



David Finckel and Wu Han. Photo by Lisa-Marie Mazzucco.

David Finckel, *cello*
Wu Han, *piano*

Sunday, November 14, 2021, 3pm
Zellerbach Hall

David Finckel, *cello*
Wu. Han, *piano*

PROGRAM

- Johann Sebastian BACH (1685–1750) Sonata No. 1 in G major for Viola da Gamba and Harpsichord, BWV 1027 (ca. 1736–1741)
Adagio
Allegro ma non tanto
Andante
Allegro moderato
- Felix MENDELSSOHN (1809–1847) Sonata No. 2 in D major for Cello and Piano, Op. 58 (1843)
Allegro assai vivace
Allegretto scherzando
Adagio
Molto allegro e vivace

INTERMISSION

- Claude DEBUSSY (1862–1918) Sonata for Cello and Piano (1915)
Prologue
Sérénade
Final
- Benjamin BRITTEN (1913–1976) Sonata in C for Cello and Piano, Op. 65 (1960–1961)
Dialogo
Scherzo-Pizzicato
Elegia
Marcia
Moto Perpetuo

*David Finckel and Wu Han recordings are available exclusively through ArtistLed: www.artistled.com
www.davidfinckelandyuhan.com*

Wu Han performs on the Steinway Piano.



The Unfolding of Music

With works spanning nearly a quarter of a millennium, David Finckel and Wu Han lead listeners through the extraordinary evolution of classical music. Beginning with Bach's vibrant sonata for the viola da gamba and harpsichord—the ancestors of the cello and piano—the program transitions seamlessly to Beethoven's experimental sonata from the twilight of the Classical period, whose opening recollects the music of Bach. Mendelssohn, who paved the way for full-blown Romanticism, is featured in his second sonata, an ebullient, virtuosic work that pushed the capabilities of the instruments to their limits at the time. Debussy, universally regarded as the inspiration for musical modernism, composed his only cello sonata late in his life, and this short work is considered the most important work for the cello in the Impressionist style. The program concludes with the extraordinary sonata by the renowned Englishman Benjamin Britten, the first of five masterworks he composed for cellist Mstislav Rostropovich. David Finckel was privileged to study the work with Rostropovich, gaining priceless insight into the sonata's conception through the intimate knowledge of its dedicatee.

Johann Sebastian Bach

Sonata No. 1 in G major for Viola da Gamba and Harpsichord, BWV 1027

On two occasions in 1723, the rich musical life of Leipzig got magnificently richer. On May 22, the famous musician Johann Sebastian Bach arrived to assume the post of Cantor and Music Director at St. Thomas' Church, one of the city's musical epicenters. Bach, now 36 years old, had achieved enough celebrity throughout Germany for his elite musical skill, that not only his appointment, but his family's very arrival in Leipzig was reported in newspapers as far away as Hamburg, 180 miles away ("He himself arrived with his family on two carriages at two o'clock and moved into the newly renovated apartment in the St. Thomas School").

The other great development to occur that year was the partnership between Gottfried Zimmermann's coffeehouse, Leipzig's most prominent such establishment, and the

Collegium Musicum. The Collegium was a performing collective of singers and instrumentalists (largely comprising students) founded in 1701 by Georg Philipp Telemann, and had since then played a vital role in Leipzig's musical culture. Zimmermann's coffeehouse included a concert hall that could accommodate large ensembles and audiences of 150 (the neighborhood Starbucks it most certainly was not). A series of weekly concerts—always free of charge—sprung from this partnership, and would eventually fall under Bach's supervision when he became the Collegium's music director in 1729.

Though overseeing this series undoubtedly added a substantial commitment to Bach's already demanding church duties, he nevertheless thrived in his dual position as Cantor at St. Thomas' and concert presenter at Zimmermann's coffeehouse. In fact, in addition to offering works by Handel, Locatelli, Scarlatti, and others, Bach moreover took advantage of the Collegium series as an opportunity to compose a good deal of non-liturgical music himself: primarily instrumental music, as well as a number of cantatas known as "moral cantatas," light-hearted musical dramas dealing with themes of moral virtue (including the famous *Coffee Cantata*, which passes tongue-in-cheek judgment on the vice of caffeine addiction).

