

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Pasadena Symphony Association**  
**Pasadena Symphony & POPS**  
Contact: Marisa McCarthy  
MMcCarthy@PasadenaSymphony-Pops.org  
(626) 793-7172 ext. 13



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For artist images click here: <https://pasadenasympphony-pops.org/vivaldi-four-seasons-press-release/>

**VIVALDI'S MOST CHERISHED CONCERTOS LEAD A BAROQUE PROGRAM FOR ALL SEASONS**

*With Avery Fisher Career Grant Recipient Simone Porter*

**Pasadena CA** – Music Director **David Lockington** and the **Pasadena Symphony** present their annual Baroque program with **Vivaldi Four Seasons** on **Saturday, January 25** at **Ambassador Auditorium** with matinee and evening performances at **2:00pm and 8:00pm**. Lockington describes the program for his Baroque conductorial debut with the orchestra as being “filled with all sorts of twists.” He will put the focus on the strings for the first half, beginning with a string arrangement of selections from **Bach’s Goldberg Variations**, and then present them in a completely different light for **Reena Esmail’s Teen Murti**, drawing on Hindustani raags. The orchestra’s virtuosic **Principal trumpet, Marissa Benedict** will then take the stage to play an **Albinoni oboe concerto** transcribed for trumpet. A highlight of the concert, **Avery Fisher Career Grant recipient Simone Porter** will perform **Vivaldi’s Four Seasons** interspersed throughout the program, which will close with **Piazzolla’s Spring from The Four Seasons of Buenos Aires**, a modern counterpoint to Vivaldi’s Baroque masterpiece.

The Pasadena Symphony’s 19-20 season continues to spotlight fresh talent with both violinist Simone Porter and composer Reena Esmail. Continuing its tradition of showcasing the stars of tomorrow here today, the organization heralds the return of Porter, who first performed with the orchestra in 2014 at the age of 18. “On the cusp of a major career” (*Los Angeles Times*), Porter’s roster is now in full international stride, and her technical chops and elegant vibrato will bring an expressive panache to Vivaldi’s most cherished concertos. Acclaimed local composer Reena Esmail embodies the pioneering and diverse spirit of the 19/20 Composer’s Showcase with her Teen Murti, which reflects her Indian American heritage by combining traditional raag rhythms with Western techniques for a sonorously magical experience.

The Pasadena Symphony provides a socially vibrant experience specially designed for the music lover, the social butterfly or a date night out, and the inner epicurean in us all. As part of the symphony’s Insights program, Music Director David Lockington will present a pre-concert dialogue with soloist Simone Porter and composer Reena Esmail, beginning one hour prior to each performance. Patrons can unwind at the Symphony Lounge, a posh setting along Ambassador Auditorium’s beautiful outdoor plaza, that offers uniquely prepared menus for both lunch and dinner at each concert from Claud & Co, fine wines by Michero Wines serving Riboli Family Wines, plus music before the concert and during intermission.

All concerts are held at Ambassador Auditorium, 131 South St. John Ave, Pasadena, CA. Subscription

packages start at as low as \$99. Single tickets start at \$35 and may be purchased online at [www.pasadenasympphony-pops.org](http://www.pasadenasympphony-pops.org) or by calling (626) 793-7172.

#### **IF YOU GO:**

- **What:** The Pasadena Symphony presents Vivaldi Four Seasons

David Lockington, conductor

Simone Porter, violin

Marissa Benedict, trumpet

Bach *Goldberg Variations* for Strings

Reena Esmail Teen Murti

Albinoni Oboe Concerto (transcribed for trumpet)

Vivaldi *The Four Seasons*

Piazzolla "Spring" from *The Four Seasons of Buenos Aires*

- **When:** Saturday, January 25, 2020 at 2:00pm and 8:00pm

- **Where:** Ambassador Auditorium | 131 South St. John Avenue, Pasadena, CA 91105

- **Cost:** Tickets start at \$35.00

- **Parking:** Valet parking is available on St. John Ave for \$20. General parking is available in two locations: next to the Auditorium (entrance on St. John Ave) at the covered parking structure for \$10 and directly across the street at the Wells Fargo parking structure (entrance on Terrace at Green St). ADA parking is located at the above-ground parking lot adjacent to the Auditorium (entrance on St. John Ave.) for \$10. Parking purchased onsite is cash only.

