



SAN FRANCISCO  
PERFORMANCES

PIVOT  
2020

# String Theory

A Festival Exploring Musical Frontiers

January 23–26, 2020 | Herbst Theatre



presents

# PIVOT: New Adventures in the Performing Arts

January 23–26, 2020 | Herbst Theatre

Launched in 2016, PIVOT is a San Francisco Performances series created for adventurous audiences interested in truly unique arts experiences. Driven by a philosophy of innovation, creativity and artistic excellence that pushes the boundaries of the traditional concert experience, PIVOT offers exciting performances and creative exchanges between artists and audiences.

Since its inception in 2016, PIVOT been mixing things up around themes that resonate with today's audiences (see article on page 4). This year, under the theme ***String Theory***, our four-day festival will cross boundaries, explore frontiers and energetically traverse and unify four threads of music: ancient, traditional classical, new music and jazz.

We begin on Thursday with the unique pairing of harpsichordist **Mahan Esfahani** and violinist **Stefan Jackiw**. Together, they shatter musty stereotypes of the baroque keyboard in a program surveying 300+ years of music that puts the harpsichord in an entirely new light.

The following night, SF Performances' favorites **Jennifer Koh**, violin and **Vijay Iyer**, composer/pianist team up with debut composer/percussionist **Tyshawn Sorey**. This vibrant trio examines limitless relationships between composer and performer including two new works and improvisations.

On Saturday, category-defying German composer/vocalist **Theo Bleckmann** joins dynamic jazz pianist **Dan Tepfer** and San Francisco's own adventurous **Telegraph Quartet** in an evening of Berlin cabaret songs of *Love and War*, *Peace and Exile*.

We conclude this year's festival early Sunday evening with the pairing of violinist **Patricia Kopatchinskaja** and cellist **Jay Campbell**, both known for embracing a broad and diverse repertoire. Here they offer a program spanning a millennium and underscoring the timeless power of music to communicate, innovate and move us.

**PIVOT: New Adventures in Performing Arts** was developed under a grant from:



The Wallace Foundation\*

Since 1979, **SAN FRANCISCO PERFORMANCES** has been a pioneer in the Bay Area by introducing hundreds of classical music, jazz, and contemporary dance artists to audiences. With a strong artistic vision and adventurous programming, San Francisco Performances presents the world's finest in music and dance, connecting audiences with artists in intimate settings. For more info please visit our website at: **[sfperformances.org](http://sfperformances.org)**

**PHOTO CREDITS:**

**PAGE 4:** Kronos Quartet: Jay Blakesburg; Brooklyn Rider: Erin Baiano

**PAGE 5:** Philip Glass: Johansen Krause   **PAGE 7:** Mahan Esfahani: Kaja Smith

**PAGE 8:** Stefan Jackiw: Courtesy of Opus 3 Artists

# San Francisco Performances: The First 40 Years A History of Innovation

San Francisco Performances' programming has long reflected a commitment to artists who are driving classical music forms in new and innovative directions. From the start, this philosophy complemented our mission of introducing exciting emerging artists in every season, and it has often—but not exclusively—been these early career artists who have nourished our audiences' taste for adventure.



San Francisco's own Kronos Quartet, known worldwide for their commitment to new music, has been a frequent presence for more than 30 years, going back to live dance performances with ODC (1986) and Japanese performance duo Eiko & Koma (1997), to their most recent collaboration for the 2017 world premiere of *Echoes* with The Living Earth Show, the spoken word group Youth Speaks and composer Danny Clay.



In recent seasons the trailblazing string quartet Brooklyn Rider has made a profound impact on our audiences—in collaboration with dancer Wendy Whelan and choreographer Brian Brooks (*Some of a Thousand Words*, 2017); and last season with a program entitled *Healing Modes* that explored new works written as a response to Beethoven's *String Quartet Op. 15 No. 132* by Caroline Shaw, Gabriela Lena Frank, Reena Esmail and Matana Roberts.



Over the years we have taken special pride in bringing the iconic American composer/performer Philip Glass to San Francisco at regular intervals to highlight the full range of his experiments in sound, from screenings of the *Qatsi* film trilogy accompanied live by the Philip Glass Ensemble, to the minimalist cycle *Music in Twelve Parts*, to the epic, three-hour set of his 20 piano études.

