



SAN FRANCISCO SYMPHONY

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Images of Christian Reif and the SFS Youth Orchestra are available for download in the [SFSYO Press Kit](#)

SAN FRANCISCO SYMPHONY YOUTH ORCHESTRA CELEBRATES 35TH ANNIVERSARY

Wattis Foundation Music Director Christian Reif Leads the SFSYO 2017–18 Season

Season opens on Sunday, November 19 at 2pm, featuring SFSYO 2017 Concerto Competition Winner Leyla Kabuli as soloist performing Rachmaninoff's Piano Concerto No. 2; Orchestra also performs Elgar's *Enigma* Variations and Detlev Glanert's Prelude No. 1, from Three American Preludes

SFSYO partners with the International Contemporary Ensemble to commission new work by composer Anahita Abbasi, culminating in world premiere performance March 4; concert also includes Beethoven's Symphony No. 7 and small ensemble music by Gabrieli, Ruggles, R. Strauss, and Michael Burritt

35th Anniversary Concert and Celebration highlighted by Stravinsky's *Le Sacre du printemps*, Fauré's *Pelléas et Mélisande*, and Ligeti's *Concert Românesc* May 13

Other season events include annual Holiday concert of Prokofiev's *Peter and the Wolf* with narrator Zachary Quinto, December 10 and Bay Area Youth Orchestra Festival hosting young talent from around the region, January 14

SAN FRANCISCO, November 9, 2017—Recognized as one of the finest youth orchestras in the world, the San Francisco Symphony Youth Orchestra (SFSYO) celebrates its 35th anniversary this season, performing three concert programs in Davies Symphony Hall November 19, March 4, and May 13, as well as presenting its annual Holiday *Peter and the Wolf* concert on December 10, and hosting the Bay Area Youth Orchestra Festival on January 14. Part of the San Francisco Symphony's ongoing commitment to nurture young musicians, SFSYO participants are chosen from more than 300 applicants from the greater Bay Area through annual auditions and receive a pre-professional caliber and tuition-free orchestral experience. The SFSYO rehearses and performs at Davies Symphony Hall

under the direction of Wattis Foundation Music Director Christian Reif and rehearsals include weekly coaching by SFS musicians.

“The members of the SFSYO are phenomenal young musicians who are completely dedicated to music making,” stated Youth Orchestra Music Director Christian Reif. “We have a spectacular season planned for the 35th anniversary, with works from both the core symphonic repertoire and contemporary repertoire. This season, I am particularly excited about our commission of a new piece written for the YO by Anahita Abbasi, and our partnership with the International Contemporary Ensemble for this project. This is a very special opportunity for YO musicians to be a part of the creation of a new work from start to finish, working directly with the composer and with coaches who specialize in contemporary music performance and development. I hope that everyone in our community will come hear them in concert during the anniversary season!”

The 2017–18 Youth Orchestra season begins Sunday November 19 at 2 pm with a concert featuring 2017 Youth Orchestra Concerto Competition winner **Leyla Kabuli performing Rachmaninoff’s Piano Concerto No. 2 with the SFSYO**. Open exclusively to members of the San Francisco Symphony Youth Orchestra, the Concerto Competition is a professionally-adjudicated experience that allows members to compete for the opportunity to perform with the YO on a subscription concert in Davies Symphony Hall. The November 19 concert also features **Elgar’s *Enigma Variations*** and German composer **Detlev Glanert’s *Prelude No. 1, from Three American Preludes***.

Reif leads the SFSYO musicians in three additional concerts this season, including a December 11 Holiday concert performance of **Prokofiev’s *Peter and the Wolf***, featuring American actor and film producer Zachary Quinto as guest narrator.

On March 4, 2018, the Orchestra will give the world premiere performance of a **new commission by Iranian composer Anahita Abbasi**. This commission is presented in partnership with EntICE, a new program of the International Contemporary Ensemble (ICE) in which leading composers from around the world write new works for youth ensembles and ICE, whose members then guide young musicians through the entire collaborative process of bringing a new work to life, as well as perform side-by-side with young ensembles in concert. Other works on the program includes **Carl Ruggles’ *Angels***, **Strauss’ *Serenade in E-flat major, Opus 7***, **Michael Burritt’s *Fandango 13*** and **Beethoven’s *Symphony No. 7 in A major, Opus 92***.