The instrumental works Bach produced for this series include numerous important works, among them this first of three Sonatas for Viola da Gamba, BWV 1027–1029. Bach's Collegium works for Zimmermann's coffeehouse also include the six Sonatas for Violin and Keyboard *Obbligato*, BWV 1014–1019; the Violin Concerto in A minor, BWV 1065; and the famous Double Concerto in D minor, BWV 1043.

The G Major Sonata for Viola da Gamba also exists as a Trio Sonata for Two Flutes and Basso Continuo, BWV 1039, which is almost certainly the earlier version (probably from Bach's days as *Kapellmeister* at Cöthen). By the late 1730s (around the time of Bach's arrangement for viola da gamba of his trio sonata), the viola da gamba had already begun to fall out of favor as a solo instrument. Marin Marais, the instrument's greatest virtuoso, had died in 1728. Bach

remained a champion of the instrument, however, as evidenced by his use of it in numerous concertos, cantatas, and the *St. John* and *St. Matthew Passions*, in addition to these sonatas. They remain today as standard repertoire for both the viola and cello; the latter's more burnished tone, compared to the delicacy of the gamba, demands a heightened sensitivity of the player to the nuances of Bach's writing. The early Bach biographer Philipp Spitta—who ranked the G Major among the three gamba sonatas “the loveliest, the purest idyll conceivable”—also noted that the viola da gamba “afforded a great variety in the production of tone, but its fundamental character was tender and expressive rather than full and vigorous. Thus, Bach could rearrange a trio originally written for two flutes and bass, for viol da gamba, with harpsichord obbligato, without destroying its dominant character.”

The sonata does indeed demonstrate trio sonata-style writing. Instead of a sparse basso continuo accompaniment to the through-composed gamba part, Bach provides a complete keyboard accompaniment, which moves in melodic and contrapuntal dialogue with the soloist. In the opening movement, a dignified yet dance-like Adagio, the keyboard and gamba bear equal melodic responsibility, often following each other in canon. The movement's latter half features an intricately involved dialogue between the two, colored gracefully in turn by florid countermelodies and ornamental trills.

The work follows the four-movement structure of the Italian *sonata da chiesa* (church sonata) from the late 17th and early 18th centuries. Following a slow introduction, Bach launches into the fugal Allegro ma non tanto, whose rollicking, perfectly shaped subject inches its way upwards before quickly laughing its way back down to its starting point. The third movement is a languishing Andante in the relative minor, which the finale answers with another jovial fugue.

In the great wealth of solo and chamber instrumental works throughout Bach's oeuvre, the Sonatas for Viola da Gamba are among those gems that have, though certainly not ignored, somewhat taken a back seat to the cello suites,

the sonatas and partitas for violin, *Die Kunst der Fuge*, and other such works. Even 200 years ago, Johann Nikolaus Forkel, Bach's first biographer, only quaintly made note of “Several Sonatas for Harpsichord and Violin, Harpsichord and Flute, Harpsichord, and Viol da Gamba. They are admirably written and most of them are pleasant to listen to even today.” These sonatas are far from second-tier pieces, however, and demonstrate Bach's genius in the mature years of his career as fully as any other works.

Felix Mendelssohn

Sonata No. 2 in D major for Cello and Piano, Op. 58

The turn of the 19th century emancipated the cello from its traditional supporting role as Beethoven, followed by his heirs in the Romantic period, increasingly contributed sonatas, concertos, and other solo works to the cello literature. Felix Mendelssohn's Cello Sonata in D Major, Op. 58 may rightly be counted among the most significant of these, and equally as a quintessential statement of the aesthetic that defined its era.