For more than two decades SF Performances has been a member of Music Accord, a national consortium of presenters that commissions and presents new works in the chamber music, instrumental recital and song genres. Recent Music Accord presentations in San Francisco include Caroline Shaw's *Narrow Sea* performed by Dawn Upshaw, Gil Kalish and Sō Percussion (2017) and Shulamit Ran's *Glitter, Doom, Shards, Memory* for the Pacifica Quartet (2014).

Over the past decade, novel curated projects have become a staple of our work. Jennifer Koh's *Limitless* program, featured in the current PIVOT series, is representative. As reported in a 2018 profile in *The New York Times*, "In Mozart's time, for example, there wasn't a distinction between new and repertory works 'because everything was new,' Ms. Koh said. 'Now we have pop, jazz, classical, and even new music within classical. I don't believe in that; I just believe in good musicians and bad musicians.' This project is also an attempt to add more diverse voices to the violin repertory beyond what Ms. Koh called 'dead, white European males.'"

*PIVOT* is a celebration of artists who are moving their art into the present and future, making it accessible to younger audiences while converting many traditionalists to new possibilities. They represent the path forward.



**MAHAN ESFAHANI** | Harpsichord  
**STEFAN JACKIW** | Violin

Thursday, January 23, 2020 | 7:30pm  
Herbst Theatre

**BACH**

**Sonata No. 1 in B minor for Violin and  
Harpsichord, BWV 1014**

*Adagio*  
*Allegro*  
*Andante*  
*Allegro*

**KALABIS**

**Sonata for Violin and Harpsichord,  
Opus 28**

*Allegro moderato*  
*Andante*  
*Allegro vivo*

**C.P.E. BACH**

**Sonata in B minor for Violin and  
Harpsichord, H.512, Wq76**

*Allegro moderato*  
*Poco andante*  
*Allegretto siciliano*

**PISTON**

**Sonatina for Violin and Harpsichord**

*Allegro leggiero*  
*Adagio espressivo*  
*Allegro vivo*

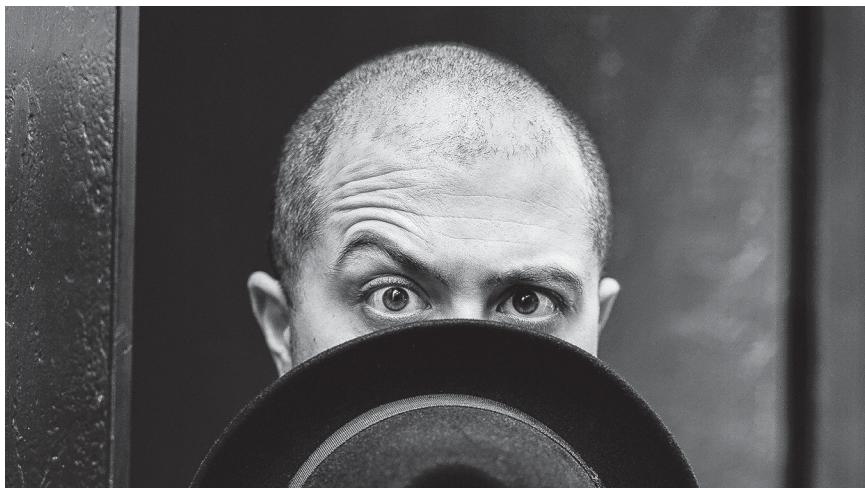
**Mahan Esfahani** is represented by Colbert Artists Management  
[colbertartists.com](http://colbertartists.com)

**Stefan Jackiw** is represented by Opus 3 Artists  
[opus3artists.com](http://opus3artists.com)

Please join us after the performance for a brief Q&A with the artists  
and Cy Musiker

## ARTIST PROFILES

SF Performances presents both Mahan Esfahani and Stefan Jackiw for the second time. Mahan Esfahani helped to inaugurate the first season of PIVOT in October 2016; Stefan Jackiw made his SF Performances recital debut in April 2014.



