

CALIFORNIA
SYMPHONY

2018/19 SEASON



EPIC

BRUCKNER

May 5, 2019

California Symphony
EPIC BRUCKNER

Lesher Center for the Arts, Hofmann Theatre
Sunday, May 5, 2019 | 4PM

Donato Cabrera, Music Director
Robyn Bollinger, violin

Balch (b. 1991) *Artifacts*
23 minutes (World Premiere, Commissioned by California Symphony)
Robyn Bollinger, violin
I. *Prelude* (after Berio)
II. *Aria* (after Paganini)
III. *Intermezzo* (after Ysäye)
IV. *Dance* (after Sciarrino)

INTERMISSION

Bruckner (1824–1896) *Symphony No. 7*
64 minutes I. *Allegro moderato*
II. *Adagio* (Very solemn and slow)
III. *Scherzo* (Very fast - Trio: Slightly slower)
IV. *Finale* (Moving, but not fast)

The total running time for this concert is approximately 2 hours and 5 minutes,
including a 20-minute intermission. Please silence your cell phones.

SEASON PARTNERS



THE ORCHESTRA



Violin I

Jennifer Cho,
Concertmaster
Christina Knudson,
Assistant Concertmaster
Dan Flanagan
Sergi Goldman-Hull
Josepha Fath
Patricia Miner
David Steele
Laurien Jones
Julie Kim
Matt Oshida
Liana Berube
George Hayes

Violin II

Philip Santos, *Principal*
Sarena Hsu-Giarrusso,
Assistant Principal
Sharon Wood
Sheng-Ching Hsu
Xander Abbe
Junghee Lee
Yulee Seo
Rae Ann Goldberg
Katherine Button
Harry Chomsky
Hande Erdem

Viola

Sandy Leem,
Principal
Katy Juneau,
Assistant Principal
Janet Lynch
Chad Kaltinger
Stephanie Ng
Stephanie Railsback
Pauline Metzgar
Betsy London

Cello

Richard Andaya, *Principal*
Leslie Meeks, *Assistant
Principal*
Liz Struble
Julie Feldman
Dina Weinschelbaum
Kris Desby
Amy Brodo
Drew Ford

Bass

Andy Butler, *Principal*
Michel Taddei, *Assistant
Principal*
Carl Stanley
Stephanie Payne

Schuyler Karr
Steven Hoffman

Flute

Michelle Caimotto,
Principal
Katrina Walter

Oboe

James Moore, *Principal*
Peter Lemberg

Clarinet

Stephen Zielinski, *Principal*
Jeannie Psomas

Bassoon

David Granger, *Principal*
Dan Zimardi

French Horn

Meredith Brown, *Principal*
Nicky Roosevelt
Alicia Mastromonaco
Keith Green
Monika Warchol



Wagner Tuba

Mark Almond, *Principal*
Alicia Telford
Eric Achen
Alex Camphouse

Trumpet

Scott Macomber,
Principal
William Harvey
Owen Miyoshi

Trombone

Don Benham, *Principal*
Tom Hornig
Dave Ridge

Tuba

Forrest Byram, *Principal*

Timpani

Alex Orfaly, *Principal*

Percussion

Victor Avdienko, *Principal*
Tim Dent

Victor Avdienko

California Symphony percussionist Victor Avdienko has one thing to do in Bruckner's Symphony No. 7 and that is to play a lone, epic cymbal crash. It's trickier than you might think.

"In addition to being musically and emotionally engaged, the big challenge is being able to play a single epic crash technically. You don't get a warm up crash leading into it. You have to be able to tell an epic story with that one note."



Photo: Art Garcia

Donato Cabrera, Music Director

Donato Cabrera is the Music Director of the California Symphony and the Las Vegas Philharmonic, and served as the Resident Conductor of the San Francisco Symphony and the Wattis Foundation Music Director of the San Francisco Symphony Youth Orchestra from 2009–2016.

Since Cabrera's appointment as Music Director of the California Symphony in 2013, the organization has reached new artistic heights by implementing innovative programming that

emphasizes welcoming newcomers and loyalists alike, building on its reputation for championing music by living composers, and committing to programming music by women and people of color. With a recently extended contract through the 2022–23 season, Cabrera continues to advise and oversee the Symphony's music education programs and community engagement activities. Cabrera has also greatly changed the Las Vegas Philharmonic's concert experience by expanding the scope and breadth of its orchestral concerts. Cabrera has also reenergized its Youth Concert Series by creating an engaging and interactive curriculum-based concert experience.

In recent seasons, Cabrera has made impressive debuts with the National Symphony's KC Jukebox at the Kennedy Center, Louisville Orchestra, Hartford Symphony, Orquesta Filarmónica de Jalisco, New West Symphony, Kalamazoo Symphony, and the Reno Philharmonic. In 2016, he led the Chicago Symphony Orchestra in performances with Grammy Award-winning singer Lila Downs. Cabrera made his Carnegie Hall debut leading the world premiere of Mark Grey's *Ātash Soroushan* with soprano, Jessica Rivera.

