*There Was a Child Went Forth* was inspired by Puckett's artistic affinity with Nicholas Phan. He recalls how they first collaborated two decades ago to premiere one of his orchestral songs—another setting of a Walt Whitman text. “We stayed in touch, since we found such immediate resonance in the way that we saw music,” Puckett says. An ideal occasion to renew the collaboration arrived when he received a commission to write a piece celebrating the 225th anniversary of the President's Own Marine Band Chamber Orchestra (later expanded to encompass a chamber orchestra).

“I wanted to find something that speaks to the moment that we're all feeling right now, of America being at a crossroads and trying to figure out what it wants to be next,” recalls the composer. “I'm always trying to think about how my music can express the moment in which it is being created. My opera *The Fix*, for example, is a

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workers' story at its heart—about a bunch of ballplayers being taken advantage of not only by management but by a system that was set up to hold them down.”

Phan suggested that a good source for the new commission would be the poetry of Walt Whitman, who had made the topic of America at a crossroads a central concern in his work. Puckett found the 1855 poem “There Was a Child Went Forth” particularly suitable, though he slightly adapted it to account for changes in sensibility between a 19th-century text and a 21st-century audience. (Whitman later included the poem as part of the “Autumn Rivulets” section of the 1881 edition of *Leaves of Grass*.) “The text follows the everyday wanderings of a child as they notice and incorporate the world around them into their being,” writes the composer in his preface to the score. “The music taps into a melancholic nostalgia for childhood, belonging—or not fully belonging—to a family, and the spirit of wanting to become an individual.”

Puckett recalls being struck by the resemblances he noticed with James Agee’s *Knoxville: Summer of 1915*, the prose-poem that Samuel Barber set so memorably for voice and orchestra in 1947. That similarity, he says, “dictated not only what I started hearing musically but the orchestration.” Puckett therefore scored *There Was a Child Went Forth* for the same instrumental forces.

A brief side note: Founded in 1798, the United States Marine Band became known as “The President’s Own” in 1801 thanks to its regular history of performances at the White House. According to Puckett, First Lady Dolley Madison took a special interest in the band and had it expanded into

a chamber orchestra by adding a small number of string players—“limited to how many could fit on the White House stage.”

Whereas Puckett views Agee’s text as conveying “a rather pessimistic view of the narrator being at a crossroads in his life,” he points out that “Whitman’s poem uses a lot of the same literary devices but has a very optimistic tone to my ear.” Throughout *There Was a Child Went Forth*, “the listener is invited to join the child on their growth, self-discovery, and self-realization journey.”

### What to listen for

Puckett provides these comments: “The music’s contemplative and introspective mood reflects the child’s journey of self-discovery and exploration in the poem. The orchestra provides a rich harmonic backdrop for the tenor’s voice, which soars above the textured accompaniment. Throughout the piece, the melody is transformed through a series of variations, reflecting the evolving nature of the child’s experiences.”

### Laura Karpman

Born on March 1, 1959, in Los Angeles; currently resides in Playa del Rey, California

### ***Ask Your Mama: 12 Moods for Jazz, Parts One and Three***

Composed: 2008

First performance: March 16, 2009, at Carnegie Hall, with Jessye Norman, Cassandra Wilson, The Roots, and the

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Duration: c. Part 1: c. 24 minutes; Part 3: c. 52 minutes

Scored for 3 flutes (2nd doubling piccolo, 3rd doubling alto flute), oboe (doubling English horn), clarinet (doubling bass clarinet), bassoon (doubling contrabassoon), tenor saxophone, 4 horns, 2 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, 4 percussionists, timpani, harp, piano, and strings, along with solo soprano, solo jazz vocalist(s), solo spoken word artists, and pre-recorded sound samples

**A**sk Your Mama: 12 Moods for Jazz is the longest, most ambitious poem by James Mercer Langston Hughes (1901-67)—in one sense, the neglected *Leaves of Grass* of American literary history. As the composer Laura Karpman aptly stated in a radio interview in 2016: “It’s a great poem—period. It’s a great American poem that’s often relegated to African American studies. Everyone reads *Leaves of Grass*, why not also read *Ask Your Mama*? It is a great work of American literature—period.”