- **Symphony Lounge:** Located on the plaza at Ambassador Auditorium, the Rusnak Symphony Lounge opens at 12:00pm before the matinee and 6:00pm before the evening performance.

- **Pre-Concert Discussion:** Pre-concert discussions with David Lockington and guest artists begins one hour before curtain and is available to all ticket holders at no cost.

#### **ABOUT THE PASADENA SYMPHONY ASSOCIATION**

Recent Acclaim for the Pasadena Symphony and POPS:

*"The Pasadena Symphony signals a new direction...teeming with vitality...dripping with opulent, sexy emotion." Los Angeles Times.*

*"...full of pulsating energy from first note to last... the strings were lushly resonant, the wind principals were at the top of their games, and the brass rang out with gleaming vigor." –Pasadena Star News.*

Formed in 1928, the Pasadena Symphony and POPS is an ensemble of Hollywood's most talented, sought after musicians. With extensive credits in the film, television, recording and orchestral industry, the artists of Pasadena Symphony and POPS are the most heard in the world.

The Pasadena Symphony and POPS performs in two of the most extraordinary venues in the United States: Ambassador Auditorium, known as the *Carnegie Hall of the West*, and the luxuriant Los Angeles Arboretum & Botanic Garden. Internationally recognized, Grammy-nominated conductor, David Lockington, serves as the Pasadena Symphony Association's Music Director, with performance-practice specialist Nicholas McGegan serving as Principal Guest Conductor. The multi-platinum-selling, two-time Emmy and five-time Grammy Award-nominated entertainer dubbed "The Ambassador of the Great American Songbook," Michael Feinstein, is the Principal Pops Conductor, who succeeded Marvin Hamlisch in the newly created *Marvin Hamlisch Chair*.

A hallmark of its robust education programs, the Pasadena Symphony Association has served the youth of the region for over five decades through the Pasadena Youth Symphony Orchestras (PYSO), comprised of five performing ensembles with over 300 gifted 4<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grade students from more than 50 schools all over the Southern California region. The PYSO has toured internationally at prestigious venues in New York, Vienna, and most recently San Jose, Costa Rica. They regularly perform throughout Southern California and have appeared on the popular television show *GLEE*.

The PSA provides people from all walks of life with powerful access points to the world of symphonic music.

## **ABOUT THE ARTISTS**

### **David Lockington Music Director**

David Lockington began his career as a cellist and was the Principal with the National Youth Orchestra of Great Britain for two years. After completing his Bachelor of Arts degree at the University of Cambridge where he was a choral scholar, Mr. Lockington came to the United States on a scholarship to Yale University where he received his Master's Degree in cello performance and studied conducting with Otto Werner Mueller. He was a member of the New Haven Symphony Orchestra and served as assistant principal cellist with the Denver Symphony Orchestra for three years before turning to conducting.

Over the past thirty years, David Lockington has developed an impressive conducting career in the United States. A native of Great Britain, he served as the Music Director of the Grand Rapids Symphony from January 1999 to May 2015, and is currently the orchestra's Conductor Laureate. He has held the position of Music Director with the Modesto Symphony since May 2007 and in March 2013, Mr. Lockington was appointed Music Director of the Pasadena Symphony. He has a close relationship with the Orquesta Sinfonica del Principado de Asturias in Spain, where he was the orchestra's Principal Guest Conductor from 2012 through 2016, and in the 15/16 season was named one of three Artistic Partners with the Northwest Sinfonietta in Tacoma, Washington.

In addition to his current posts, since his arrival to the United States in 1978 Mr. Lockington has held positions with several other American orchestras, including serving as Assistant Conductor of the Denver Symphony Orchestra and Opera Colorado, and Assistant and Associate Conductor of the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra. In May 1993 he accepted the position of Music Director of the Ohio Chamber Orchestra, assumed the title of Music Director of the New Mexico Symphony Orchestra in September 1995 and was Music Director of the Long Island Philharmonic for the 96/97 through 99/2000 seasons.

Mr. Lockington's guest conducting engagements include appearances with the Saint Louis, Houston, Detroit, Seattle, Toronto, Vancouver, Oregon and Phoenix symphonies; the Rochester and Louisiana Philharmonics; and the Orchestra of St. Luke's at Carnegie Hall. Internationally, he has conducted the Northern Sinfonia in Great Britain, the Israel Chamber Orchestra, the China Broadcasting Symphony Orchestra in Beijing and Taiwan, and led the English Chamber Orchestra on a tour in Asia.