Reif and the SFSYO conclude the season on May 13 with a 35th anniversary celebration concert, The concert will feature **Fauré’s *Suite from Pelléas et Mélisande, Opus 80***, **Ligeti’s *Concert Românesc***, and **Stravinsky’s *Le Sacre du printemps*** [1947 version].

On January 14, 2018, the SFS Youth Orchestra will host the Bay Area Youth Orchestra Festival concert at Davies Symphony Hall. The festival began in 2009 and was conceived by the directors of six Bay Area youth orchestras who sought an opportunity for each ensemble to perform in Davies Symphony Hall, and to hear other ensembles perform there. Proceeds from the concert are divided among designated charitable organizations that serve homeless and underserved youth in each orchestra’s community. In addition to the San Francisco Symphony Youth Orchestra, other participating orchestras include the El Camino Youth Symphony, Golden Gate Philharmonic, Oakland Symphony Youth Orchestra, Reno Philharmonic Youth Orchestra, and Young People’s Symphony Orchestra. This year’s Festival Music Director will be SFSYO alumnus Daniel Patrick Stewart.

About the SFSYO

Now celebrating its 35th Anniversary Season, the [San Francisco Symphony Youth Orchestra](#) (SFSYO) is recognized internationally as one of the finest youth orchestras in the world. Founded by the [San Francisco Symphony](#) in 1981, the SFSYO’s musicians are chosen from more than 300 applicants in annual auditions. The SFSYO’s purpose is to provide an orchestral experience of pre-professional caliber, tuition-free, to talented young musicians from the greater Bay Area. The more than 100 diverse musicians, ranging in age from 12 to 21, represent communities from throughout the Bay Area. The SFSYO rehearses and performs at Davies Symphony Hall under the direction of Wattis Foundation Music Director Christian Reif, whose first season with the Orchestra was 2016–2017. Jahja Ling served as the SFSYO’s first

Music Director, followed by David Milnes, Leif Bjaland, Alasdair Neale, Edwin Outwater, Benjamin Shwartz, and Donato Cabrera, who stepped down at the conclusion of the 2015-16 season.

As part of the SFSYO's innovative training program, musicians from the San Francisco Symphony coach the young players each Saturday afternoon in sectional rehearsals, followed by full orchestra rehearsals with Reif. SFSYO members also have the opportunity to work with many of the world-renowned artists who perform with the SFS each week. SFS Music Director Michael Tilson Thomas, SFS Conductor Laureate Herbert Blomstedt, Sir Simon Rattle, Kurt Masur, Valery Gergiev, Leonard Slatkin, Yo-Yo Ma, Isaac Stern, Yehudi Menuhin, Vladimir Ashkenazy, Midori, Joshua Bell, Gil Shaham, Sarah Chang, and many others have worked with the SFSYO. Of equal importance, the students are able to talk with these prominent musicians, asking questions about their lives, their professional and personal experiences, and about music. The SFSYO has toured internationally on ten different occasions, garnering rave reviews and critical acclaim for its artistry. Its alumni have won positions in many major orchestras throughout the US and in Europe.

About Leyla Kabuli



Leyla Kabuli is a first-year student at the University of California, Berkeley, majoring in Electrical Engineering and Computer Sciences as a Regents' and Chancellor's Scholar. She currently studies piano with Professor Yoshikazu Nagai of the San Francisco Conservatory of Music, and was a scholarship student in the Pre-College Division of SFCM for seven years. She has been a member of the San Francisco Symphony Youth Orchestra since 2015.