Hughes, the revered poet, playwright, novelist, and activist who became famous as a leader of the Harlem Renaissance, indeed counted Walt Whitman among his models—with whose status as a gay artist he may have felt a special affinity—along with Paul Laurence Dunbar and Carl Sandburg. A visit to the 1960 Newport Jazz Festival seems to have inspired this epic version of his long-standing practice of “jazz poetry,” in which Hughes transformed linguistic virtuosity and the sensitivity of a keen observer into a poetic, improvisatory parallel to jazz. His dream was to collaborate with

the likes of Charles Mingus to realize the music for which Hughes provides clues and directions throughout the text—a project that sadly never came to fruition.

Fast forward to the early 2000s, when Laura Karpman went on a search for jazz poetry that would be suitable to combine with a score she had originally written for CBS, only to be told it was considered “too out there.” When she came across the text of *Ask Your Mama*—Hughes had his epic printed entirely in upper case letters, with musical annotations in the margins—Karpman experienced a shock of recognition.

“I grew up listening to jazz and classical music, as well as a host of other sounds,” she writes in her preface to the score. “My mother would alternate well-worn LPs of Stravinsky, Bernstein, Miles Davis, and Wes Montgomery with occasional flamenco and Hebrew folk songs.” For his part, Hughes calls for “rapid stylistic changes” in his annotations to the poems, which list popular songs, specific classical pieces, and folk sources in an Ivesian cornucopia side-by-side with musical icons whose signature styles are to be imitated—“from German lieder to traditional 12-bar blues,” as Karpman puts it.

“This world, where Strauss’s *Die Nacht* and Miles Davis’s *So What* live side-by-side, is a world in which I feel very much at home,” she writes. “Not only is it familiar from the eclectic music of my childhood, but also from my student days, when I studied at Juilliard with Milton Babbitt by day and scat sang in jazz clubs by night, and then later as a film composer, where one is asked to be versatile—sometimes even gymnastic—in



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musical thought. In *Ask Your Mama* I saw the possibility of working with the most brilliant, erudite ‘director,’ Langston Hughes.”

Karpman is a Juilliard-trained, multiple-Emmy Award-winning composer who writes prolifically for film, television, video games, and the stage. Her 2016 opera *Balls*, which treats the 1973 “Battle of the Sexes” tennis match between Billie Jean King and Bobby Riggs, will be given its world premiere staging next month across the Bay by Opera Parallèle and SFJAZZ.

Karpman’s fascination with *Ask Your Mama* inspired her to embark on a collaboration with the soprano Jessye Norman, for whom she envisioned writing the score and who became co-creator of the project. “We agreed to use this opportunity, through music, to have an honest and impassioned conversation between Black and white America,” says the composer. “We both felt *Ask Your Mama* told the history of America through culture, wit, beauty, and pain.”

Following the world premiere at a sold-out Carnegie Hall concert in 2009—part of the Honor! Festival curated by Norman to celebrate African American music and culture—a Grammy-nominated recording featuring sopranos Janai Brugger and Angela Brown and jazz vocalist Nnenna Freelon was released in 2015 on the Avie Records label. Hughes dedicated *Ask Your Mama* “to Louis Armstrong, the greatest horn blower of them all,” and Karpman and Norman dedicated their setting “to our beloved mothers, as well as to Edgar Beitzel for introducing us, and finally to the great Carnegie Hall for commissioning the work.”

## What to listen for

Together with Norman, Karpman organized a “playlist” of Hughes’s musical references and allusions throughout the margins of the poem. This and a recording of Hughes himself reciting *Ask Your Mama* that she unearthed became the composer’s “essential tools, the building blocks of what you will hear tonight. This playlist became the basis of the archival sounds, triggered as samples, that you will hear coming from two onstage laptops.”

Karpman sets the text for four principal roles, “none firmly stuck in one tradition: an opera singer who swings; a jazz singer(s) who loves lieder, who is the siren, the mother, the child; a spoken word artist who is a poet himself, a Greek chorus and a preacher; and Langston Hughes.” The orchestra members are asked “to do much more than simply play their instruments” as they realize what Karpman calls a “‘mashup’ of many kinds and styles of American music.”

