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INHERITANCE, TRANSFORMATION, REMEMBRANCE: BERKELEY SYMPHONY PRESENTS ITS 2026–27 SEASON

Berkeley Symphony presents a season of renewal and reinvention, offering programs that reinterpret works by Bach, Vivaldi, and other timeless composers. Highlights include the world premiere of Alex Nante's *Vater unser*, the first-ever performance of the fully orchestrated *Intonations: Songs from the Violins of Hope* by Jake Heggie, and more

BERKELEY, CA (August 18, 2026) – **Berkeley Symphony** announces its **2026–27 season**, a program of renewal and reinvention. The season features three Mainstage Concerts and two Chamber Concerts, featuring two premieres. The Mainstage Concerts—***Inheritance***, ***Transformation***, and ***Remembrance***—explore how composers revisit and reinterpret works from the past. The season presents familiar chorales, Baroque masterworks, and centuries-old melodies in new forms, from **Alex Nante's** world-premiere reimagining of a Bach chorale to **Max Richter's** recomposition of Vivaldi's *The Four Seasons* and **Jake Heggie's** *Intonations: Songs from the Violins of Hope*, inspired by instruments owned by Jewish musicians before and during the Holocaust. These innovative works are paired with masterworks by **Felix Mendelssohn** and **Franz Schubert** and Berkeley-born composer **Gabriella Smith's** *Desert Ecology*, a response to the urgent realities of climate change.

The season's programs are led by a distinguished roster of guest artists. Music Director Laureate **Kent Nagano** opens the season on **Sunday, October 18** by exploring the music of Felix Mendelssohn. In February, guest violinist **Nick Kendall** guides a conductorless ensemble in a program inspired by the natural world. Conductor **Kwamé Ryan** closes the season in June with the first complete performance of the orchestral version of Heggie's *Intonations*.

"There is a wonderful thread running through this season's programs," said **Marion Atherton, Executive Director of Berkeley Symphony**. "We're presenting familiar music in unexpected contexts, alongside powerful new works by living composers. It feels very

much in keeping with Berkeley Symphony's spirit of curiosity and discovery. I'm grateful to this community, and excited to share the season with our audiences."

Subscription packages are available now. Individual concert tickets will go on sale **August 20 at 9 a.m.** Performances will be held at **Henry J. Kaiser Center for the Arts, The Hillside Club, Littlefield Concert Hall, and Zellerbach Hall.**

MAINSTAGE CONCERTS

INHERITANCE

Sunday, October 18, 2026 at 4 p.m.

Henry J. Kaiser Center for the Arts (10 10th St, Oakland)

Maestro **Kent Nagano**, Music Director Laureate, returns for a program exploring the legacy of **J.S. Bach** through the works of **Felix Mendelssohn** and contemporary composers. The concert opens with Mendelssohn's haunting overture *The Hebrides (Fingal's Cave)*, followed by the world premiere of **Alex Nante's** *Vater unser*, based on a Bach chorale melody and reimagined for full orchestra. Pianist **Mari Kodama** joins Nagano for Mendelssohn's Piano Concerto No. 1, and the program concludes with Symphony No. 5, "Reformation," whose finale is built on Luther's hymn "Ein feste Burg," echoing the evening's theme of transformation from tradition to innovation.

TRANSFORMATION

Saturday, February 27 & Sunday, February 28, 2027 at 4 p.m.

Jeannik Méquet Littlefield Concert Hall (Richards Road, Oakland)

Led from the violin by **Nick Kendall** of the "genre-busting" trio **Time for Three**, and performing without a conductor, a chamber orchestra of Berkeley Symphony musicians presents a program inspired by the natural world. Berkeley-born composer **Gabriella Smith** transports listeners to California's Joshua Tree National Park in *Desert Ecology*, a multimedia work for string orchestra and desert field recordings that addresses the urgent realities of climate change. **Max Richter**, known for his acclaimed film and television scores, concludes the performance with *The Four Seasons Recomposed*, a bold reimagining of Vivaldi's Baroque masterpiece that feels both familiar and new.

