

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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



April 6, 2023

For full artist bios and high res images visit: <https://pasadenasymphony-pops.org/an-american-in-paris-press-release/>

GERSHWIN, RACHMANINOFF AND BARBER CLOSE THE PASADENA SYMPHONY'S 22/23 SEASON

Pasadena, CA The **Pasadena Symphony** closes out its 22/23 season with **An American in Paris** at **Ambassador Auditorium** on **Saturday, April 29, 2023** with matinee and evening performances at **2:00pm and 8:00pm**. Emerging international conductor **Kensho Watanabe** will make his Pasadena debut, taking audiences on an aural journey through the City of Lights with **Gershwin's** iconic **An American in Paris** to open the show. **Barber's** exquisite **Violin Concerto** follows, performed by **Avery Fisher Winner Tai Murray**, whose playing has been described as "technically flawless, vivacious and scintillating" (*Muso Magazine*).

Grammy-nominated composer **Carlos Simon** rounds out the third annual Composer's Showcase with **The Block**, inspired by Romare Bearden's paintings portraying the rich energy that Harlem expressed as the hotbed for African American culture. Finally, **Rachmaninoff's** final and arguably best orchestral work, **Symphonic Dances** concludes the program with electrifying modern rhythms that will keep audiences on the edge of their seats. This is one season finale you won't want to miss!

The Pasadena Symphony provides a vibrant experience specially designed for the music lover, the social butterfly or a date night out. Patrons can enjoy a pre-concert meal at many nearby restaurants in Old Town Pasadena or have a drink and a bite in the lively outdoor, tented **Symphony Lounge**, which opens two hours prior to show time. A posh setting along Ambassador Auditorium's beautiful outdoor plaza, the Lounge offers sandwiches, salads and desserts by Love Birds, plus coffee, cocktails and fine wines from The Michero Family before the concert and during intermission.

All concerts are held at Ambassador Auditorium, 131 South St. John Ave, Pasadena, CA. Single tickets starting at \$40 and may be purchased online at www.pasadenasymphony-pops.org or by calling (626) 793-7172.

IF YOU GO:

- **What:** The Pasadena Symphony presents **An American in Paris**
Kensho Watanabe, conductor
Tai Murray, violin

Gershwin

An American in Paris

Barber	Violin Concerto
Carlos Simon	The Block
Rachmaninoff	Symphonic Dances

- **When:** Saturday, April 29, 2023 at 2:00pm and 8:00pm
- **Where:** Ambassador Auditorium | 131 South St. John Avenue, Pasadena, CA 91105
- **Cost:** Tickets start at \$40.00
- **Parking:** Valet parking is available on St. John Ave for \$15. 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 may be pre-purchased or purchased onsite. **Parking purchased onsite is cash only.**

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Tai Murray Violin

Described as “superb” by *The New York Times*, violinist Tai Murray has established herself a musical voice of a generation. “Technically flawless... vivacious and scintillating... It is without doubt that Murray’s style of playing is more mature than that of many seasoned players... “(*Muso Magazine*).

Appreciated for her elegance and effortless ability, Murray creates a special bond with listeners through her personal phrasing and subtle sweetness. Her programming reveals musical intelligence. Her sound, sophisticated bowing and choice of vibrato, remind us of her musical background and influences, principally, Yuval Yaron (a student of Gingold & Heifetz) and Franco Gulli. Winner of an Avery Fisher Career Grant in 2004, Tai Murray was named a BBC New Generation Artist (2008 through 2010). As a chamber musician, she was a member of Lincoln Center’s Chamber Music Society II (2004-2006).

She has performed as guest soloist on the main stages world-wide, performing with leading ensembles such as the Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra, Royal Liverpool Symphony Orchestra, and all of the BBC Symphony Orchestras. She is also a dedicated advocate of contemporary works (written for the violin). Among others, she performed the world premiere of Malcolm Hayes’ violin concerto at the BBC PROMS, in the Royal Albert Hall.

As a recitalist Tai Murray has visited many of the world’s capitals having appeared in Berlin, Chicago, Hamburg, London, Madrid, New York’s Carnegie Hall, Paris and Washington D.C., among many others.

Tai Murray’s critically acclaimed debut recording for harmonia mundi of Ysaye’s six sonatas for solo violin was released in February 2012. Her second recording with works by American Composers of the 20th Century was released by the Berlin-based label eaSonus and her third disc with the Bernstein Serenade on the French label mirare.

Tai Murray plays a violin by Tomaso Balestrieri fecit Mantua ca. 1765, on generous loan from a private collection.

Kensho Watanabe **Conductor**

Emerging onto the international stage, Kensho Watanabe is fast becoming one of the most exciting and versatile young conductors to come out of the United States. Recently recognized as a recipient of a Career Assistance Award by the Solti Foundation U.S, Kensho held the position of Assistant Conductor of The Philadelphia Orchestra from 2016 to 2019. During this time, he made his critically acclaimed subscription debut with the Orchestra and pianist, Daniil Trifonov, taking over from his mentor Yannick Nézet-Séguin. He would continue on to conduct four subscription concerts with the Philadelphia Orchestra in 2019, in addition to debuts at the Bravo! Vail Festival and numerous concerts at the Mann and Saratoga Performing Arts Centres. Watanabe has previously been an inaugural conducting fellow of the Curtis Institute of Music from 2013 to 2015, under the mentorship of Nézet-Séguin.