## Felix Mendelssohn

Born on February 3, 1809, in Hamburg, Germany; died on November 4, 1847, in Leipzig, Germany

### Overture to *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*

Composed: 1826

First performance: February 20, 1827, in Stettin, Germany, with Carl Loewe conducting

Duration: c. 12 minutes

Scored for pairs of flutes, oboes, clarinets, bassoons, horns, and trumpets; tuba (ophicleide); timpani, and strings

**T**he music Felix Mendelssohn composed for Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* spans nearly two decades. Its best-known component—with the exception of the later “Wedding March”—is the Overture, the product of a 17-year-old genius and among the towering achievements of prodigy composers. With the Overture from 1826, Mendelssohn developed some features that became signatures of his style—above all the gossamer-textured, scherzo-like writing associated here with the fairies, which he had already explored in his dazzling Octet for Strings of the previous year. The Overture distills the essence of Shakespeare's comedy from 1595/96 into a purely instrumental narrative. In this sense, it looks ahead to the Romantic innovation of the symphonic poem.

Inspired by reading Shakespeare's play in a recent German translation, Mendelssohn initially wrote his Overture to *A Midsummer Night's Dream* as an independent concert work (rather than to introduce a production of the comedy). And the music makes perfect sense on its own terms. Indeed, Mendelssohn was reluctant to attach a programmatic description to the score, though his music critic friend A. B. Marx later described in his memoirs how he had encouraged the young composer to enrich his first draft so as to encompass each

of the different character types and their respective realms as depicted by Shakespeare in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

### **What to listen for**

This variety is rooted in the four woodwind chords, oscillating between minor and major, that are heard at the outset. Like the famous Masonic chords that start Mozart's Overture to *The Magic Flute*, they recur several times and frame the piece. Liszt compared them to “slowly drooping and rising eyelids, between which is depicted a charming dream-world of the loveliest contrasts.”

Mendelssohn conjures the fairies with lighter-than-air, mercurial textures, in contrast to the dignified stateliness of Theseus's court in Athens. The longing of the misaligned pairs of lovers that move the plot forward is mirrored in meandering lyricism, while a rhythmically vibrant idea is associated with the “rude mechanicals,” the hilariously incompetent amateur acting company led by Peter Quince. Mendelssohn even includes a musical signifier of Nick Bottom's “braying” after he is metamorphosed into an ass. In an especially clever adaptation of classical sonata form, he reverses the order in which the themes are reprised so as to make musical events correspond more closely to the play's denouement, which returns us from the nocturnal forest to the “real” world of the Athenian court.

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# Music Director Joseph Young

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photo by Louis Bryant Photography



Joseph Young balances a flourishing guest conducting career with leadership roles as Music Director of the Berkeley Symphony and Artistic Director of Ensembles at the Peabody Conservatory.

“Joseph Young has had quite a year . . . impressive,” wrote *Washington Classical Review* of his 2023 National Symphony Orchestra debut, which capped a year of debuts that included leading Jeanine Tesori’s *Blue* with Washington National Opera, the LA Phil at the Hollywood Bowl, and NYO2 at Carnegie Hall and on tour in the Dominican Republic, as well as collaborations with composer Du Yun, pianist Lara Downes, artist William Kentridge, bass-baritone Davóne Tines, and icon Debbie Allen.

Other recent and upcoming guest engagements include the San Francisco Symphony, Seattle Symphony, New Jersey Symphony, Milwaukee Symphony, Detroit Symphony, New World Symphony Orchestra, Spoleto Festival Orchestra, Orquestra Sinfónica do Porto Casa da Música (Portugal), the Orquestra Sinfónica y Coro de RTVE (Spain), and the Mzansi National Philharmonic Orchestra (South Africa). In July 2024, he will conduct the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra in the Cincinnati Opera’s world-premiere staging of the *Liverpool Oratorio*, Paul McCartney’s acclaimed 1991 work for orchestra, chorus, and soloists.

Earlier in his career, Joseph served as the Assistant Conductor of the Atlanta Symphony, Music Director of the Atlanta Symphony Youth Orchestra and Resident Conductor of the Phoenix Symphony. He also served as the League of American Orchestras Conducting Fellow at the Buffalo Philharmonic and Baltimore Symphony Orchestra.

Joseph holds an Artist’s Diploma from the Peabody Conservatory, studying with Gustav Meier and Markand Thakar. Mentors include Jorma Panula, Robert Spano, and Marin Alsop, with whom he maintains an artistic partnership. Now a mentor himself, Joseph shapes the future of classical music through his dynamic engagements with major symphony orchestras, his steadfast commitment to teaching in classrooms and concert halls, and his service on the board of New Music USA.

