



Ben McKeown

**Matthew Whitaker**



Jeremy Geffen

One of the many impressive traits of **Mitsuko Uchida** is that her sonar is always on. Her awareness of the musical decisions made by those around her is at once instinctive and informed, and seems to feed into the larger portrait of the artistic sensibilities of those with whom she collaborates. To watch Mitsuko at the Marlboro Music Festival, of which she is co-artistic director and at which she works with countless young artists at the most formative stages of their careers, is to see someone completely engaged with those around her. There, she will read chamber music with every participant, in a search to understand what truly motivates each musician. In the process she gently shapes the development of so many, though she insists that she does not—and will not—teach individuals.

The membership of the **Mahler Chamber Orchestra** includes many instrumentalists who have felt her musical influence, which is perhaps one of the reasons the partnership they share is so extraordinary. Though all are aware that they are on stage and are keenly attuned to giving “a performance,” none seek to promote themselves over the music itself. I believe that this interest is pure, and that it gives them—and especially her—the energy needed for their astounding performances. We’re fortunate, indeed, to welcome these extraordinary artists to Zellerbach Hall on Sunday afternoon.

And I mustn’t forget to mention Saturday’s Zellerbach Playhouse concert with the singular **Matthew Whitaker** (like Mitsuko, a hit last year on *Cal Performances at Home*), a true jazz prodigy still in the early years of what promises to be a legendary career. Whitaker arrives in Berkeley for his Cal Performances live-concert debut, hot on the heels of the recent release of his third album, the brilliant *Connections* (Resilience Music Alliance). I can’t wait to hear him again!

March and April finds Cal Performances operating at full speed as we approach the April 20 announcement date for our brilliant 2022–23 season. (We just released our beautiful new 42-page season brochure to the printer; I can’t wait to share it with you!) From now through the beginning of May, the remainder of our current season is filled with adventurous programming. You won’t want to miss...

- the **Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater** (Mar 29 – Apr 3), returning to Zellerbach Hall for the first time since the initial pandemic shutdown in 2020; this year’s Ailey programs feature more than a dozen works from the company’s legendary repertoire
- the renowned **English Baroque Soloists** with conductor **Sir John Eliot Gardiner** in a transfixing program of works by Mozart and Haydn (Apr 10)
- **Angélique Kidjo**, our 2021–22 artist-in-residence, in her new music-theater piece *Yemandjá* (a much-anticipated Cal Performances co-commission and *Illuminations* event, Apr 23).
- highly anticipated concerts with superb classical artists including Germany’s **Tetzlaff Quartet** (Apr 23), another favorite from last season’s *Cal Performances at Home*; pianist **Daniil Trifonov** (Apr 28), making his Cal Performances solo debut; and the **Danish String Quartet** (Apr 29)—a particular favorite of our chamber music audience—delivering the next installment in its ongoing *Doppelgänger* Project, a series of concerts that pairs late Schubert string quartets with newly commissioned works (on this occasion, a new quartet by the fascinating Finnish composer Lotta Wennäkoski).

Fasten your seatbelts; we have all of this—and more—in store before the season ends!

I know you join us in looking forward to what lies ahead, and to coming together—as we do today and have done so often in the past—to encounter the life-changing experiences that only the live performing arts deliver. We can’t wait to share it all with you!

Jeremy Geffen  
Executive and Artistic Director, Cal Performances



Saturday, March 26, 2022, 8pm  
Zellerbach Playhouse

## Matthew Whitaker Quartet

Matthew Whitaker, *piano and Hammond B3 organ*  
Marcos Robinson, *guitar*  
Karim Hutton, *electric bass*  
Johnny Steele, *drums*

*This performance will last approximately 90 minutes  
and be performed without an intermission.*

*Matthew Whitaker is a Yamaha Artist.*

*Yamaha C7X grand piano provided by Yamaha Artist Services New York  
in association with Piedmont Piano Company in Oakland, CA.*

*Matthew Whitaker is endorsed by Hammond Organ, USA.*

**M**atthew Whitaker (*piano and Hammond B3 organ*) was born in 2001 in Hackensack, NJ, and grew up surrounded by music. His love for performing first became apparent at the tender age of three, after Matthew's grandfather gave him a small Yamaha keyboard.

At age nine, Whitaker began teaching himself how to play the Hammond B3 organ. Four years later, he became the youngest artist to be endorsed by Hammond in its more than 80-year history. He was also named a Yamaha Artist at age 15, becoming the youngest musician to join that stellar group of jazz pianists.

Whitaker has had years of music instruction, studying classical piano and drums at the Filomen M. D'Agostino Greenberg Music School in New York City. It is the only community music school for the blind and visually impaired in the United States.

Whitaker has previously studied at the Harlem School of the Arts and was a member of both the Jazz House Big Band and the Organ Messengers at Jazz House Kids in Montclair, NJ. He also attended the Manhattan School of Music's Precollege Jazz Program, and he is currently enrolled in the jazz studies program at Juilliard in New York City.

Whitaker has received the Outstanding Soloist Award from Jazz at Lincoln Center's Charles Mingus High School Competition & Festival and the Essentially Ellington High School Jazz Band Competition & Festival. He was also recognized by the Harlem International Film Festival, which named him "Most Remarkable Young Person on Screen."