**Mahan Esfahani** has made it his life's mission to rehabilitate the harpsichord in the mainstream of concert instruments, and to that end his creative programming and work in commissioning new works have drawn the attention of critics and audiences across Europe, Asia, and North America. He was the first and only harpsichordist to be a BBC New Generation Artist (2008–2010), a Borletti-Buitoni prize winner (2009), and a nominee for *Gramophone's* Artist of the Year (2014, 2015, and 2017).

His work for the harpsichord has resulted in recitals in most of the major series and concert halls, including London's Wigmore Hall and Barbican Centre, Oji Hall in Tokyo, the Forbidden City Concert Hall in Beijing, Shanghai Concert Hall, Carnegie Hall, Sydney Opera House, Melbourne Recital Centre, Berlin Konzerthaus, Zurich Tonhalle, Wiener Konzerthaus, San Francisco Performances, and the 92nd St Y, among others. He has appeared widely in concerts including the Chicago Symphony, Ensemble Modern, BBC Symphony, Royal Liverpool Philharmonic, Seattle Symphony, Melbourne Symphony, Czech Radio Symphony, and Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra, with whom he was an artistic partner for 2016–2018.

Particularly renowned for his championing of contemporary music, Esfahani has commissioned and premiered solo works and concertos from such composers as George Lewis, Bent Sorensen, Anahita Abbasi, Sunleif Rasmussen, Daniel Kidane, Laurence Osborne, Gary Carpenter, Harold Meltzer, Elena Kats-Chernin, and Miroslav Srnka.

His richly-varied discography includes six critically-acclaimed recordings for Hyperion and Deutsche Grammophon—garnering one *Gramophone* award,

two *BBC Music Magazine Awards*, a *Diapason d'Or* and “*Choc de Classica*” in France, and an *ICMA*.

Esfahani studied musicology and history at Stanford University, where he first came into contact with the harpsichord in the class of Elaine Thornburgh. Following his decision to abandon the law for music, he studied harpsichord privately in Boston with Peter Watchorn before completing his formation under the celebrated Czech harpsichordist Zuzana Růžičková. Following a three-year stint as Artist-in-Residence at New College, Oxford, he continues his academic associations as an honorary member at Keble College, Oxford, and as professor at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama in London.

Born in Tehran in 1984 and raised in the United States, he lived in Milan and then London for several years before taking up residence in Prague.



**Stefan Jackiw** is one of America’s foremost violinists, captivating audiences with playing that combines poetry and purity with an impeccable technique. Hailed for playing of “uncommon musical substance” that is “striking for its intelligence and sensitivity” (*Boston Globe*), Jackiw has appeared as soloist with the Boston, Chicago, Cleveland, New York, Philadelphia, and San Francisco symphony orchestras, among others.

This season, he will make his debut with the Konzerthaus Orchestra Berlin. He also returns to the Bournemouth Symphony, the Helsinki Philharmonic, and the RTÉ National Symphony in Dublin. Other highlights include performances with the San Diego Symphony, the Indianapolis Symphony, the Baltimore Symphony, and the Omaha Symphony. In recital, Stefan continues touring the complete Ives Sonatas with Jeremy Denk, with whom he has recorded the sonatas for future release on Nonesuch Records. He also appears on tour with harpsichordist Mahan Esfahani and continues to perform alongside pianist Conrad Tao and cellist Jay Campbell as part of the JCT Trio.



Recent recital highlights have included his performances of the complete Ives violin sonatas with Jeremy Denk at Tanglewood and Boston's Jordan Hall, and multiple performances of the complete Brahms violin sonatas, which he has recorded for Sony.

Jackiw has performed in numerous important festivals and concert series, including the Aspen Music Festival, Ravinia Festival, Caramoor International Music Festival, Schleswig-Holstein Music Festival, and New York's Mostly Mozart Festival, among others. At the opening night of Carnegie Hall's Zankel Hall in New York, Jackiw was the only young artist invited to perform, playing alongside such artists as Emanuel Ax, Renée Fleming, Evgeny Kissin, and James Levine.

Born to physicist parents of Korean and German descent, Stefan Jackiw began playing the violin at the age of four. His teachers have included Zinaida Gilels, Michèle Auclair, and Donald Weilerstein. He holds a Bachelor of Arts from Harvard University, as well as an Artist Diploma from the New England Conservatory, and is the recipient of a prestigious Avery Fisher Career Grant. He lives in New York City.