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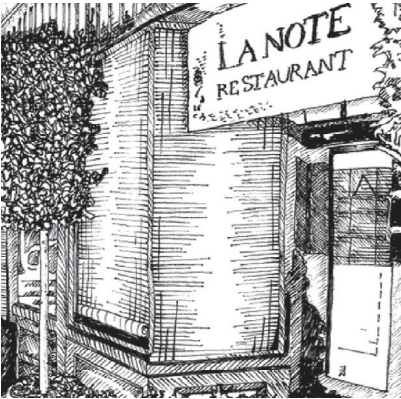
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# Composer & Guest Artist Bios

photo by Maarten de Boer



## Laura Karpman, *composer*

**A** bold, incandescent talent, composer Laura Karpman creates powerful and imaginative scores that push the boundaries of storytelling. Her award-winning music, spanning film, television, theater, interactive media, and live performance, reflects an audaciously creative, prodigious, fresh spirit. Karpman collaborates with the most creative filmmakers of our time, including Misha Green, Steven Spielberg, Alex Gibney, Kasi Lemmons, Sam Pollard, and Eleanor, Francis Ford, and Sofia Coppola.

The five-time Emmy winner's scores span the Marvel Studios' series *The Marvels*, *What If?*, and *Ms. Marvel*, the HBO hit series *Lovecraft Country*, the 2020 Oscar-nominated *Walk Run Cha-Cha*, and the Discovery Channel docuseries *Why We Hate*, for which she recently won an Emmy Award.

Karpman received a Critic's Choice award for her song, *Jump*, co-written with frequent collaborators Raphael Saadiq and Taura Stinson and sung by Cynthia Erivo. Her animated work includes *Sitara*, directed by Sharmeen Obaid-Chinoy, and

produced by Darla Anderson and Gloria Steinem. Her celebrated scores for interactive media include *Guardians of Middle Earth*, *Everquest 2*, *Kung Fu Panda 2*, and *Untold Legends Dark Kingdom*.

Across concert halls, Karpman is well known for her Grammy award-winning album, *Ask Your Mama*, a multimedia opera based on the iconic cycle of poems by Langston Hughes. Other notable works include *All American*, commissioned by The Los Angeles Philharmonic at the Hollywood Bowl; *Brass Ceiling*, commissioned and recorded by The U.S. Army Band, *And Still We Dream*, commissioned by Lyric Opera of Kansas City honoring 100 years of suffrage; and *Balls*, an opera chronicling Billie Jean King's 1973 "*Battle of the Sexes*" tennis match.

A fierce champion for inclusion in Hollywood, after founding the Alliance for Women Film Composers, Karpman became the first American woman composer inducted into the music branch of the Academy of Motion Pictures and Sciences and was subsequently elected to be its first female governor. During her time as governor, Karpman has made indelible strides, advocating for Academy membership for dozens of underrepresented composers and songwriters and spearheading the Academy Women's Initiative.

Karpman is an advisor for the Sundance Film Institute and on the faculty of the USC Film Scoring Program and the San Francisco Conservatory. She received a doctorate from The Juilliard School where she studied with Milton Babbitt. Karpman lives and works in Los Angeles with her wife, composer Nora Kroll-Rosenbaum, their son, and two dogs.



## Joel Puckett, *composer*

*Sponsored by Marilyn & Richard Collier*

Joel Puckett is a composer, leaving both audiences and the press buzzing. His music has been described as, “soaringly lyrical” (*Minneapolis Star Tribune*), “Puccini-esque” (*Wall Street Journal*), and “containing a density within a clarity, polyphony within the simple and—most importantly—beautiful and seemingly spiritual.” (*Audiophile Audition*). *Parterre Box* recently proclaimed, “Puckett should be a household name,” and the *Philadelphia Inquirer’s* David Patrick Stearns mused, “If the name Joel Puckett isn’t etched into your brain, it should be.” In 2011 *NPR Music* listed him as one of the top 100 composers under 40 in the world.

Hailed as “visionary” (*Washington Post*) and “an astonishingly original voice” (*Philadelphia Inquirer*), his music is performed by the leading artists of our day and is consistently recognized by organizations such as the American Composers Forum, BMI, Chorus America, National Public Radio, and the American Bandmasters Association. Puckett’s music attracts diverse performers and listeners through its emotional energy and commitment. Melding tradition with innovation, his distinctive style grows from his

power to create transcendent experiences using charismatic musical language.

