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Pasadena Symphony Association

Pasadena Symphony & POPS

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**GRAMMY AWARD-WINNING PIANIST MICHELLE CANN MAKES HER PASADENA DEBUT WITH
MOZART'S SHIMMERING PIANO CONCERTO NO. 23**

The orchestra shines on Tchaikovsky's Symphony No. 6, "Pathétique"

Pasadena, CA – Music Director Brett Mitchell and the Pasadena Symphony present **Tchaikovsky Pathétique** on **Saturday, February 21, 2026** at **Ambassador Auditorium** with performances at **2:00pm** and **8:00pm**. The orchestra will perform the Ambassador debut of **Tchaikovsky's sixth and final symphony**, the haunting "**Pathétique**," taking the audience on an exhilarating journey through love, despair and fate. To top off the program, **multiple award-winning pianist Michelle Cann** will give a shimmering performance of **Mozart's 23rd Piano Concerto**.

Two-time Grammy Award-winner Michele Cann is also a recipient of the **Sphinx Medal of Excellence** and the **Andrew Wolf Chamber Music Award**. Recognized as a leading interpreter of the piano music of Florence Price, Cann won a 2023 Grammy Award for her recording of Price's *Piano Concerto in One Movement* and won a second Grammy in 2025 for *Beyond the Years: Unpublished Songs of Florence Price*. Lauded as "**a pianist of sterling artistry**" by **Gramophone**, Cann is one of the most sought-after pianists of her generation and the orchestra is honored to host her Pasadena debut performing one of Mozart's most radiant concerti.

The Pasadena Symphony provides a vibrant experience specially designed for the music lover, the social butterfly or a date night out. Arrive early for the pre-concert discussion **Insights** with **KUSC host Brian Lauritzen, Music Director Brett Mitchell**, and composer **Jeffrey Nyth**, whose work **Beacon** will open the program. Nearby Old Town Pasadena provides a host of revered dining options, or enjoy a bite or a glass along Ambassador Auditorium's veranda, which offers two full-service beverage centers serving fine wines, spirits and coffee, plus snacks, charcuterie and dessert before the concert and during intermission.

All concerts are held at **Ambassador Auditorium, 131 South St. John Ave, Pasadena, CA** at 2pm and 8pm. **Subscriptions and single tickets start at \$55** and may be purchased online at www.pasadenasympphony-pops.org or by calling (626) 793-7172.

IF YOU GO:

- **What:** The Pasadena Symphony presents **Tchaikovsky Pathétique**
Brett Mitchell, conductor
Michelle Cann, piano

Jeffrey Nytch	Beacon
Mozart	Piano Concerto No. 23 in A Major
Tchaikovsky	Symphony No. 6, "Pathétique"

- **When:** Saturday, February 21, 2026 at 2:00pm and 8:00pm
- **Where:** Ambassador Auditorium | 131 South St. John Avenue, Pasadena, CA 91105
- **Cost:** Tickets start at \$55
- **Parking:** Valet parking is available on St. John Ave for \$25. General parking is available in two locations: next to Ambassador Auditorium (entrance on St. John Ave) at the covered parking structure, and directly across Green St. at the Wells Fargo parking structure (entrance on Terrace at Green). ADA parking is located at the above-ground parking lot adjacent to the Auditorium (entrance on St. John). Parking may be pre-purchased for **\$15 in advance or \$20 onsite. Parking purchased onsite is cash only.**

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Brett Mitchell **Music Director**

Hailed for the breadth of his work on the podium and at the piano, Brett Mitchell has carved a unique path for himself in the world of contemporary American classical music. Mitchell began a five-year term as Music Director of the Pasadena Symphony—an orchestra composed of the greatest studio musicians in Hollywood—in 2024, and has served as Artistic Director & Conductor of Oregon's Sunriver Music Festival since 2022.

In May 2025, with less than 24 hours' notice, Mitchell stepped in for his subscription debut with the New York Philharmonic, leading three performances of Kevin Puts's *The Brightness of Light* featuring soprano Renée Fleming and baritone Rod Gilfry, followed by the complete score of Ravel's *Daphnis et Chloé* featuring the New York Philharmonic Chorus.