Mendelssohn penned the Opus 58 Sonata in 1843, a year of considerable personal upheaval. Having at last concluded an unhappy residency in Berlin, Mendelssohn and his family returned to Leipzig, where they had previously spent the years 1835–1840, during which time, Mendelssohn scholar R. Larry Todd notes, the composer, still in his 20s, “stood at the forefront of German music.” Hence in 1840, as part of a sweeping attempt to install Berlin among Europe's major cultural capitals, the recently ascendant Friedrich Wilhelm IV had lured Mendelssohn from Leipzig. Though compensated handsomely in both payment and prestige, however, Mendelssohn would not find personal satisfaction in Berlin over the coming three years. His professional responsibilities remained frustratingly undefined—besides which, he regarded that city as “one of the most sour apples into which a man can bite”—and, in 1843, Mendelssohn resumed his conducting duties at the Leipzig Gewandhaus. Moreover, with his beloved mother's death on December 12, 1842, Felix shared the realization with his

younger brother, Paul, that “we are children no longer.” This sentiment may have partly impelled the 34-year-old composer to act upon his longtime ambition of founding a conservatory (now the Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy University of Music and Theatre), whose charter faculty would include himself, Robert and Clara Schumann, and others of Germany’s musical elite.

Despite the turbulence surrounding this time, 1843 nevertheless represented a solidly productive year. In addition to the Opus 58 Sonata, Mendelssohn completed his incidental music to *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, the *Capriccio* for String Quartet (later published as Op. 81, No. 3), five *Lieder ohne worte* for piano, and numerous choral pieces, among other works.

Befitting Mendelssohn’s mature compositional language, the D Major Sonata is firmly rooted in the tenets of Classicism inherited from Bach, Mozart, and Beethoven, but meanwhile demonstrates the pathos of the Romantic period. Each of the sonata’s four movements portrays a vital dimension of Mendelssohn’s musical identity. The opening *Allegro assai vivace* is all soaring lyricism and propulsive rhythmic energy, even at its tender second theme. The movement’s ecstatic tone dispels the misguided aphorism that music’s emotional content must correlate to biography—there is nothing in this movement, after all, to betray Mendelssohn’s grief over his mother’s passing—but, rather, its great emotive breadth reflects the *zeitgeist* of the Romantic period at large. The second movement offers further Romantic *cantabile*, but couched in a signature Mendelssohnian scherzo. The cello complements the piano’s sly staccato figures with piquant pizzicati before indulging in breathless melody. The homophonic, hymn-like piano introduction to the slow movement furtively recalls Bach—one of Mendelssohn’s formative influences—but with an unmistakably 19th-century touch: Mendelssohn’s instruction *sempre arpeggiando col pedale* (“arpeggiated and with pedal”) imbues each chord with a distinctly more lush and immersive sound than would characterize a

Baroque organ chorale. The cello answers with a dramatic recitative, marked *appassionato ed animato*. The spirited dialogue between cello and piano continues in the finale, now returning to the effervescence of the opening movement. An increased restlessness in the piano accompaniment matches the virtuosic cello writing measure for measure until the stirring final cadence.

Though the Opus 58 Sonata bears a dedication to the Russian cellist and arts patron Count Mateusz Wielhorski, Felix truly intended the work for the aforementioned Paul, the cellist of the Mendelssohn family. It is the second of two cello sonatas Mendelssohn composed: the first, the Sonata in B-flat Major, Op. 45 (1838), as well as the earlier *Variations concertantes* for Cello and Piano (1829), were likewise composed for Paul.

Claude Debussy Sonata for Cello and Piano

The last years of Debussy’s life were largely unhappy times. He once wrote: “Try as I may, I can’t regard the sadness of my existence with caustic detachment. Sometimes my days are dark, dull, and soundless like those of a hero from Edgar Allan Poe; and my soul is as romantic as a Chopin ballade.” Though his marriage to the singer Emma Bardac was sufficiently content, Debussy nevertheless found domestic life increasingly stifling. His melancholy was compounded in 1909, when he was diagnosed with cancer, and the onset of war in 1914 deeply dismayed the already fragile composer. (He mused in a letter to Stravinsky: “Unless one’s directly involved in a war, it makes thought very difficult.”)