*The Fix*, a grand opera commissioned by Minnesota Opera, premiered in March 2019 to packed houses, enthusiastic audiences, and largely effusive praise. With a libretto by *Academy Award* and *Tony Award* winner Eric Simonson, the work depicts the rise and fall of the 1919 Chicago White Sox. It is a tragedy ripe with power, romance, and redemption, set against the backdrop of America’s favorite pastime. Puckett’s earlier commissions have been premiered and performed worldwide to exuberant critical acclaim. His double concerto for clarinet, flute, and orchestra, *Concerto Duo*, was premiered by the Chicago Youth Symphony Orchestra in 2012 when Puckett was Composer-in-Residence with soloists Anthony McGill and Demarre McGill. *The Chicago Tribune’s* John von Rhein praised the piece, saying it “soar[ed] in intertwining dialogues, jazzy and lyrical, with shimmering waves of post-minimalism.”

His flute concerto, *The Shadow of Sirius*, premiered in 2010 and has received more than 200 performances and has been recorded multiple times, including 2015’s Naxos Surround Sound disc, *Shadow of Sirius*, which received a 2016 *Grammy* Nomination. Currently the Chair of Music Theory, Ear Training, and Piano Skills at the Peabody Conservatory in Baltimore, where he has received a 2022 Johns Hopkins Catalyst Award, the 2022 Johns Hopkins Alumni Association Excellence in Teaching Award, and the 2021 Peabody Conservatory Student Affairs Mental Health Ally Award, Puckett presents workshops nationwide and frequently serves as an adjudicator at competitions for rising composers. His music is represented worldwide by Bill Holab Music.





### **Clairdee, jazz vocalist**

**I**n a career spanning some four decades, vocalist Clairdee has performed around the world as an internationally touring artist who's collaborated with some of America's most celebrated jazz masters, including Dick Hyman, Bucky Pizzarelli, Houston Person, Cyrus Chestnut, Russell Malone, and Ken Peplowski.

Deeply informed by the music's departed masters, Clairdee puts a personal stamp on whatever she sings, a gift aptly described by the inimitable Nancy Wilson, who declared that "in the tradition of all great vocalists she infuses each song with her unique style while always remaining true to the song itself." Equally at home singing various idioms in various settings, she works with symphony orchestras, big bands, small jazz combos, and intimate duos and leads her world-class band.

Clairdee's discography as a leader includes four highly regarded albums on her Declare Music label. Her album, *A Love Letter to Lena*, garnered international press and was acknowledged in three categories in the 2020 Grammy first-round nominations.

A 2018 recipient of the Bay Area Jazz & Blues Artist Lifetime Achievement Award, Clairdee is a passionate mentor and advocate for music education, having served as a Professor of Jazz Voice at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music and a Teaching Artist for SFJAZZ and San Francisco Symphony. She sits on the Board of Directors for Jazz in the Neighborhood and is a member of the Independent Musicians Alliance.



### **Olivia Johnson, mezzo-soprano**

**O**livia Johnson has been recognized by *Opera News* as a "standout . . . commanding and reassuring, with the timbre of a contralto and the astounding upper extension of a dramatic mezzo" for her portrayal of Girlfriend 3 in Jeanine Tesori and Tazewell Thompson's opera, *Blue*, in production with Detroit Opera from 2021 to 2022.

At the beginning of this season, Johnson had the privilege to debut at The Metropolitan Opera as an Alto I soloist in *X: The Life and Times of Malcolm X* by Anthony Davis. This past summer, Johnson was featured as a Gerdine Young Artist in the Opera Theatre of Saint Louis'



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Summer Festival 2023. Nearing the end of the festival, Johnson had the most exhilarating evening where she stepped in as the cover of Monisha, making her debut in Damien Sneed and Karen Chilton's reimagined opera of Scott Joplin's *Treemonisha*. *Wall Street Journal* noted that "Olivia Johnson . . . delivered with aplomb the aria in which Treemonisha's mother recounts her daughter's origins."

Johnson was awarded an encouragement award in the 2023 George and Nora London Foundation Competition in NYC. In the summer of 2022, she attended Chautauqua Opera, where she covered the role of the Mother in *Thumbprint* by Kamala Sankaram and performed the role of Gertrude Stein in *Mother of Us All*.