Awards and fellowships include a Herbert von Karajan Conducting Fellowship at the Salzburg Festival and conducting the Nashville Symphony in the League of American Orchestra's prestigious Bruno Walter National Conductor Preview. Donato Cabrera was recognized by the Consulate-General of Mexico in San Francisco as a Luminary of the Friends of Mexico Honorary Committee, for his contributions to promoting and developing the presence of the Mexican community in the Bay Area.



Photo: Lindsay Hale



Photo: Kristin Hoebermann

Robyn Bollinger, violin

Daring, versatile and passionate, American violinist Robyn Bollinger is recognized for her musical creativity, rich tones, emotional depth, and technical mastery. Having made her Philadelphia Orchestra debut at age twelve, she has since performed with orchestras, in recital and at festivals nationwide and abroad.

A sought-after collaborator, she is a popular figure on the chamber music stage, both as a member of the renowned,

Grammy-nominated ensemble A Far Cry, and for her work at festivals and on chamber music series. Ms. Bollinger records for Crier Records. *The New York Times* reviewed her 2018 debut CD and selected her performance of Biber's *Sequenza VIII* as one of "8 Best Classical Music Moments of the Week on YouTube."

The recipient of a prestigious Fellowship from the Leonore Annenberg Arts Fellowship Fund, as well as other awards, she performs on a beautiful 2017 violin made by the world-renowned luthier Samuel Zygmuntowicz, on loan from a private collection.

“An engaging and original talent.”

—*The Boston Music Intelligencer*

Katherine Balch, Composer

Called "intricate" and an "exquisite sound world" by *icareifyoulisten*, Katherine Balch's music has been commissioned and performed by the Tokyo, Minnesota and Albany Symphony Orchestras, American Composer's Orchestra, Ensemble Intercontemporain, Yale Camerata and Philharmonia, Aspen Contemporary Ensemble, Antico Moderno, FLUX Quartet, International Contemporary Ensemble, New York Youth



Photo: Katel Photography

Symphony, wild Up and Contemporaneous, among others, in such venues as Carnegie Hall, Disney Hall, Wiener Konzerthaus (Vienna), and Suntory Hall (Tokyo). Projects for the 2018–2019 season include new works for NYC-based Bearthoven Trio, International Contemporary Ensemble, Oregon and California Symphony Orchestras, and the Argus Quartet / Concert Artist's Guild.

Balch is currently Composer-in-Residence with the California Symphony, a three-year position she will hold through 2020. She is managed by Young Concert Artists Inc., where she currently holds the William B. Butz Composition Chair. Recent recognitions include fellowships from Aspen, Norfolk, Fontainebleau, Tanglewood, and Santa Fe music festivals, and awards from ASCAP, BMI, and the American Academy of Arts and Letters, among others.

Balch received her B.A. / B.M. in the Tufts / New England Conservatory double degree program, where she studied history and political science at Tufts (summa cum laude) and composition at NEC. Her research has been published in the *History of European Ideas*. Explorations of political philosophy, history, and the relationship of the artist to society remain an important part of her musical identity. She completed her M.M. at Yale School of Music as a Charles H. Ditson Fellow, where she studied with Aaron Jay Kernis, Chris Theofanidis, and David Lang, and is currently pursuing her D.M.A. as a Dean's Fellow at Columbia University, studying with Georg Haas and Fred Lerdahl.

Passionate about education at all levels, she is a faculty member of the Walden School in Dublin, New Hampshire and formerly at Bard College-Conservatory preparatory in the Hudson Valley. When not making or listening to music, Balch enjoys cooking, playing with her cat, Zarathustra, various combinations of espresso and steamed milk, and the outdoors.

PROGRAM NOTES

Katherine Balch (b. 1991) ***Artifacts* Concerto for Violin and Orchestra** **(world premiere)**

One particularly pleasant corner of the repertoire is occupied by works that composers have written for good friends, often with that friend's input and contributions.

The Brahms Violin Concerto comes first to mind: Brahms wrote it for Joseph Joachim, one of Brahms's

earliest boosters and a faithful collaborator down the years, and it was the result of so much give-and-take between the two artists that one rather wonders if it might warrant a hyphenated attribution of Brahms-Joachim. Felix Mendelssohn wrote his genre-changing Violin Concerto for his close colleague Ferdinand David; Bartók composed his warm and lyrical Third Piano Concerto for his wife Ditta. It's a sizeable list of terrific stuff, a testimony to the role that friendships have played in shaping music history.