The 2022-23 season will see Watanabe give debuts with the Minnesota Orchestra, Edmonton Symphony, and Pasadena Symphony Orchestras. He will also return to the Philadelphia Orchestra for subscription concerts, as well as to the Rhode Island Philharmonic and RTE Concert Orchestra.

Equally at home in both symphonic and operatic repertoire, Watanabe has led numerous operas, most recently at the Spoleto Festival 2022 conducting *La bohème*. This season will see Kensho work with Nézet-Séguin for Kevin Puts' THE HOURS with the Philadelphia Orchestra and the Met, Terence Blanchard's CHAMPION with the Met. He will also conduct *Madame Butterfly* with the Michigan Opera Theatre.

Recent highlights include Kensho's debuts with the London Philharmonic and Tokyo Philharmonic Orchestras, Orchestre National du Capitole de Toulouse, Rhode Island Philharmonic, Jyväskylä Sinfonia, Turku Philharmonic, and his Polish debut with the Filarmonia Szczecin. Kensho has also enjoyed recent collaborations with the Houston Symphony, Royal Scottish National Orchestra, Detroit Symphony, Brussels Philharmonic, BBC National Orchestra of Wales, Charlotte Symphony, Sarasota Orchestra, the Seiji Ozawa Matsumoto Festival, and the Orchestre Métropolitain in Montreal.

Carlos Simon **Composer**

Carlos Simon is a native of Atlanta, Georgia whose music ranges from concert music for large and small ensembles to film scores with influences of jazz, gospel, and neo-romanticism.

Simon's latest album, *My Ancestor's Gift* was released on the Navona Records label in April 2018. Described as an "overall driving force" (Review Graveyard) and featured on Apple Music's "Albums to Watch", *My Ancestor's Gift* incorporates spoken word and historic recordings to craft a multifaceted program of musical works that are inspired as much by the past as they are the present.

As a part of the Sundance Institute, Simon was named as a Sundance/Time Warner Composer Fellow in 2018, which was held at the historic Skywalker Ranch. His string quartet, *Elegy*, honoring the lives of Trayvon Martin, Michael Brown and Eric Garner was recently performed at the Kennedy Center for the

Mason Bates JFK Jukebox Series. With support from the US Embassy in Tokyo and US/Japan Foundation, Simon traveled with the Asia/America New Music Institute (AANMI) on a two-week tour of Japan in 2018 performing concerts in some of the most sacred temples and concert spaces in Japan including Suntory Hall in Tokyo, Japan. Other recent accolades include being a Composer Fellow at the Cabrillo Festival for Contemporary Music, winning the Underwood Emerging Composer Commission from the American Composers Orchestra in 2016, the prestigious Marvin Hamlisch Film Scoring Award in 2015, and the Presser Award from the Theodore Presser Foundation in 2015. He has also served as a contributing arranger for Rachel Barton Pine Foundation's *Music by Black Composers* series for violin.

Recent commissions have come from the Philadelphia Orchestra, Washington National Opera, Reno Philharmonic, the American Composers Orchestra, Arizona State University Symphony Orchestra, Irving Klein String Competition, Morehouse College celebrating its 150th founding anniversary, the University of Michigan Symphony Band celebrating the university's 200th anniversary, Albany Symphony's Dogs of Desire (American Music Festival) as well as serving as the young composer-in-residence with the the Detroit Chamber String and Winds in 2016. Simon's music has been performed by Tony Arnold, the Third Angle New Music Ensemble, Hub New Music Ensemble, the Asian/American New Music Institute, the Flint Symphony, the Color of Music Festival, University of North Texas Symphony Band, University of Miami Symphony Band, Georgia State University Wind Ensemble and many other professional performance organizations. His piece, *Let America Be America Again* (text by Langston Hughes) is scheduled to be featured in an upcoming PBS documentary chronicling the inaugural Gabriela Lena Frank Academy of Music. He has served as a member of the music faculty at Spelman College and Morehouse College in Atlanta, Georgia and now serves as Assistant Professor at Georgetown University.

Acting as music director and keyboardist for GRAMMY Award winner Jennifer Holliday, Simon has performed with the Boston POPS, Jackson Symphony, and St. Louis Symphony. He has toured internationally with soul GRAMMY-nominated artist, Angie Stone, and performed throughout Europe, Africa, and Asia.

Simon earned his doctorate degree at the University of Michigan, where he studied with Michael Daugherty and Evan Chambers. He has also received degrees from Georgia State University and Morehouse College. Additionally, he studied in Baden, Austria at the Hollywood Music Workshop with Conrad Pope and at New York University's Film Scoring Summer Workshop.

Carlos Simon, Jr. is a member of many music organizations including ASCAP (American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers), where he was honored as one of the "Composers to Watch" in 2015 and will take part in the ASCAP Film Music Workshop in Los Angeles, California in 2019. He is also an honorary member of Phi Mu Alpha Music Sinfonia Fraternity and a member of the National Association of Negro Musicians, Society of Composers International, and Pi Kappa Lambda Music Honor Society. His compositions have been published by the Gregorian Institute of America (GIA) Publications and Hal Leonard Publications.

ABOUT THE PASADENA SYMPHONY ASSOCIATION

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. The multi-platinum-selling, two-time Emmy and five-time Grammy Award-nominated entertainer dubbed “The Ambassador of the Great American Songbook,” Michael Feinstein, leads the POPS as Principal Pops Conductor, succeeding Marvin Hamlisch.

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 seven performing ensembles, with over 400 gifted 4th-12th grade students from all over Southern California. The PYSO Symphony has performed at venues across the globe as well as on the television show *GLEE*.

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

- end -