During the 2021/22 season, Johnson had the distinction of appearing twice in recital alongside her former teacher, mentor, and legendary tenor, Professor George Shirley, in Kerrytown Concert House's recital series, *Passing the Torch I* and *Passing the Torch II*. In the summer of 2021, she attended the Vocal Institute of Music Academy of the West in Santa Barbara, CA—where she received an Encouragement Award for Marilyn Horne's Art Song Competition. She also made her debut in the spring of 2021 with the AEPEX Contemporary Ensemble as the soloist for Julia Perry's *Stabat Mater*. As a result of that collaboration, she went on to become the new Artist in Residence for AEPEX Contemporary Ensemble for their 2021/22 season.

Johnson has also made soloist appearances with White Snake Projects, Detroit Opera's Touring Ensemble, Opera MODO, Rackham Choir, Opera NexGen, and the Detroit Symphony Orchestra. Other roles include Dorabella in *Così fan tutte*; Gertrude in *Roméo et Juliette*; Mercédès in *Carmen*; Maurya in *Riders to the Sea*;

Sister Mathilde in *Dialogue of Carmélites*; Conchetta in *Night Trip*.

A native of North Carolina, Johnson began studying voice performance in 2010 at East Carolina University, earning her B.A. degree and graduating in 2014. Johnson then went on to complete her graduate studies at the University of Michigan, earning her M.M. under the tutelage of Professor George Shirley. She now studies with Jane Randolph. This coming summer, she will be making her debut at the Vienna Opera Festival as Donna Elvira in *Don Giovanni* by W.A. Mozart.



### Wendel Patrick, *narrator*

**W**endel Patrick has been referred to as "David Foster Wallace reincarnated as a sound engineer" by *Urbanite Magazine* and "wildly talented" by the *Baltimore Sun*. He has been referred to by *XLR8R* magazine as "a hip-hop producer that could easily make any fan of Squarepusher, Boards of Canada, or Madlib flip out." The alter-ego of classical and jazz pianist Kevin Gift, Patrick is rapidly making a name for himself as a producer. His five albums, *Sound*, *Forthcoming*, *JDWP*, *Passage*, and *Travel*, were all produced without sampling—with Patrick playing every note of every instrument, crafted electronically.



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Equally at home performing on stage with his band, behind two turntables, beatboxing, improvising, or playing a Mozart concerto on stage with an orchestra, Patrick has toured Europe on several occasions and performed throughout the world with renowned spoken word artist and poet Ursula Rucker. In 2011, Patrick co-founded the Baltimore Boom Bap Society with Erik Spangler (DJ Dubble8), who performs improvised hip-hop shows with hand-picked musicians and emcees. The group's collaborative performance with the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra of Igor Stravinsky's *The Soldier's Tale* was named "Best Mesmerizing Performance of 2016" by *Baltimore Magazine*.

Patrick's music has seen airplay across the country on NPR stations, most notably on *Out of the Blocks*, an award-winning radio documentary program he co-produces with radio producer Aaron Henkin for NPR affiliate WYPR that has been featured on the BBC. An avid photographer and videographer, his photography has been exhibited in several art galleries, including the Baltimore Museum of Art. Patrick shoots all the accompanying documentary photography and videography for *Out of the Blocks*.

Patrick majored in music and political science at Emory University. He earned his M.M. in Piano Performance as a scholarship student at the Northwestern University School of Music in Evanston, Illinois. Patrick was a full-time faculty member at Loyola University in Baltimore, Maryland, from 2001 to 2013, teaching piano, introduction to music theory, music history, and electronic music production. He currently teaches "Hip Hop Music Production: History and Practice" at The Peabody Music Conservatory—the first course of its kind—to be taught at a major traditional music conservatory anywhere in the United States.



**Nicholas Phan, tenor**

**D**escribed by the *Boston Globe* as “one of the world’s most remarkable singers,” American tenor Nicholas Phan is increasingly recognized as an artist of distinction. Praised for his keen intelligence, captivating stage presence, and natural musicianship, he performs regularly with the world’s leading orchestras and opera companies. Also an avid recitalist, in 2010 he co-founded the Collaborative Arts Institute of Chicago (CAIC) to promote art song and vocal chamber music, where he serves as artistic director.