Katherine Balch joins that select company in writing *Artifacts*, a violin concerto for Robyn Bollinger. "Robyn and I have been friends since our undergraduate years at New England Conservatory, and I've been wanting to write her a piece for a long time," says Balch. "I wanted to take the repertoire Robyn and I love and have shared conversations over, and turn it into something not only in my own voice, but also into something I hope elevates/highlights the incredible personality Robyn brings to her performative practice."

As a result, *Artifacts* takes as the departure point for each of its four movements a particular piece in the solo violin repertoire—Berio's 'Sequenza', the Paganini Sixth Caprice, the Sarabande from Ysaÿe's fourth violin sonata, and Sciarrino's *sei capricci*. Balch tells us that "while there are not really direct 'quotes', there is often the illusion of quotation, or referencing the pieces in some personal way." But it's not necessary to recognize the pieces being referenced in order to enjoy the concerto. "I want to capture and try to share a bit of the magic I experienced listening to the music I love," says Balch. Then she adds an altogether critical proviso: "filtered through my own voice."



Image: Bollinger and Balch enjoying a concert at Tanglewood Music Center last summer.

Anton Bruckner Symphony No. 7 in E Major (1883)

Nowadays it's easy to get to Ansfelden, Austria. Just take the A1 westbound out of Vienna and after a while Ansfelden will be on your left, immediately following the exit for central Linz. Ansfelden turns out to be an altogether nice little place. There's a budget motel that offers a passable complimentary breakfast. There's a good Chinese restaurant with a popular lunch buffet. There's a McDonald's.

And just a short walk away is the house where Anton Bruckner was born in an Ansfelden that was a world removed from today's pretty suburb. Bruckner's Ansfelden was an impoverished rural hamlet with more cows than people and shortages both of food and decent jobs. It must have seemed like the end of nowhere to a talented young chap like Anton Bruckner, son of a village schoolmaster. His father got him started in music, then in his early teens he was sent off to the nearby Augustinian monastery of Sankt Florian, which would play a critical role throughout his life. (And posthumously as well: he's buried in the monastery's crypt.) The sound of the mighty Saint Florian organ runs throughout Bruckner's works, as does the monastery's reverent, timeless atmosphere.

As an organist at Sankt Florian and in nearby Linz, it was a quiet, unassuming life. He studied mostly via correspondence with the renowned music theorist Simon Sechter, and when Sechter died in 1868 Bruckner (reluctantly) moved to the Imperial City and took over his beloved teacher's theory classes at the Vienna Conservatory. The shy and unsophisticated Bruckner, a village and monastery man down to his toes, was a poor fit for Vienna's toxic musical politics. He had a rough time of it with both the Viennese intelligentsia and the critics. Brahms referred to him as "that bumpkin" and arch critic Eduard Hanslick skewered one of his works as a "symphonic anaconda." But he persisted amidst a steady shower of brickbats,



Image: Organ of St. Florian Abbey Church, Sankt Florian, Upper Austria

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continued to produce luxuriantly epic symphonies, and eventually found a certain measure of success with Viennese musicians and their notoriously fickle public. He stayed unmarried—not for lack of trying—and died in his humble but comfortable Vienna apartment at the age of 72. It took a while for posterity to catch on, but catch on it did and nowadays Bruckner enjoys an enviable reputation as a supreme master of the late Romantic symphony. His music even survived being appropriated by the Nazis, a tribute indeed to its fundamental nobility and goodness.

Time is the essential element in a Bruckner symphony. It is not our time; it is Bruckner's time; it is the time of the unruffled pastures of Sankt Florian; it is the time of nature and the gradual unfolding of the seasons. To expect otherwise from a Bruckner symphony is to wind up with the white knuckles and cracked tooth enamel of a seething driver stuck in rush-hour traffic. Far better to forget about the freeway and think instead of carriages on sun-dappled country roads, where other travellers are rarely encountered and our time of arrival is mostly up to the horse.

The Bruckner Seventh Symphony stands apart from its predecessors as having been accepted as a repertory item almost from the get-go. Bruckner finished it in September 1883, and two now-legendary conductors—Arthur Nikisch and Hermann Levi—set it on its way in 1884 and 1885, respectively. Amazingly enough, it had made its way to Chicago by 1886 thanks to that enterprising American conductor Theodore Thomas. Its immediate and lasting popularity isn't at all difficult to understand. It's not quite as lengthy as most of its brethren, but most importantly, it has a special sweep and a compelling inner urgency. Even if it might seem silly to describe an hour-plus symphony as economical, the word is actually quite apt. Impressively grand, majestic, and passionate, the Bruckner Seventh propels itself firmly along its destined journey. It isn't just that it comes off as good. It comes off as *right*.



Program Annotator Scott Foglesong, Chair of Musicianship and Music Theory at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music, is a Contributing Writer and Lecturer for the San Francisco Symphony as well as lecturer for California Symphony's adult music education series Fresh Look: The Symphony Exposed.