In 1915, Debussy underwent an operation to treat his cancer, which took a severe physical toll, leaving him almost unable to compose. Nevertheless, feeling that he had little time left, he continued to work as feverishly as his strength would allow, planning a set of six sonatas for various instruments. A letter from October 6 of that year to the conductor Bernardo Molinari thoroughly illustrates the state of Debussy’s psyche at the time:

Mon cher ami,

Your kind letter has reached me in a little spot by the sea where I've come to try and forget the war. For the last three months I've been able to work again.

When I tell you that I spent nearly a year unable to write music... after that I've almost had to *re-learn* it. It was like a rediscovery and it seemed to me more beautiful than ever!

Is it because I was deprived of it for so long? I don't know. What beauties there are in music "by itself," with no axe to grind or new inventions to amaze the so-called "dilettanti"... The emotional satisfaction one gets from it can't be equaled, can it, in any of the other arts? This power of "the right chord in the right place" that strikes you... We're still in the age of "harmonic progressions" and people who are happy just with beauty of sound are hard to find.

• • •

I haven't written much orchestral music, but I have finished: *Douze Etudes* for piano, a Cello Sonata, and another sonata for flute, viola, and harp, in the ancient, flexible mould with none of the grandiloquence of modern sonatas. There are going to be six of them for different groups of instruments and the last one will combine all those used in the previous five. For many people that won't be as important as an *opera*... But I thought it was of greater service to music!

In addition to the Cello Sonata and the Sonata for Flute, Viola, and Harp, Debussy would two years later complete the third sonata of the projected six, for violin and piano. The fourth sonata was to be for oboe, horn, and harpsichord, and the fifth for trumpet, clarinet, bassoon, and piano. The Violin Sonata would prove to be his final work, however—Debussy took ill and died in Paris in 1918 at the age of 55.

The Cello Sonata utilizes a rich palette of timbres, which Debussy achieves with exquisite subtlety in both the piano and cello. The work furthermore demonstrates an economy of language characteristic of the composer's mature style, but also offers a rare example in Debussy's works of sonata form, the predominant musical structure since the Classical era. Debussy was most explicit about his ambivalence towards such acknowledged past masters as Beethoven, Tchaikovsky, and Brahms, and their musical forms; nevertheless, he wrote to his publisher

Jacques Durand, "It's not for me to judge [the Cello Sonata's] excellence, but I like its proportions and its almost classical form, in the good sense of the word."

The Prologue opens with a resolute gesture in the piano, solidly in the key of D minor, but this conventional harmony yields almost immediately to more mysterious, Impressionistic sounds, sung in the cello's upper register. The development section continues to defy Classical harmony, mixing major and minor tonalities. Debussy's musical ideas unfold with a graceful logic throughout, and are set sensitively to each instrument's acoustic strengths: in a turbulent excursion towards atonality, agitated rhythms in the lower register of both instruments create an excited murkiness, before building into the bright and sweeping reprise of the opening measures (marked *largement declamé* by the composer), soaring triumphantly at the top of the cello's range.

The bold opening measures of the animated *Sérénade* lean even further towards atonality, giving the impression of abandoning western Classical harmony altogether. Guitar-like *pizzicati* in the cello, evocative of Spanish music, provide the engine for the movement's forward motion. As in the Prologue, Debussy's gestures here afford a certain degree of elasticity, but consistently remain compact and understated. Recurrent whole-tone figures lend the movement an exotic touch. The daring gestures and nuances of this *Sérénade* illustrate Debussy's visionary genius: the movement sounds as fresh and modern today as the works of any present day composers.

After a static and suspenseful passage, marked by a bowed return to the opening guitar-like theme, the music launches *attacca* into the lively finale. The cello soars again in its expressive upper register, then launches into a jaunty melody. The movement features two notably distinct interludes: in the first, the piano offers a lyrical melody in high octaves, again evoking an exotic Spanish flavor; the cello appropriately accompanies with strumming *pizzicati*. Later, the lively theme suddenly dissipates again into trance-like music, this time with the

stylishly lethargic swagger of *fin-de-siècle* Paris. Recalling with a vengeance the declamatory measures of the entire sonata, Debussy returns to D minor, and punctuates the work with a defiant self-assurance.

