



For Immediate Release: April 28, 2026

[2026–2027 Season Announcement Press Kit](#)

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CAL PERFORMANCES AT UC BERKELEY ANNOUNCES ITS 2026–27 SEASON, WITH AMBITIOUS PROGRAMMING BUILDING ON 120 YEARS OF ARTISTIC EXCELLENCE

WEST COAST PREMIERE OF *THE HEAD & THE LOAD* INAUGURATES FIVE-YEAR INITIATIVE TO PRESENT WILLIAM KENTRIDGE INTERDISCIPLINARY WORKS

The monumental production programmed for this first year features dance, projection, speech, song, shadow play, costume, and music to tell the story of Africans who labored, fought, and died during World War I

Designed for a massive stage, the production is presented at the newly remodeled arena at the Henry J. Kaiser Center for the Arts in Oakland

VIENNA PHILHARMONIC RETURNS WITH CONDUCTOR YANNICK NÉZET-SÉGUIN FOR THREE-PERFORMANCE RESIDENCY AND GALA CELEBRATION

Cal Performances and the Philharmonic Society of Orange County bring the world-renowned orchestra and conductor to the West Coast for the 2027 Maria Manetti Shrem and Elizabeth Segerstrom California Orchestra Residency, which includes three Berkeley performances and an accompanying gala

Special guest soloists include pianist **Yuja Wang**, soprano **Christiane Karg**, and mezzo-soprano **Elīna Garanča**, and the **San Francisco Symphony Chorus** directed by **Jenny Wong**

DANCE SERIES ABOUNDS WITH INNOVATIVE CHOREOGRAPHERS, STORIED COMPANIES, AND BOLD, MULTIDIMENSIONAL ARTISTIC CREATIONS

Opening the season, **The Australian Ballet** performs the North American premiere of *Oscar*, Christopher Wheeldon's 2024 production inspired by the life and work of Oscar Wilde

Exciting multifaceted productions include *A a | a B : B E N D*, a collaboration between choreographer and director **Aszure Barton** and composer and musician **Ambrose Akinmusire**; the world premiere of **Mark Morris Dance Group** in *Holidayland*, an immersive work Morris is co-creating with *Goosebumps*' **R.L. Stine**; **Compagnie Hervé Koubi**'s gravity-

defying visual spectacle, *Sol Invictus*; and **MOMIX** in *Botanica*, brought to life through dance, acrobatics, imaginative costuming, and puppetry

Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater and **Les Ballets Trockadero de Monte Carlo** return in repertory programs, and **Ballet Folklórico de México's** 75th anniversary program honors choreographer and founder **Amalia Hernández**

MUSIC PROGRAMS HONOR MAJOR MILESTONES FOR LEADING ARTISTIC VOICES OF OUR TIME

Programs honor influential composers during significant anniversaries: **Bang on a Can All-Stars**, **Ensemble Signal**, and conductor **Brad Lubman** unite for **Steve Reich** at 90: *A Birthday Celebration* that includes a new Cal Performances co-commissioned work; **Timo Andres**, **Aaron Diehl**, **Daniela Liebman**, and **Jason Moran** are among the 10 acclaimed pianists performing **The Complete Philip Glass Piano Etudes** during the composer's 90th year; and **Attacca Quartet** performs the Bay Area premiere of a new Cal Performances co-commissioned work by **John Adams**, alongside other of the composer's works during the month of his 80th birthday

Performances that recognize landmarks in the careers of some of today's most important artists include **Wynton Marsalis'** final tour as managing and artistic director of the **Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra**; **Judy Collins** in *Sweet Judy Blue Eyes: The Farewell Tour*; and viol virtuoso and conductor **Jordi Savall**—renowned for his wide-ranging, historically informed programs—directing a rare full symphony orchestra on period instruments for an all-Beethoven concert featuring the composer's Third and Fifth Symphonies

ATTACCA QUARTET SERVES AS ENSEMBLE IN RESIDENCE

The visionary and adventurous ensemble's two performances honor composers with whom the group has had close relationships: **Caroline Shaw**, who performs with The Attacca on voice and violin; and **John Adams**, whose *Iron Jig*, a Cal Performances co-commission, receives its Bay Area premiere

EARLY MUSIC SERIES FEATURES SUPERLATIVE PERFORMERS INTERPRETING CANONIC OPERA/ORATORIO MASTERWORKS

Performances include mezzo-soprano **Joyce DiDonato** and **Il Pomo d'Oro Orchestra and Choir** in Henry Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas*; **Monteverdi Choir**, **English Baroque Soloists**, conductor **Masaaki Suzuki**, and soloists in J. S. Bach's *St. Matthew Passion*; and **The English Concert** and guest soloists led by conductor and harpsichordist **Harry Bicket** in Handel's *Alessandro*