REMEMBRANCE

Sunday, June 6, 2027 at 4 p.m.

Zellerbach Hall, UC Berkeley (101 Zellerbach Hall, Berkeley)

Berkeley Symphony's 2026–27 season concludes with *Remembrance*, a program of resilience and renewal. Conductor **Kwamé Ryan** leads the first live performance of the orchestral version of Jake Heggie's *Intonations: Songs from the Violins of Hope*, featuring mezzo-soprano **Sun-Ly Pierce** and violinist **Benjamin Beilman**. A dramatic song cycle told from the perspective of the Violins of Hope — restored instruments once played by Jewish musicians before and during the Holocaust — Heggie's work gives voice to stories of loss and survival, and to the enduring power of music as a source of hope. *Intonations* was originally commissioned by the Cabrillo Festival; the orchestration was set to premiere in 2020 but was halted by the pandemic and has never since been performed live in full — making this its long-awaited premiere. **Franz Schubert's** Ninth Symphony, aptly nicknamed "The Great," brings the season to a majestic and hopeful finale.

CHAMBER CONCERTS

NIGHT OF THE IMAGINATION

Sunday, November 15, 2026 at 4 p.m.

The Hillside Club (2286 Cedar Street, Berkeley)

Night has often been a canvas for composers—a space where reality blurs and the imagination takes over. Join us for this chamber concert curated by **Nicole Paiement**, Founder and Artistic Director of San Francisco's Opera Parallèle, including works by **Philip Glass, J. S. Bach, Missy Mazzoli, and Claude Debussy**. Nicole Paiement is an internationally renowned conductor, celebrated for her expertise in contemporary opera and her commitment to premiering new works.

COMPASS

Sunday, April 4, 2027 | 4 p.m.

The Hillside Club (2286 Cedar Street, Berkeley)

"Wildly inventive" composer **Viet Cuong**, in his first appearance with Berkeley Symphony, explores the ways music can lead us towards new sounds, new places, and one another. Includes works by **Maurice Ravel, Igor Stravinsky, Caroline Shaw, and Viet Cuong**. A composer known for his imagination and colorful voice, Cuong strives to blend the whimsical and profound by finding new expressive possibilities through unexpected instrumental pairings and textures.

FAMILY & COMMUNITY PROGRAMMING

Berkeley Symphony continues its commitment to introducing the next generation to live orchestral music. On **Saturday, November 7, 2026**, the orchestra presents a free family concert at **Oxford Elementary School** in Berkeley, led by Berkeley Symphony's education director, **Ming Luke**. Designed as a welcoming, low-barrier introduction to the orchestra, last year's family concert drew more than 250 attendees. The season also sees the return of the orchestra's **Kids Club** and **Students at the Symphony** programs, which invite young people and families into concerts throughout the year.

TICKETS & SUBSCRIPTIONS

Subscription packages are available now. This season offers a Full Subscription (all three Mainstage Concerts plus both Chamber Concerts) and a Mainstage Subscription (all three Mainstage Concerts).

Single tickets go on sale **Thursday, August 20 at 9 a.m.**, at berkeleysymphony.org or by phone at (510) 841-2800.

Ticketed performances take place at the Henry J. Kaiser Center for the Arts, Jeannik Méquet Littlefield Concert Hall, The Hillside Club, and Zellerbach Hall at UC Berkeley. Single tickets start at \$20.

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 cultural diversity and creative climate of its home city. For more than 50 years, Berkeley Symphony has established itself as a cultural cornerstone of the East Bay through its commitment to artistic excellence, community engagement, and introducing audiences to new and lesser-known works. Berkeley Symphony takes pride in crafting thoughtfully balanced programs that pair contemporary voices with beloved classics, creating meaningful musical experiences that resonate with the East Bay's diverse community. With programs that welcome families and students to performances, Berkeley Symphony is supporting the next generation of classical music lovers.

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