Recent and upcoming guest conducting engagements include appearances with the New Jersey, Indianapolis, Utah, Pacific, Colorado, Nashville, San Diego, Santa Barbara, Stamford, Tucson and Kansas City symphonies, the Florida and Louisville Orchestras, the National Arts Centre Orchestra in Ottawa and the Buffalo, Calgary and Oklahoma Philharmonics. Mr. Lockington's summer festival activities include appearances at the Grand Teton, Colorado Music, Interlochen, Chautauqua and Eastern Music festivals.

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## **Simone Porter**

### **Violin**

Violinist Simone Porter has been recognized as an emerging artist of impassioned energy, interpretive integrity, and vibrant communication. In the past few years she has debuted with the New York Philharmonic, the Philadelphia Orchestra, the Los Angeles Philharmonic; and with a number of renowned conductors, including Stéphane Denève, Gustavo Dudamel, Yannick Nézet-Séguin, Nicholas McGegan, Ludovic Morlot, and Donald Runnicles. Born in 1996, Simone made her professional solo debut at age 10 with the Seattle Symphony and her international debut with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra in London at age 13. In March 2015, Simone was named a recipient of an Avery Fisher Career Grant.

Highlights of Simone's 2019/20 season include performing Beethoven with the Colorado Symphony, Mendelssohn with New Jersey Symphony, Brahms with the Pacific Symphony, and the Brahms Double Concerto with the Charlotte Symphony. She also tours extensively throughout the US, including concerts with the Wyoming, Arkansas, Santa Rosa, Amarillo, Pasadena, Fairfax, and Midland Symphonies; the Rochester, Westchester, and Greater Bay Philharmonics; and the Sarasota Orchestra and the Northwest Sinfonietta.

At the invitation of Esa-Pekka Salonen, Simone performed his work 'Lachen verlernt' ('Laughing Unlearned'), at the New York Philharmonic's "Foreign Bodies," a multi-sensory celebration of the work of the composer and conductor. In recent seasons, she has also appeared at the Edinburgh Festival performing Barber under the direction of Stéphane Denève, and at the Mostly Mozart Festival performing Mozart under Louis Langrée. She has also performed with the Los Angeles Philharmonic at the Hollywood Bowl with both Nicholas McGegan and Ludovic Morlot, and at Walt Disney Concert Hall with Gustavo Dudamel. Other orchestras with whom she has appeared in recent seasons include the

Detroit, Cincinnati, Houston, Seattle, Pittsburgh, Indianapolis, Nashville, Utah, and Baltimore Symphonies, and the Minnesota Orchestra. She also made her Ravinia Festival recital debut, her debut at the Grand Teton Music Festival, and multiple solo performances as a guest artist at the Aspen Music Festival.

Internationally, Simone has performed with the Simón Bolívar Symphony Orchestra with Gustavo Dudamel; the Orquestra Sinfônica Brasileira in Rio de Janeiro; the National Symphony Orchestra of Costa Rica; the City Chamber Orchestra of Hong Kong; the Royal Northern Sinfonia; the Milton Keynes City Orchestra in the United Kingdom; and the Opera de Marseilles.

Simone made her Carnegie Zankel Hall debut on the Emmy Award-winning TV show *From the Top: Live from Carnegie Hall* followed in November 2016 by her debut in Stern Auditorium. In June 2016, her featured performance of music from *Schindler's List* with Maestro Gustavo Dudamel and members of the American Youth Symphony was broadcast nationally on the TNT Network as part of the American Film Institute's Lifetime Achievement Award: A Tribute to John Williams.

Raised in Seattle, Washington, Simone studied with Margaret Pressley as a recipient of the Dorothy Richard Starling Scholarship, and was then admitted into the studio of the renowned pedagogue Robert Lipsett, with whom she studied at the Colburn Conservatory of Music in Los Angeles. Summer studies have included many years at the Aspen Music Festival, Indiana University's Summer String Academy, and the Schlern International Music Festival in Italy.

Simone Porter performs on a 1740 Carlo Bergonzi violin made in Cremona Italy on generous loan from The Master's University, Santa Clarita, California.