## PROGRAM NOTES

### **Sonata No. 1 in B minor for Violin and Keyboard, BWV 1014**

#### **JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH**

(1685–1750)

When Bach moved from Weimar to Cöthen in 1717, his musical duties changed completely. For the Duke of Saxe-Weimar, Bach had been primarily a church musician, writing cantatas and his great works for organ, but the Cöthen court was strictly Calvinist and would allow no music more elaborate than hymn-singing as part of its services. Prince Leopold of Cöthen, however, proved an enlightened patron. He was an enthusiastic amateur musician (he played violin, clavier, and viola da gamba), and he put a 17-piece professional orchestra at Bach's disposal. From this period came the bulk of Bach's secular instrumental music: the *Brandenburg Concertos*, the first book of *The Well-Tempered Clavier*, several of the orchestral suites, the violin concertos, and the magnificent works for unaccompanied violin and unaccompanied cello.

During these years Bach also composed six sonatas for violin and keyboard (which meant harpsichord). Bach was a great synthesizer, and he drew upon several traditions in these sonatas: the trio sonata, in which the polyphony is a product of three distinct voices (the violin and the pianist's right and left hands), and the Italian instrumental *sonata di chiesa*, whose four movements are in a slow-fast-slow-fast sequence. These sonatas combine the contrapuntal complexity of German music with the singing line of the Italian instrumental sonata.

The opening *Adagio* is remarkable for its evolving textures. It opens with the piano alone, the violin joins this, and then the violin part expands into

double-stopping, giving the movement a full sonority; the music rises to its climax on a great flourish for the violin alone, then closes quietly. The *Allegro* is a fugue that makes full use of the pianist's left hand as one of the contrapuntal participants; the movement is in ternary form, and Bach rounds it off with a literal repeat of the opening section. The *Andante* moves to D Major and offers a limpid lyric line that moves between the piano and the pianist's right hand; the left hand provides a steady bass-line accompaniment. The concluding *Allegro*, in binary-form, races along some hard-driving energy. Once again, Bach liberates the pianist's left hand, and his melodic line moves smoothly between all three voices.

## Sonata for Violin and Harpsichord, Opus 28

### VIKTOR KALABIS

(1923–2006)

Viktor Kalabis faced significant challenges when he set out to become a composer. Born into a musical family, Kalabis studied piano as a boy, but his plans to study at the university level were blocked when the Nazis occupied Czechoslovakia during World War II and he was forced to work in an aircraft factory. Things hardly improved after the war, when Czechoslovakia fell under Communist control. Kalabis was able to study at the Prague Conservatory and the Academy of Music, but he and his wife refused to join the Communist Party, and his career was sidelined for decades—he was able to find employment only in the children's music section of Czech Radio. Not until the 1990s did he begin to achieve the performances that established him as one of the leading Czech composers of his generation. He composed five symphonies, two violin concertos, numerous concertos for other instruments, seven string quartets, and piano and vocal music.

In 1952 Kalabis married the distinguished harpsichordist Zuzana Růžicková, and the two of them eventually became a powerful force in Czech music—they set up an international foundation to promote their music, and Viktor became president of the Bohuslav Martinu Foundation. Perhaps because he was married to a harpsichordist, Kalabis wrote often for that instrument, including a *Harpsichord Concerto* in 1975 and duos that included harpsichord and other instruments. Kalabis composed his *Sonata for Violin and Harpsichord* in 1967 specifically for his wife and the great Czech violinist Josef Suk, who had performed together as a duo for several years. Though the three-movement sonata is quite brief—it spans only about 15 minutes—it is regarded as one of Kalabis' finest works. It comes from a fraught moment in Czech history (Prague Spring and the Soviet invasion were only a year in the future), and he was writing for two artists very close to his heart. Perhaps it is not surprising that he should create—in this small form—music of such emotional power.