Working widely as a guest conductor, Mitchell's other recent engagements have included appearances with the Dallas, Detroit, Edmonton, Fort Worth, Houston, Indianapolis, Memphis,

Milwaukee, National, North Carolina, Oregon, San Antonio, San Francisco, Tulsa, and Vancouver symphonies; the Los Angeles Philharmonic at the Hollywood Bowl; the Cleveland and Minnesota orchestras; the Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra; the River Oaks and Saint Paul chamber orchestras; the Grant Park Festival Orchestra; and a two-week tour with the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra. He has also guest conducted the Grant Park Festival Orchestra, and led a two-week tour with the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra. Mitchell regularly collaborates with the world's leading soloists, including Renée Fleming, Yo-Yo Ma, Itzhak Perlman, Kirill Gerstein, Conrad Tao, Rudolf Buchbinder, James Ehnes, Augustin Hadelich, Leila Josefowicz, and Alisa Weilerstein.

From 2017 to 2021, Mitchell served as Music Director of the Colorado Symphony in Denver, following a term as Music Director Designate during the 2016–17 season. During his tenure, he led the organization through a period of significant artistic growth, helped position the orchestra as a central cultural voice in the region, strengthened community ties via strategic collaborations, and broadened the orchestra's commitment to American music with new commissions, premieres, and recordings.

From 2013 to 2017, Mitchell served on the conducting staff of The Cleveland Orchestra, joining as Assistant Conductor in 2013 and receiving a promotion to Associate Conductor in 2015. More than a decade later, he continues to return as a frequent guest conductor, having led more than 150 performances with the orchestra over the past twelve years.

From 2007 to 2011, Mitchell led over one hundred performances as Assistant Conductor of the Houston Symphony, to which he also continues to return regularly as a guest conductor. He held Assistant Conductor posts with the Orchestre National de France, where he worked under Kurt Masur from 2006 to 2009, and the Castleton Festival, where he worked under Lorin Maazel in 2009 and 2010. In 2015, Mitchell completed a highly successful five-year appointment as Music Director of the Saginaw Bay Symphony Orchestra, where an increased focus on locally relevant programming and community collaborations resulted in record attendance throughout his tenure.

Equally at home in the pit, Mitchell has served as music director of nearly a dozen opera productions spanning the core works of Mozart, Verdi, and Stravinsky to contemporary works by Mark Adamo, Robert Aldridge, Daniel Catán, and Daron Hagen. As a ballet conductor, Mitchell most recently led seven performances of *The Nutcracker* with the Pennsylvania Ballet in collaboration with The Cleveland Orchestra.

In addition to his work with professional orchestras, Mitchell is widely recognized for his commitment to mentoring young musicians. During his highly regarded tenure as Music Director of the Cleveland Orchestra Youth Orchestra (2013–17), he led a much-lauded four-city tour of China in 2015. At home, he has worked extensively with students at this country's leading training programs, including the Cleveland Institute of Music, Interlochen Center for the Arts, National Repertory Orchestra, Sarasota Music Festival, and Texas Music Festival. He has

also held faculty appointments at Northern Illinois University (2005–07), the University of Houston (2012–13), and the University of Denver (2019–20, 2022–23).

Also an accomplished pianist, Mitchell has a devoted fanbase of his work at the keyboard, including a widely praised YouTube channel featuring his original transcriptions of iconic cues from film history. He also concertizes regularly at the piano, often performing in recital with musicians from his orchestras. In recognition of his work at the keyboard, Mitchell was named a Steinway Artist by Steinway & Sons in 2025.

Born in Seattle in 1979, Mitchell holds degrees in conducting from the University of Texas at Austin and composition from Western Washington University, which selected him as its Young Alumnus of the Year in 2014. He studied with Leonard Slatkin at the National Conducting Institute in 2005, and was selected by Kurt Masur as a recipient of the inaugural American Friends of the Mendelssohn Foundation Scholarship in 2008. Mitchell also one of five recipients of the League of American Orchestras' American Conducting Fellowship from 2007 to 2010. For more information, please visit brettmitchellconductor.com.

Michelle Cann

Piano

Lauded as “exquisite” by *The Philadelphia Inquirer* and “a pianist of sterling artistry” by *Gramophone*, GRAMMY Award winning pianist Michelle Cann is one of the most sought-after artists of her generation. Recent engagements include appearances with Chicago Symphony Orchestra, The Cleveland Orchestra, The Philadelphia Orchestra, Los Angeles Philharmonic, National Symphony Orchestra, and Orquestra Sinfônica Municipal de São Paulo. She is a recipient of the Sphinx Medal of Excellence and the Andrew Wolf Chamber Music Award, and she served as the inaugural Christel DeHaan Artistic Partner of the American Piano Awards.