SEASON-LONG ILLUMINATIONS THEME COMBINES PERFORMANCE AND SCHOLARSHIP TO EXPLORE "INNOCENCE & EXPERIENCE"

Six distinct performances combine with related events featuring artists and UC Berkeley scholars to investigate "Innocence & Experience" as intertwined forces that shape how we understand the world. Performances include:

The Australian Ballet and the **Berkeley Symphony Orchestra** in the North American premiere of **Christopher Wheeldon's** *Oscar*; **William Kentridge's** *The Head & the Load*;

Jason Moran and the Harlem Hellfighters in *James Reese Europe and the Absence of Ruin*; **Ambrose Akinmusire** and **Aszure Barton's** *A a | a B : B E N D*; **Compagnie Hervé Koubi** in *Sol Invictus*; and mezzo-soprano **Joyce DiDonato** with **Il Pomo d'Oro Orchestra and Choir** in Henry Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas*

UC BERKELEY STUDENT ACCESS INITIATIVE EXPANDS

Cal Performances' popular Golden Bear Circle program, offering UC Berkeley students \$10 tickets in prime locations of the house, expands to cover half of the season's events

Berkeley, CA, Tuesday, April 28, 2026—Cal Performances Board of Trustees Co-chairs Carol T. Christ and Jeffrey MacKie-Mason and Executive and Artistic Director Jeremy Geffen today announce the performing arts presenter's 2026–27 season, a celebration of 120 years of artistic excellence. The ambitious and eclectic programming reflects the organization's long-standing dedication to connecting world-renowned artists with Bay Area audiences, its efforts to foster and catalyze artistic innovation, and its belief in the power of the arts to transform lives. Across nearly 80 performances, Cal Performances shines the spotlight on the most acclaimed creators and performers of concert music, dance, jazz, theater, opera, and global musical traditions. Highlights of the season include the West Coast premiere of **William Kentridge's** *The Head & the Load*, an epic theater work drawing on the stories of African soldiers in World War I, representing the first performance in a new initiative to present a Kentridge interdisciplinary work on each of the next five seasons; the return of the **Vienna Philharmonic** in an exclusive residency featuring three programs with conductor **Yannick Nézet-Séguin** and guest soloists **Yuja Wang, Christiane Karg, and Elīna Garanča**; extensive programs honoring milestone anniversaries for composers **John Adams, Philip Glass, and Steve Reich**; **Wynton Marsalis'** final Berkeley appearance as managing and artistic director of the **Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra**; two performances and related campus activities by the **Attacca Quartet**, Cal Performances' 2026–27 Ensemble in Residence; and **The Australian Ballet** in the North American premiere of **Christopher Wheeldon's** *Oscar*, inspired by the life and work of Oscar Wilde, during the season-opening weekend. And Cal Performances continues its bold exploration of pressing themes with *Illuminations*—performances, lectures, and conversations that connect artistry with groundbreaking scholarship—this season centered on “Innocence & Experience.”

“The first performance in 1906 presented by what would come to be known as Cal Performances featured the legendary Sarah Bernhardt to benefit those affected by the great San Francisco earthquake just weeks prior,” said Jeremy Geffen, Cal Performances' Executive and Artistic Director. “Even as the organization expanded beyond anyone's wildest dreams, it

remained true to the spirit with which it began—amplifying the power of the performing arts to unite us, inspire us, and create a better future. The programming for our 120th anniversary season, our most ambitious season to date, unequivocally demonstrates the excellence to which Cal Performances has always aspired. By deepening the invaluable relationships our famously thoughtful audiences have formed with world-renowned artists while also promoting curiosity and innovation through presentations of debut artists, new works, and thought-provoking programs, we continue to add to Cal Performances' legacy, as well as to the memorable experiences of the Bay Area patrons who make our work possible.”

William Kentridge's *The Head & the Load* Explores the African Legacy of World War I

Visionary South African artist **William Kentridge** returns to Cal Performances with an expansive work that chronicles—through dance, projection, speech, song, shadow play, costume, and music—the untold history of the more than two million Africans who labored, fought, and, in many cases, died during the First World War. Drawing its title from a Ghanaian proverb, “The head and the load are the troubles of the neck,” *The Head & the Load* (November 12–15) continues Kentridge's exploration of history, language, and artistic and political movements through richly layered and inventive performance works. The sonic world created in this production is particularly symbolic. According to the production notes, “One of the striking aspects of colonialism is Europe's incomprehension of Africa—not being able to hear the very clear language that was being spoken by Africa to Europe. There is the sense of language breaking down into nonsense, which is what Dadaism was very much about.” Pulling from this Dada tradition, the libretto draws from an equally wide net of sources, from Frantz Fanon to Tristan Tzara to Setswana proverbs, cut up and reassembled. The score, composed by **Philip Miller** and **Thuthuka Sibisi**, uses collage as a tool to reflect the many varied, unpredictable sounds that commingle during wartime, here including traditional African songs, European compositions, war chants, and percussive interjections.