Leyla's recognitions in piano include the National YoungArts Honorable Mention Awards in both 2016 and 2017, and the 2016–17 U.S. Chopin Foundation scholarship. She won first prizes in the Los Angeles Young Musician, eMuse, American Protégé, and Wildflower Music Showcase International Competitions, the second prize in Enkor, third prize in Virginia Waring Concerto, and the best transcription prize in addition to the audience prize in the Seattle International Piano Competition. She was also a semifinalist in prestigious international piano competitions, including the International Piano-e-Competition, Hilton Head International Piano Competition, Yamaha USASU International Piano Competition, and the First International Arthur Rubinstein Youth Piano Competition. At the regional and national levels, Leyla won first prizes in Pacific Musical Society, Music Teachers' Association of California, CAPMT, Kruschke, Mindell, Ghiglieri, Classical Masters, East Bay, Berkeley Etude Club, US Open, Junior Bach, and MTNA Piano Duet competitions, and also received top awards from the American Prize in Solo Piano, Ross McKee, and Zeiter competitions. Her success in these events led to many performances at major music venues, including the Kennedy Center and Carnegie Hall.

Following the national broadcast of her featured performance on NPR's From the Top in 2016, Leyla collaborated with the show on a benefit video to raise awareness for refugees, and was invited to perform at From the Top's 2017 Gala. In 2015, she performed with Ensemble SF in two concerts, and was a soloist with the Waring Festival Orchestra. She was featured in San Francisco's Noontime Concerts as the Helen von Ammon Emerging Artist Award recipient in 2016. As winner of their Young Artist Concerto competitions, she performed with Nova Vista Symphony, Palo Alto Philharmonic, and El Camino Symphony orchestras in the Bay Area, and was also the Young Artist Award soloist in two concerts with the Sonoma Philharmonic Orchestra in 2017.



About Anahita Abbasi

Anahita Abbasi is an Iranian composer of acoustic and electro-acoustic music whose works have been performed around the world in festivals such as Darmstadt Ferienkurse, Ircam (Manifeste Academy), Matrix (Experimental studio des SWR), Impuls festival, Time of music, and Atlas festival, among many others. In 2014, she received the work-scholarship from Experimentalstudio des SWR in Freiburg. A recipient of a 2015 Morton Gold ASCAP young composers award, Abbasi was also

nominated in 2017 as the “women composers of our time” alongside Kaija Saariaho and Isabel Mundry. She is one of the founders of Schallfeld Ensemble in Graz, Austria. Anahita Abbasi (b. 1985, Iran) graduated from the University of Music and Performing Arts in Graz, Austria, where she studied music theory with Clemens Gadenstätter and composition with Beat Furrer and Pierluigi Billone, while working closely with Georges Aperghis, Franck Bedrossian and Philippe Leroux. Abbasi currently resides in San Diego and is pursuing her Ph.D. in Composition with Rand Steiger at the University of California San Diego.

About Christian Reif



Christian Reif was appointed the San Francisco Symphony's Resident Conductor and Wattis Foundation Music Director of the San Francisco Symphony Youth Orchestra in the 2016-17 season. In this role, he assists Music Director Michael Tilson Thomas and several guest conductors with subscription concerts, touring, semi-staged productions, recordings and other special projects. In addition, he conducts the San Francisco Symphony in selected *Concerts for Kids*, *Adventures in Music*, and *Music for Families* concerts, which annually draw more than 26,000 young people and their families from throughout the Bay Area to Davies Symphony Hall. Reif, a native of Germany, made his San Francisco Symphony debut in September 2015 leading the West Coast premiere of Ted Hearne's *Dispatches*. Highlights of Reif's 2016-17 season include leading the Deutsche Staatsphilharmonie Rheinland-Pfalz in the opening concert of the International Festival Heidelberger Frühling, performing Mozart's Jupiter Symphony and Mahler's "Das Lied von der Erde" with Michelle DeYoung and Toby Spence. He also led the Kitchener-Waterloo Symphony and the Berkeley Symphony in several critically acclaimed concerts. Reif curated a SFS Soundbox concert in March, titled "Rebel" featuring music by composers who struggled with political oppression and censorship, spanning an arc from Germany's Weimar Republic over Soviet Union to contemporary America.