Highlights of Cann’s 2025-26 season include appearances with the Colorado Symphony, New Jersey Symphony, Kansas City Symphony, and Ireland’s National Symphony Orchestra. She also performs the world premiere of a new piano concerto by Valerie Coleman with the National Symphony Orchestra in Washington, D.C. Her recital appearances include Stanford Live, Music Toronto, Chamber Music Detroit, the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, Spivey Hall, and a recital tour in China.

Recognized as a leading interpreter of the piano music of Florence Price, Cann performed the New York City premiere of Price’s *Piano Concerto in One Movement* with The Dream Unfinished Orchestra in July 2016 and the Philadelphia premiere with The Philadelphia Orchestra and Music Director Yannick Nézet-Séguin in February 2021. Her recording of the concerto with the New York Youth Symphony won a GRAMMY Award in 2023 for Best Orchestral Performance. She won a GRAMMY Award in 2025 for *Beyond the Years: Unpublished Songs of Florence Price*, recorded with soprano Karen Slack, which features 19 unpublished songs composed by Price.

Her acclaimed debut solo album *Revival*, featuring music by Price and Margaret Bonds, was released in May 2023 on the Curtis Studio label. She has also recorded two Price piano quintets with the Catalyst Quartet as a part of the quartet's UNCOVERED series. A champion of emerging talent, Cann and cellist Tommy Mesa recorded *Our Stories*, an album of new works by five living composers of color, which was released in November 2023.

A celebrated chamber musician, Cann has collaborated with leading artists including the Catalyst, Dover, and Juilliard string quartets, Imani Winds, violinists Timothy and Nikki Chooi, soprano Karen Slack, and mezzo-soprano J'Nai Bridges. She regularly performs duo piano repertoire with her sister, pianist Kimberly Cann, as the Cann Duo. She has appeared as co-host and collaborative pianist with NPR's *From the Top*, collaborating with actor/conductor Damon Gupton, violinist Leila Josefowicz, and violinist and MacArthur Fellow Vijay Gupta. Cann's numerous media appearances include *Performance Today*, PBS Great Performances' *Now Hear This*, and *Living the Classical Life*.

Embracing a dual role as performer and pedagogue, Cann is frequently invited to teach master classes, give lecture-demonstrations, and lead teaching residencies. Recent residencies include the Gilmore International Keyboard Festival and the National Conference of the Music Teachers National Association. She has recorded lessons for tonebase, the popular piano lesson platform. She has also served on the juries of the Cleveland International Piano Competition, the Kauffman Music Center International Youth Piano Competition, and the piano competition of the Music Academy of the West.

Cann holds bachelor's and master's degrees in piano performance from the Cleveland Institute of Music, where she studied with Paul Schenly and Dr. Daniel Shapiro, and an Artist's Diploma from Curtis Institute of Music, where she studied with Robert McDonald. She joined the Curtis piano faculty in 2020 as the inaugural Eleanor Sokoloff Chair in Piano Studies. She is also on the piano faculty of the Manhattan School of Music.

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 film, television, recording and the orchestral industry, the artists of the Pasadena Symphony and POPS are some of the most heard in the world.

Brett Mitchell assumed the post of Pasadena Symphony Music Director on April 1, 2024. The multi-platinum-selling, Emmy and Grammy Award-nominated entertainer dubbed "The Ambassador of the Great American Songbook," Michael Feinstein, assumed the role of Principal Pops Conductor Emeritus in September 2025, after leading the POPS for 14 years, succeeding Marvin Hamlisch. Resident Pops Conductor Larry Blank will lead the POPS for the 2026 season.

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 Los Angeles Arboretum & Botanic Garden.

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). PYSO offers supplemental in-class instruction within the Pasadena Unified School District and eleven performance ensembles, serving over 700 4th-12th grade students from all over Southern California. The PYSO has performed at venues across the globe as well as on the television show *GLEE*.

The Pasadena Symphony Association provides people from all walks of life with powerful access points to the world of symphonic music. www.pasadenasympphony-pops.org

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