As Kentridge said of the work, *The Head & the Load* is “about all the contradictions and paradoxes of colonialism that were heated and compressed by the circumstances of the war. ... The colonial logic towards the Black participants could be summed up: ‘Lest their actions merit recognition, their deeds must not be recorded.’ *The Head & the Load* aims to recognize and record.”

The Head & the Load premiered in 2018 at the Tate Modern's Turbine Hall and was designed to fit the venue's 70-meter-long stage. Presented this season in its West Coast premiere, Cal Performances will be showcasing Kentridge's massive creation across four performances at the newly remodeled arena of the Henry J. Kaiser Center for the Arts in Oakland, a venue well suited for the unique production demands of the work.

This presentation inaugurates a major new Cal Performances initiative to champion Kentridge's interdisciplinary works by presenting a distinct program on each of the next five seasons; and builds upon the organization's robust history with the artist, a relationship that has already seen the co-commission and Bay Area premiere of Kentridge's *The Great Yes, The Great No* in 2025, the US premiere of his *SIBYL* in 2023, and Kentridge's role as UC Berkeley campus-wide artist in residence in 2023.

Vienna Philharmonic Residency Unites Masterful Interpreters for Programs Centered on Mahler

Under the baton of superstar conductor and multiple Grammy winner **Yannick Nézet-Séguin**, the storied **Vienna Philharmonic** makes its eagerly awaited return to Cal Performances on March 2–4 under the auspices of the 2027 Maria Manetti Shrem and Elizabeth Segerstrom California Orchestra Residency (which also includes performances at Philharmonic Society of Orange County—the orchestra's only other West Coast performances in 2027). Cal Performances is honored to be the orchestra's most-visited West Coast presenter since 2011. In a reprise visit from its 2025 residency with Nézet-Séguin, the Vienna Philharmonic centers its 2027 Berkeley programs around masterworks by Gustav Mahler, a composer indelibly linked with the city of Vienna as a conductor of the orchestra and onetime director of its subscription series. The residency begins March 2 with a performance of Mahler's Symphony No. 9, the composer's final completed symphony and a profound meditation on mortality, premiered posthumously by the Vienna Philharmonic in 1912. The second evening (March 3) features Mahler's lighter Symphony No. 4, with Bavarian soprano soloist and seasoned Mahler interpreter **Christiane Karg** making her Cal Performances debut, portraying a child's view of heaven in the final movement's song "Das himmlische Leben" ("The Heavenly Life"), plus Prokofiev's brilliant and diabolical Piano Concerto No. 3, featuring the keyboard virtuoso **Yuja Wang**, whose recent accolades as one today's most prominent performers and recording artists in classical music include a 2026 Grammy Award and recognition as one of *Gramophone's* "50 Greatest Classical Pianists on Record" (2024).

The final performance (March 4), which also forms the centerpiece of **Cal Performances' 2027 Gala**, is devoted to Mahler's monumental Symphony No. 2, *Resurrection*. For this program, Karg returns as a soloist and is joined by Latvian mezzo-soprano **Elīna Garanča**, a multiple Echo Klassik Award winner (who also makes her Cal Performances debut during this residency); along with the Grammy-winning **San Francisco Symphony Chorus** led by director **Jenny Wong**.

Of the residency, Cal Performances' Executive and Artistic Director Jeremy Geffen said, "The opportunity to experience this extraordinary orchestra in a residency built around symphonies by Gustav Mahler, onetime director of the Vienna Court Opera—the predecessor of the Vienna State Opera, from which the Vienna Philharmonic still draws its membership—will create incomparable and memorable experiences that combine the exalted musical tradition of this orchestra with some of the most thoughtful and charismatic guest artists of our time."

Dance Series Showcases Broad Range of Standout Creators, Companies, and Concepts

The 2026–27 dance series is infused with verve, vitality, and originality from a number of the world's foremost companies and leading creators. Balancing innovation with tradition, programming includes cross-genre collaborations, compelling storytelling, and dancers of international renown embodying striking choreography as well as interacting with elements of puppetry, theater, and music ranging from classical works of many eras to contemporary hip-hop and electronica.

Leading off the series and the season as a whole (September 25–27), **The Australian Ballet** performs the North American premiere of *Oscar* by **Christopher Wheeldon**, the world-renowned founder of Morphoses/The Wheeldon Company and winner of both a Tony Award and an Olivier Award for his choreography in 2022's *MJ The Musical*, based on the life of Michael Jackson. *Oscar* takes inspiration from the life and literary accomplishments of one of the 19th century's most compelling cultural figures, Oscar Wilde, through visionary choreography, an intricate set and costume designs by the multiple Olivier-winning **Jean-Marc Puissant**, and an orchestral score by the wide-ranging stage, film, and opera composer (and frequent Wheeldon collaborator) **Joby Talbot**, performed live by the **Berkeley Symphony Orchestra**. In its first West Coast visit in more than a decade, The Australian Ballet explores themes of romance, sacrifice, and forbidden love. Fittingly, the performance represents the first of six artistic programs under Cal Performances' signature *Illuminations* series, this season

centered on the theme of “Innocence & Experience.” (See more in the *Illuminations* section below.)