Benjamin Britten

Sonata in C for Cello and Piano, Op. 65

Benjamin Britten's Sonata in C is the first of five products—each of them bona fide masterpieces—of a rich artistic relationship with the Russian cellist Mstislav Rostropovich, whom the composer first met in 1960. In September of that year, Britten was invited to attend the premiere, being given in London, of the First Cello Concerto of Shostakovich, another of the myriad composers for whom Rostropovich has served as muse. Rostropovich by that time was already a great admirer of Britten's music; the admiration would quickly be reciprocated. The cellist once surmised in an interview: "He wrote the Cello Sonata, then the Cello Symphony, followed by three Unaccompanied Cello Sonatas. I take that as a personal compliment. If I had played the Cello Sonata poorly, would Britten have written his Symphony for me?"

Britten agreed to Rostropovich's request for a new sonata, which he completed in January of the following year and sent to Rostropovich. The two agree to meet for the sonata's first rehearsal on the cellist's next trip to London two months later. By Rostropovich's account, both musicians were so nervous that they began the session with "four or five very large whiskies." With Britten at the piano, the sonata received its premiere at the Aldeburgh Festival on July 7, 1961; the evening's program also included the Debussy and Schubert Sonatas, as well as the Schumann Cello Concerto, conducted by Britten.

While lending testament to a wondrous musical partnership, the Sonata in C carries a greater significance as well, given the political context of the 1960s. The alienation between Western and Eastern Europe was strong at the time of Rostropovich's introduction to Britten, the composer of the *War Requiem* and an outspoken pacifist. Such a sympathetic, not to

mention high-profile, Anglo-Soviet collaboration was not to go unnoticed. During a visit to the Soviet Union in 1963, Britten offered the following in an interview with *Pravda*:

I must own that until my arrival in the USSR, I was assailed with doubts whether the Soviet audiences would understand and accept our musical art which had been developing along different national lines than the Russian. I am happy at having had my doubts dispelled at the very first concert. The Soviet public proved not only unusually musical—that I knew all along—but showed an enviable breadth of artistic perception. It is a wonderful public.

This interview appeared internationally and, in its transcendence of political circumstance (Britten also noted, "I disbelieve profoundly in power and violence"), can only have benefited relations between the two nations.

The opening movement, aptly subtitled *Dialogo*, shows off Britten's impeccable compositional technique. The entire movement is a meditation on the wide expressive potential of whole steps and half steps. In the conversational introduction, the piano's fragmentary scale figures underscore sighing stepwise gestures in the cello, which Britten directs to be played *lusingando* (coaxingly). The animated first theme emerges, extending the subdued whole step and half step figures into a turbulent ride. Following a boisterous transitional passage in which triplets are bowed across the second string (fingered) and first (open)—still a succession of major and minor seconds—a lyrical second theme appears. The ascending whole steps in the cello are interrupted by a striking slide up a minor seventh (or, more fittingly, an inverted whole step), which Rostropovich so described to his student, and the cellist on this program, David Finckel: "It should be as if the devil comes along and grabs your cello from you" (at which point Rostropovich himself, in the devil's absence, pulled the instrument upward from behind his student's chair to produce the required abruptness of the melodic leap).

The second movement offers further evidence of Britten's complete technique as a com-

poser: though not a cellist himself, he spins a cello part ingeniously suited to the instrument. Furthermore, the Scherzo-Pizzicato—so designated because the entire movement is played with plucked rather than bowed strings—demonstrates the most virtuosic use of this technique in the entire cello literature. Pizzicati are played by both the right and left hand, often in rapid alternation; full chords are strummed across all four strings; and in addition to conventional pizzicato technique, Britten also calls for the cellist to hammer notes out directly on the fingerboard. These liberties speak not only to the composer's ability, but also to his deep trust in the instrumental wizardry of his sonata's dedicatee.