He has already toured both here in the United States and abroad, performing before the Youth Assembly at the United Nations headquarters in New York City and on other world-renowned stages including Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts, the Apollo Theater, Carnegie Hall, and Jazz at Lincoln Center in NYC; SFJAZZ Center in San Francisco; the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington, DC; the Raymond F. Kravis Center for the Performing Arts (FL); the Monterey and Newport jazz festivals; and at international venues in the UK, France, Italy, Germany,

Portugal, Spain, Switzerland, Morocco, Indonesia, Japan, South Korea, and Australia. In Fall 2020, Whitaker headlined a streamed performance from New York's Bowery Ballroom for *Cal Performances at Home*.

Whitaker has performed with an array of outstanding musicians, including Ray Chew, Christian McBride, Dr. Lonnie Smith, Rhoda Scott, Cameron Carpenter, Regina Carter, Jason Moran, Jon Batiste, Cory Henry, Marc Cary, Arturo O'Farrill, James Carter, Roy Ayers, D.D. Jackson, the New York Pops Orchestra, the EFG London Jazz Orchestra, and Hamiet Bluiett and his Bio-Electric Ensemble.

In 2010, Whitaker was a winning participant in the "Child Stars of Tomorrow" competition, as part of Amateur Night at the Apollo. A year later and just 10 years old, he was invited to perform at Stevie Wonder's induction into the Apollo Theater's Hall of Fame. He returned to the venue for Fox television's revival of *Showtime at the Apollo* in 2016, where he thrilled the audience with his rendition of Stevie Wonder's classic "I Wish." Whitaker's television appearances also include NBC's *Today* show, where he was one of three young men featured in the program's "Boys Changing the World" series; Harry Connick Jr.'s *Harry*; Ellen DeGeneres' *Ellen*; and CBS' *60 Minutes*.

Having composed several original compositions, Whitaker names a list of stellar musicians and composers/arrangers as his artistic influences, including organists Dr. Lonnie Smith, Jimmy Smith, Jimmy McGriff, and Rhoda Scott; pianists Stevie Wonder, Herbie Hancock, Oscar Peterson, Art Tatum, Ahmad Jamal, Thelonious Monk, Bud Powell, Chick Corea, Jon Batiste, Cory Henry, Marc Cary, Jason Moran, and D.D. Jackson; Chopin and Bach; and drummers Roy Haynes, T.S. Monk, Herlin Riley, Otis Brown III, Otis Brown Jr., and Johnathan Blake.

In 2017, Whitaker was named one of 17 "People to Watch" in New Jersey's *The Record*, one of the state's largest newspapers. He was also cited as an outstanding performer in Crain's New York Business' "20 under 20" list.

In 2018, the online magazine *The Root* added Whitaker to its list of "Young Futurist Leaders."

Also that year, he received the Harlem Stage Emerging Artist Award and was singled-out as a rising star by *USA Today* and *201 Magazine*.

In 2019 and 2020, Whitaker received the Herb Alpert Young Jazz Composers Award for his original compositions “Emotions” and “Underground.”

Whitaker’s first release, *Outta the Box*, debuted in March 2017 and his second project, *Now Hear This*, came out on the Resilience Music Alliance recording label in August 2019. His third release, *Connections*, also for Resilience Music Alliance, was released in August 2021. *Downbeat* said of the recording: “It is astounding. We’ve been listening to Whitaker take our breath away with all of the promise he showed on the first two albums. This one takes him a full leap forward.”

Having been raised in a religious family, **Marcos Robinson** (*guitar*) has been surrounded by gospel music since birth. At the age of 14, his mother gave him a starter guitar kit and he began taking lessons right away. Robinson continued his studies and in 2016 graduated from the New School for Jazz and Contemporary Music. He has performed with Bebe Winans, Michelle Williams, and Kelly Rowland and recorded with artists including Le’Andria Johnson, Doobie Powell, and Naomi Raine.

**Karim “Kace” Hutton** (*electric bass*) is a musician and producer from New York City. In 2017, he received his bachelor’s degree from Cornell University, where he majored in biology and completed minors in music and busi-

ness. He prides himself on both his ability to interpret and execute the artist’s vision and his versatility, which allows him to work with a wide range of artists, producers, and events. Whether live on stage or in the studio, Hutton is known as a disciplined and reliable team player. He pursues excellence through a holistic approach to life and strives to make his mark in the world, both on and off stage. Hutton has had the pleasure of working with a broad range of artists that includes Omari Hardwick, Anita Wilson, Kurt Carr, Kennedy Administration, Vojtech Dyk, Jimmy Cozier, and SAFE.

**Johnny Steele** (*drums*) is a drummer, composer, producer, and educator with a decade of experience performing live music of all genres. Throughout his musical career, he has had the good fortune of performing, touring, and recording with many respected figures in rock/metal, jazz, R&B, fusion, and pop music—musicians including Wynton Marsalis, Marcus Printup, Gilbert Castellanos, Jon Faddis, Immanuel Wilkins, and Dan Nimmer. Steele has also shared the stage with The Contortionist, Monuments, and many other bands.

In addition to having an active playing schedule, Steele also writes a blog entitled “Beat Speak.” In this blog, he discusses his journey as a young musician in today’s music world as well as topics such as the music business, production, drum lessons, and the occasional shoptalk for his gear-head followers.

Steele is currently pursuing his BA and accelerated master’s degrees at the Juilliard School in New York City.