Christian Reif recently completed two seasons as conducting fellow with the New World Symphony in Miami, where he was mentored by SF Symphony Music Director Michael Tilson Thomas. Reif completed his master of music in conducting at the Juilliard School under Alan Gilbert, where he received the Charles Schiff Conducting Award. He also studied with Dennis Russell Davies at the Mozarteum Salzburg. In summer 2015, Reif conducted the Tanglewood Music Center Orchestra in several world premieres as part of Tanglewood's 75th anniversary summer, which led to his appointment as a Tanglewood conducting fellow for the summer of 2016. During that appointment, he stepped in for Seiji Ozawa, conducting the Seiji Ozawa International Academy Switzerland. He has also worked as assistant and cover conductor for the Los Angeles Philharmonic and Boston Symphony Orchestra, and in 2014, he served as assistant conductor for Alan Gilbert at the New York Phil Biennial. Reif won the German Operetta Prize 2015, awarded by the German Music Council. He is currently a member of Germany's Conductor's Forum (Dirigentenforum).

Calendar editors, please note:

Tickets to the SF Symphony Youth Orchestra's 2017–18 season are on sale at www.sfsymphony.org, (415) 864-6000, and at the Davies Symphony Hall Box Office, located on Grove Street between Franklin and Van Ness.

All concerts are at Davies Symphony Hall, 201 Van Ness Avenue, San Francisco.

SAN FRANCISCO SYMPHONY YOUTH ORCHESTRA

[Sunday, November 19, 2017 at 2pm](#)

Christian Reif conductor
Leyla Kabuli piano (2017 SFSYO Concerto Competition Winner)
San Francisco Symphony Youth Orchestra

Detlev GLANERT
RACHMANINOFF
ELGAR

Prelude No. 1, from Three American Preludes
Piano Concerto No. 2 in C minor, Opus 18
Enigma Variations, Opus 36

Tickets: \$55 reserved seating, \$15 general admission.

PETER AND THE WOLF with the SFS YOUTH ORCHESTRA

[Sunday, December 10, 2017 at 11 am](#)

Christian Reif conductor
Zachary Quinto narrator
San Francisco Symphony Youth Orchestra

PROKOFIEV *Peter and the Wolf*, Opus 67

Program will also include holiday favorites, with an audience sing-a-long.

Tickets: \$25–\$75; half price for ages 17 and under.

BAY AREA YOUTH ORCHESTRA FESTIVAL

[Sunday, January 14, 2018 at 3 pm](#)

Christian Reif conductor
Daniel Patrick Stewart festival music director
El Camino Youth Symphony
Golden Gate Philharmonic
Oakland Symphony Youth Orchestra
Young People's Symphony Orchestra
San Francisco Symphony Youth Orchestra

Program to include:

ELGAR Selections from *Enigma Variations*, Opus 36

Tickets: \$25–\$70

SAN FRANCISCO SYMPHONY YOUTH ORCHESTRA

[Sunday, March 4, 2018 at 2 pm](#)

Christian Reif conductor
San Francisco Symphony Youth Orchestra

GABRIELI	<i>Canzoni septimi toni a 8</i> (Ch. 172)
GABRIELI	<i>Sonata pian'e forte</i> (Ch. 175)
RUGGLES	<i>Angels for Muted Brass</i>
STRAUSS	<i>Serenade in E-flat major</i> , Opus 7
Michael BURRITT	<i>Fandango</i> 13
Anahita ABBASI	<i>Within the shifting grounds</i> (SFSYO commission in-collaboration with International Contemporary Ensemble and composer)
BEETHOVEN	<i>Symphony No. 7 in A major</i> , Opus 92

Tickets: \$55 reserved seating, \$15 general admission.

SAN FRANCISCO SYMPHONY YOUTH ORCHESTRA

[Sunday, May 13, 2018 at 2pm](#)

Christian Reif conductor

San Francisco Symphony Youth Orchestra

FAURÉ Suite from *Pelléas et Mélisande*, Opus 80
LIGETI *Concert Românesc*
STRAVINSKY *Le Sacre du printemps* [1947 revision]

Tickets: \$55 reserved seating, \$15 general admission.

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