The Elegia sets a mournful melody in the cello against morose, atmospheric chords in the piano. The accompaniment simultaneously drives the music's harmonic motion and establishes the movement's plaintive character. Perhaps recalling the first movement, major and minor seconds predominate throughout, and continue when the piano's low chords yield to sparse high notes. Harsh triple- and quadruple-stops herald an impassioned variation of the opening melody, an anguished cry in the upper register of the cello.

An energetic Marcia follows, evoking the sounds of a full marching band. The cello opens with a low, trombone-like quintuplet figure, answered rhythmically by drums and flutes. Over the course of the movement, the marching band seems to pass before the listener's eyes and ears, eventually dying away in the cello's high harmonics. The menacing tone of Britten's march also calls to mind, whether consciously or not, the more sardonic works of Shostakovich.

In the Moto Perpetuo, Britten fashions a vigorous finale, full of short-tempered mood swings and fierce syncopations. A constant eighth- and sixteenth-note rhythm provides the rhythmic engine throughout the entire movement. The music is written in triple meter, though the listener would be challenged to clap out a waltz. This rhythmic ambiguity sits alongside Britten's ironic designation of the entire work as a "Sonata in C" (all white keys after all, right?), given its tonal ambiguity throughout. The cello part is directed to be played *saltando* (jumping), a technique in which the bow is thrown against the cello and made to ricochet off the strings. Midway through the movement, Britten transforms the central *saltando* figure into a singing, *dolce* melody: a short-lived respite before a tremendous unison passage between the cello and piano hurl forward into the work's forceful close.

— © Patrick Castillo

Cellist **David Finckel** and pianist **Wu Han**'s multifaceted careers as concert performers, artistic directors, recording artists, educators, and cultural entrepreneurs distinguish them as two of today's most influential classical musicians. They are recipients of *Musical America*'s Musician of the Year award, one of the highest honors granted to artists by the music industry in the United States. They appear annually at the world's most prestigious concert series and venues, as soloists and as chamber musicians.

David and Wu Han have served as artistic co-directors of the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center (CMS) since 2004. Last season, their design and programming of a plethora of innovative digital events, from concerts to lectures, sustained and even grew CMS' audiences in New York and around the world. This unparalleled, historic pandemic season is only the latest chapter in CMS' growth under their leadership, which includes: new partnerships with Medici TV, Tencent, Radio Television Hong Kong, and the All Arts broadcast channel; the establishment of thriving satellite series; an expansion of touring, and comprehensive media initiatives. During the first year of the pandemic, when concert halls were closed, David Finckel and Wu Han produced more than 270 digital projects for CMS, Music@Menlo and ArtistLed. Together, they created CMS' Front Row National project, which has brought almost 400 CMS digital performances and events to over 60 chamber music presenters and their audiences around North America. In addition, their unwavering dedication to the well-being of CMS artists resulted in more than a year of creative artist employment across a number of digital and in-person platforms. David and Wu Han are also the founders and artistic directors of Music@Menlo, Silicon Valley's acclaimed chamber music festival and institute, which

opened in 2003. In response to the pandemic shutdown, David and Wu Han designed an entirely virtual 2020 summer festival and winter series, and in 2021 mounted Music@Menlo's return as an in-person festival. Wu Han also serves as Artistic Advisor for both the Wolf Trap Foundation for the Performing Arts' Chamber Music at the Barns series and for the Society of the Four Arts in Palm Beach.

As founders of ArtistLed, the classical music industry's first musician-directed, internet-based recording company, they have released more than 20 CD's of duo and chamber repertoire over two decades, as well as overseeing (and often performing in) more than 150 releases on both the CMS Live and Music@Menlo Live labels. BBC Music Magazine recently saluted ArtistLed's 20th anniversary with a special cover CD featuring David and Wu Han.

Passionately committed to education, Wu Han and David Finckel oversee Music@Menlo's annual Chamber Music Institute, as well as the former CMS Two program, which they dramatically transformed into today's Bowers Program, now attracting the most promising young artists from around the world. Their website now hosts Resource, a collection of material that provides thoughtful perspectives and lessons learned for classical musicians facing the particular challenges and opportunities many of them face.

