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## **BERKELEY SYMPHONY PRESENTS**

### ***LITERARY SOUNDSCAPES***

Saturday, March 23, 2024 at First Presbyterian Church of Berkeley

BERKELEY, CA (February 6, 2024) – **Berkeley Symphony**, led by **Music Director Joseph Young**, will present ***Literary Soundscapes*** on **Saturday, March 23 at 7:30 p.m.** at **First Presbyterian Church of Berkeley** (2407 Dana Street, Berkeley 94704). The enchantment of musical storytelling takes center stage as Berkeley Symphony presents a captivating concert bringing literature to life. ***Literary Soundscapes*** is the third of four Symphonic Series performances and will feature **Nicholas Phan** (Tenor), **Clairedee** (Jazz Vocals), **Arianna Rodriguez** (Soprano), **Olivia Johnson** (Mezzo-Soprano), and **Wendel Patrick** (narrator). General Admission tickets are \$40 and are available now at [berkeleysymphony.org](http://berkeleysymphony.org) or by calling the box office at 510.841.2800.

***Literary Soundscapes*** features the West Coast premiere of Joel Puckett's *There Was a Child Went Forth*, featuring the tenor Nicholas Phan, to whom the piece is dedicated. Puckett's orchestral song cycle was inspired by Walt Whitman's poetic childhood account. The whimsical Overture to Mendelssohn's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* captures the magical essence of one of Shakespeare's most revered comedies. These works are bookended by an extraordinary fusion of Langston Hughes' epic poem and Laura Karpman's interdisciplinary creation, *Ask Your Mama: 12 Moods for Jazz, Part 1 and Part 3*, conveying a rich blend of American voices. Karpman adapted the musical direction from Hughes's 1961 poem, maintaining the essence of the funny, political, genre-bending piece.

“At the heart of this program is music that transcends genre and time period to pay homage to musical evolution and shared experiences,” says **Joseph Young, Music Director of Berkeley Symphony**. “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' jazz-poetry reminds us that we can jam to poetry, jazz, and hip hop, and we can honor orchestral music *at the same time*. And 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.”

Ticketholders can arrive early for a free pre-concert chat moderated by *Berkeleyside* journalist Andrew Gilbert. The informative and engaging talk will provide fascinating insights into the music of *Literary Soundscapes*. The expert speakers will discuss the program’s cultural and historical context, along with guided listening. Additionally, there will be live interviews with guest artists, composers, and orchestra musicians.

For more information about the featured artists in *Literary Soundscapes*, visit [berkeleysymphony.org/event/literary-soundscapes](https://berkeleysymphony.org/event/literary-soundscapes)

### **ABOUT BERKELEY SYMPHONY**

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 performing, premiering, and commissioning new music that reflects the culturally diverse people and the heady creative climate of its 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 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.

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