# Sonata in B minor for Violin and Harpsichord, H.512, Wq76

**CARL PHILIPP EMANUEL BACH**

(1714–1788)

Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach might seem to have had a very narrow preparation as a composer. The second son of Johann Sebastian had only one teacher, his father (but what a teacher!). He did none of the extensive traveling young composers were supposed to do to expose themselves to different musical styles. He played only keyboard instruments—it was expected that any serious musician would know how to play the violin, but Emanuel was left-handed and so found stringed instruments uncomfortable. In fact, his father intended that Emanuel should have nothing to do with music at all—he sent him off to law school, hoping that he would gain the university degree the father never had.

But the lure of music proved too strong. Emanuel became so fine a keyboard player that in 1740, at age 26, he was named harpsichordist to Frederick the Great. He remained at the Berlin court for the next 28 years, accompanying Frederick (a flutist) several times a week. Emanuel's relations with Frederick were often uneasy. The king was a musical conservative, and doubtless Emanuel wished for a wider and more challenging world. Such an opportunity came in 1767, when Telemann died. Emanuel was reluctantly given leave by Frederick to replace Telemann as music director for the city of Hamburg, a position he filled happily for the remaining two decades of his life.

In the 1760s, during his final years with Frederick, Emanuel composed four sonatas for violin and harpsichord. The *Sonata in B minor* is a very interesting piece for several reasons. Some violin-and-keyboard sonatas in the late 18th century were essentially keyboard sonatas with a subordinate part for the violin. In this sonata, however, Emanuel takes special care to write for the two instruments as equals. Each has the opportunity to introduce musical ideas, each has moments to shine, and the melodic line moves easily (and equally) between the two performers. That said, however, it should be noted that the *Sonata in B minor* opens with an extended, brilliant passage for the harpsichord alone, written in 32nd notes and introducing some of the principal themes by itself. Only when this opening statement is complete is the violin allowed to enter and become an equal participant. The movement is nicely written for both instruments, who deftly exchange the melody, though some of the harpsichord's opening flourish will return at moments along the way. The structure of the central *Poco andante* is quite different. It opens with a long and florid melodic line for the violin, and the keyboard part, so prominent in the first movement, is reduced through much of this movement to bare quarter notes—presumably Emanuel would have fleshed out and embellished this bassline during a performance. Gradually the instruments become more equal as the keyboard takes up and shares the violin's melodic line. The sonata concludes with an *Allegretto siciliano* in binary form that dances with a grave dignity along its 6/8 meter.

## Sonatina for Violin and Harpsichord

WALTER PISTON

(1894–1976)

We automatically think of Walter Piston as “a neoclassical composer,” and so it might be tempting to think that his *Sonatina for Violin and Harpsichord* is a conscious reversion to the style of the violin-and-keyboard sonatas that the Bach family was writing two centuries earlier. And that is hardly the case—this is very much 20th-century music. Piston was 51 years old and a professor of music at Harvard when he composed the *Sonatina* in 1945, and he wrote it for two specific performers: Alexander Schneider, for many years the second violinist of the Budapest String Quartet, and Ralph Kirkpatrick, whose careful cataloging of Scarlatti’s keyboard sonatas has given each of them a K. number. Schneider and Kirkpatrick gave the first performance of the *Sonatina* on November 21, 1945, and later recorded it. Though Piston conceived the keyboard part for harpsichord, he specified that it could be played on the piano, and the music is often heard in that version. The *Sonatina*, in fact, has become one of Piston’s most frequently performed works.

The *Sonatina* shows all of Piston’s considerable virtues as a composer: clean textures, deft counterpoint, brilliant fast movements, and an expressive slow movement. Though all of the movements are relatively brief, each is a carefully conceived structure. Piston specifies that the opening *Allegro* should be *leggiero* (“light”), but more impressive is how fast-moving, syncopated, and spiky this music is. A second subject soars agreeably, the development is quite brief (as one would expect in a sonatina), and a powerful coda pushes the movement to its abrupt close. The atmosphere changes completely in the central *Adagio espressivo*, built on a long violin cantilena over the harpsichord’s steady and simple (in the best sense of that term) accompaniment. Matters grow briefly animated before the music returns to the opening material and glides to a peaceful conclusion. Piston rounds matters off with a brief but most exuberant finale.

—Program notes by Eric Bromberger