David Finckel and Wu Han divide their time between touring and residences in New York City and Westchester County.

David Finckel and Wu Han appear by arrangement with David Rowe Artists: www.davidroweartists.com

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Jeremy Geffen

We've now moved into the heart of Fall Semester and things are hopping on the UC Berkeley campus. The same can be said about Cal Performances, where—this weekend alone—we'll enjoy concerts by an array of world-class musical talent: mandolinist **Avi Avital** and guitarist **Miloš** (Nov 11), American jazz master **Aaron Diehl** and his trio (Nov 12), violinist **Leonidas Kavakos** and pianist **Yuja Wang** (Nov 13), and cellist **David Finckel** and pianist **Wu Han** (Nov 14). Together, we'll take in music by Bach, de Falla, Villa Lobos, and Philip Glass; experience a world premiere by French composer Mathias Duplessy; return to Bach to explore his fascinating musical ties with eminent jazz musicians past and present; and close out the weekend with more timeless music by Bach (there's never enough!) along with works by Busoni, Shostakovich, Mendelssohn, Debussy, and Britten. I'm so happy you could join us during what promises to be a memorable weekend; it's wonderful that we can gather together again, enjoying great music under the same roof!

This robust activity is especially meaningful this year, following such a prolonged period of shutdown! When the pandemic forced Cal Performances to close its doors in March 2020, no one could have imagined what lay ahead. Since then, we've witnessed a worldwide health crisis unlike any experienced during our lifetimes, an extended period of political turmoil, recurring incidents of civil unrest and racially motivated violence, and a consciousness-raising human rights movement that has forever—and significantly—changed how each of us views social justice in our time.

Of course, the pandemic remains with us to this date and future challenges—including many adjustments to “normal” procedures and policies—can certainly be expected. I encourage you to check Cal Performances’ website regularly for the most current information regarding our COVID-19 response. First and foremost, I assure you that there is nothing more important to us than the health and safety of our audience, artists, and staff. (And I remind one and all that proof of vaccination is mandatory today, as is protective masking throughout the event.)

Our season continues in December when the Bay Area’s beloved **Kronos Quartet** returns to Zellerbach Hall with two-part program featuring a world premiere by Cal Performances’ 2021–22 artist-in-residence **Angélique Kidjo**, new and recent works from Kronos’ extraordinary 50 for the Future project, and a selection of works performed with special guest, Persian classical and world music vocalist and composer, **Mahsa Vahdat** (Dec 2). Our full calendar offers more of the same, packed with the kind of adventurous and ambitious programming you’ve come to expect from Cal Performances. In particular, I want to direct your attention to this year’s *Illuminations*: “Place and Displacement” programming, through which we’ll explore both loss and renewal, disempowerment and hope, while seeking paths forward for reclaiming and celebrating vital cultural connections that can fall victim to political and social upheaval.

Please take the opportunity to explore the complete schedule through our website and season brochure and begin planning your performance calendar; now is the perfect time to guarantee that you have the best seats for all the events you plan to attend.

Throughout history, the performing arts have survived incredible challenges: periods of war, economic collapse, and, yes, terrible disease. And if it will take time for us—collectively and individually—to process the events of the past 18 months, I’m certain that the arts have the power to play a critical role as we come to terms with what we have experienced and move together toward recovery.

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I know you join us in looking forward to what lies ahead, to coming together once again to encounter the life-changing experiences that only the live performing arts deliver. We can't wait to share it all with you during the coming year.

Cal Performances is back. Welcome home!

Jeremy Geffen

Executive and Artistic Director, Cal Performances

COVID-19 Information

Proof of vaccination status is required for entrance and masking is mandatory throughout the event. COVID-19 information is updated as necessary; please see Cal Performances' website for the most up-to-date policies and information.

UC Berkeley does not promise or guarantee that all patrons or employees on site are vaccinated. Unvaccinated individuals may be present as a result of exemptions, exceptions, fraudulent verification, or checker error. None of these precautions eliminate the risk of exposure to COVID-19.