### **Marissa Benedict Trumpet**

Marissa Benedict has been a freelance trumpeter in the Los Angeles area for 38 years. As well as playing Principal in the Pasadena Symphony/Pops she is also Associate Principal trumpet in The Long Beach Symphony and Pops Orchestra. She actively performs with the Los Angeles Opera, Los Angeles Philharmonic, Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra, Santa Barbara Chamber Orchestra, Los Angeles Master Chorale, Orchestra Santa Monica and The Long Beach Municipal Band, and is a founding member of the Modern Brass Quintet.

A very active and in-demand studio player, she can be heard on nearly 150 motion picture recordings including *The Incredibles II*, *Coco*, *Moana*, *Spider-Man Homecoming*, *Jurassic World*, *Meet the Millers*, *Indiana Jones IV*, *Avatar*, *The Polar Express*, *Spider-Man 2*, *Monsters, Inc.*, *War of the Worlds* and many more. Her television studio recording credits include *Star Trek: Enterprise*, *Star Trek: Voyager*, *JAG*, *Commander in Chief*, *Galavant* and *Agent Carter*.

Marissa is also an active and dedicated music educator. She is on the faculty at The Colburn School of Performing Arts, California State University at San Bernardino, Glendale Community College and is also a trumpet coach at Burbank High School and Harvard Westlake Academy. While staying busy with her music and teaching career she and her husband Mike just celebrated their 32nd wedding anniversary and have raised three children.

**Reena Esmail**  
**Composer**

Indian-American composer Reena Esmail works between the worlds of Indian and Western classical music, and brings communities together through the creation of equitable musical spaces.

In recent seasons, Esmail has worked with the Kronos Quartet, Albany Symphony, River Oaks Chamber Orchestra, Salastina Music Society, SOLI, and American Composers Orchestra. Her work is performed regularly throughout the US and abroad, and has been programmed at Carnegie Hall, the Barbican Centre in London, Schloss Esterhazy in Hungary, and throughout India. She has served as Composer in Residence for Albany Symphony (2016-17), Street Symphony (2016-present) in downtown Los Angeles, Concerts on the Slope (2015-16) in Brooklyn, NY and the Pasadena Master Chorale (2014-16) in Pasadena, CA.

Esmail received a 2011-12 Fulbright-Nehru Fellowship to study Hindustani music in India, where she was also a 2011 INK Fellow (in association with TED). In 2010, Esmail co-founded of Yale's Hindi a cappella group, Sur et Veritaal. Esmail's doctoral thesis, entitled *Finding Common Ground: Uniting Practices in Hindustani and Western Art Musicians* explores the methods and challenges of the collaborative process between Hindustani musicians and Western composers. Her teachers include Srimati Lakshmi Shankar and Saily Oak.

Esmail holds degrees in composition from The Juilliard School (BM'05) and the Yale School of Music (MM'11, MMA'14, DMA'18). Her primary teachers have included Susan Botti, Aaron Jay Kernis, Christopher Theofanidis and Martin Bresnick, Christopher Rouse and Samuel Adler. She has won numerous awards, including the Walter Hinrichsen Award from the American Academy of Arts and Letters (and subsequent publication of a work by C.F. Peters) and two ASCAP Morton Gould Young Composer Awards.

Esmail was on the composition and theory faculty at Manhattan School of Music Precollege from 2006-2011. She taught the music theory core curriculum at Yale College from 2012-14. Recently, Esmail has worked with young composers through mentorship programs including Shastra's Arranging with Hindustani Music, Pasadena Master Chorale's Listening to the Future. This season, she will mentor young women composers through Kaufmann Center's new program, The Luna Lab.

Recent commissions include: *I Rise: Women in Song*, for Lehigh University's women's chorus and orchestra, a Clarinet Concerto for Hindustani/Western crossover clarinetist Shankar Tucker and Albany Symphony Orchestra (where she was the 2016-17 Composer Fellow), *The Light is the Same* for Imani Winds, and a new major sacred work, *This Love Between Us* for chorus, orchestra, sitar and tabla, written for Yale Schola Cantorum and Juilliard 415 which toured India in March 2017. This season's highlights include new works for Chicago Sinfonietta, Albany Symphony, and violinist Vijay Gupta.

In addition to her work as a composer, Esmail is the Co-Artistic Director of Shastra, a non-profit organization that promotes cross-cultural music that connects the great musical traditions of India and the West. She is also the Composer-in-Residence with Street Symphony, where she works with communities experiencing homelessness and incarceration in Los Angeles.

Esmail currently resides in Los Angeles, California.

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