A celebrated recording artist, Phan’s album *Clairières*—a recording of songs by Lili and Nadia Boulanger—was nominated for the 2020 Grammy Award for Best Classical Solo Vocal Album. His album *Gods and Monsters*, was nominated for the same award in 2017. He is the first singer of Asian descent to be nominated in the history of the category, which has been awarded by the Recording Academy since 1959. Phan’s growing discography also includes a Grammy-nominated recording of Stravinsky’s *Pulcinella* with Pierre Boulez and the Chicago Symphony, Berlioz’s *Roméo et Juliette* with Michael Tilson Thomas and the San Francisco

Symphony, an album of Bach's secular cantatas with Masaaki Suzuki and Bach Collegium Japan, Bach's *St. John Passion* (in which he sings both the Evangelist and the tenor arias) with Apollo's Fire, and the world premiere recordings of two orchestral song cycles: *The Old Burying Ground* by Evan Chambers and Elliott Carter's *A Sunbeam's Architecture*.

Phan has appeared with many of the leading orchestras in North America and Europe, including the Cleveland Orchestra, New York Philharmonic, Boston Symphony, Chicago Symphony, San Francisco Symphony, Los Angeles Philharmonic, Philadelphia Orchestra, Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra, BBC Symphony, English Chamber Orchestra, Strasbourg Philharmonic, Swedish Radio Symphony, Philharmonia and Orchestra of London. Phan's many opera credits include appearances with the Los Angeles Opera, Houston Grand Opera, Maggio Musicale in Florence, Deutsche Oper am Rhein, and Frankfurt Opera. His growing repertoire includes the title roles in Bernstein's *Candide*, Stravinsky's *Oedipus Rex* and Handel's *Acis and Galatea*, Almaviva in *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*, Fenton in *Falstaff*, Tamino in *Die Zauberflöte*, and Don Ottavio in *Don Giovanni*. He has served as guest curator for projects with the Bravo! Vail Music Festival, Laguna Beach Music Festival, and San Francisco Performances, where he served as the vocal artist-in-residence from 2014-2018.

A graduate of the University of Michigan, Phan is the 2012 recipient of the Paul C Boylan Distinguished Alumni Award, the 2018 Christopher Kendall Award, and the 2006 Sullivan Foundation Award. He also studied at the Manhattan School of Music and the Aspen Music Festival and School and is an alumnus of the Houston Grand Opera Studio.



### Arianna Rodriguez, *soprano*

Poised and playful—soprano Arianna Rodriguez has been praised by the *San Francisco Chronicle* as “crystalline” for her performance in the Merola Opera Program’s 2022 Grand Finale concert. Her performance as Musetta in Opera North’s *La Bohème* was described by the *Eagle Times* as a “a delight . . . a brilliant soprano delivering her wit with flair.” Currently a second-year Adler Fellow with San Francisco Opera, Rodriguez sang the role of Gianetta in *L’elisir d’Amore*, made her mainstage debut in Strauss’ *Die Frau ohne Schatten*, and sang the role of Musetta in the company’s production of *Bohème* out of the Box. Leading cover roles at SFO include Chrisann Brennan in *The (R)evolution of Steve Jobs* and Julie in Rhiannon Giddens’ and Michael Abels’ *Omar*. Rodriguez stars in the title role in Amadeo Vives’ *Doña Francisquita* in the Merola Opera Program’s Schwabacher Summer Concert. Other recent performances include a staged production of Bernstein’s *Mass* under the baton of Marin Alsop.

Of Guyanese and Puerto Rican heritage, Rodriguez was a District Winner and Regional Finalist in the Metropolitan Opera Laffont Competition, a finalist in the Giulio Gari International Vocal Competition, and received encouragement awards from the Vero Beach Opera Rising Star Vocal Competition and Gerda Lissner Foundation International Vocal Competition.



# About Berkeley Symphony

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**B**erkeley 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 performing, premiering, and commissioning new music that reflects its home city's culturally diverse people and the heady creative climate.

In the 2019/20 season, Berkeley Symphony entered a new era under the

leadership of Joseph Young, the Orchestra's fourth Music Director in its 50-year history, following a highly successful February 2019 debut 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 under-represented composers and artists and continues to share diverse stories that reflect the local Berkeley community.

# Music in the Schools

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photo by David Welland

**C**rafted in partnership with Berkeley Unified School District, Berkeley Symphony's Music in the Schools (MITS) program provides a comprehensive and inclusive music curriculum to over 4,700 Berkeley public school students each year and is recognized by the League of American Orchestras as one of the country's top music education programs. Ming Luke has served as the Education Director since 2007 and continues to bring joy, laughter, and music to the students in the MITS Program.

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