On the lighter side of dance with a literary flair, legendary American company and longtime Cal Performances artistic partner the **Mark Morris Dance Group** performs the world premiere of a new Cal Performances co-commission, *Holidayland* (December 11–13), with a story by **R.L. Stine** (author of the beloved *Goosebumps* series of spooky children’s novels), a score by acclaimed composer **Nico Muhly** performed live by the **MMDG Music Ensemble**, and a spell-binding visual world conceived by Obie Award-winning scenic designer **Allen Moyer**. The fifteenth Mark Morris world premiere by Cal Performances over a nearly four-decade-long relationship, the family-friendly, nondenominational holiday program brings to life the tale of a magic village that bursts into light, music, and dancing one day each year.

In a bold and incisive meeting of music and dance, the internationally acclaimed, Oakland-born composer and musician **Ambrose Akinmusire** joins forces on trumpet and electronics with adventurous Canadian American choreographer **Aszure Barton**, known for mining complex emotional terrain in works such as her *Mere Mortals* for San Francisco Ballet in 2024. Their collaboration *A a | a B : B E N D* (December 4–5) is a full-length work in which dancers and a musician (Akinmusire himself) share the stage. *B E N D* draws from the principle of “unlearning”—the attempt to undo dominant views and patterns in favor of a more intimate practice of trust, awareness, and expansion—and oscillates between the up close and personal and the vastly distanced and massive, conjuring puzzling beauty and raw, physical emotion.

In another compelling blend of art forms, **Compagnie Hervé Koubi**, led by its daring French-Algerian founder/choreographer Hervé Koubi, performs *Sol Invictus* (February 5–6). Named for the ancient Roman “Unconquered Sun” deity, *Sol Invictus* is a call for unity in which, in Koubi’s words, “sun and dance will emerge victorious.” With boundless energy and breathtaking spins and jumps that seem to ignore the law of gravity, the company’s dancers blend contemporary movement with the athleticism of hip-hop and the precision of martial arts, all set to a driving, cinematic score featuring works by Steve Reich, Mikael Karlsson, and Maxime Bodson. As Koubi stated, “I want to make the stage a playground ... to welcome a dance that laughs, a dance that comes from the heart, from the mouth, from the hips, from the feet on a burning floor.”

The ever-popular **MOMIX** brings one of its classic programs to Cal Performances for the first time with *Botanica* (May 7–9), an update of its 2009 hit propelled by a soundtrack ranging from birdsong to Vivaldi’s *The Four Seasons* and brimming with extraordinary costumes, giant puppetry, visual projections, and interactive lighting. In *Botanica*, the stage becomes a living terrarium, with dancers transforming into humming wasps, glowing marigolds, and other flora and fauna, embodying the energy that drives the natural world. In another program combining dance with pure delight, the all-male performers of **Les Ballets Trockadero de Monte Carlo** (February 27–28) blend serious ballet technique with slapstick antics in lovingly satirical takes on the tropes of classical ballet repertory. The Trocks’ layering of physical comedy with technical skill at once celebrates and skewers the ballets that aficionados thought they knew and that newcomers are initiated into through the universal language of laughter. As the company expressed, “Comedy is serious business and ballet even more so.”

Rounding out the 2026–27 dance series are two storied companies that are steeped in tradition yet always surprising and invigorating. Bringing its 75th Anniversary Tour program to Berkeley over Valentine’s Day weekend (February 13–14), **Ballet Folklórico de México de Amalia Hernández** proudly draws on Mexico’s regional movement styles, folklore, music, and costumes from pre-Columbian to modern times, delivering a performance experience resplendent with energy, color, grace, and joy. And returning for its annual residency (April 6–11) at Cal Performances—which has been honored to host more of the company’s performances than any presenter outside of its New York home base—**Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater** offers a trademark blend of classic works and premiere performances. One of the most acclaimed dance companies in the world, the Ailey company has been designated a “vital American Cultural Ambassador to the World” by a US congressional resolution, and through its annual residencies at Cal Performances continues its deep connection to Bay Area audiences.

Music Programs Focus on Personal Milestones, Career Achievements

The 2026–27 season’s music programming includes milestone birthday commemorations for three of America’s most widely acclaimed living composers, all early pioneers of Minimalism, who each have developed and refined a signature musical language across decades of creation and myriad forms—chamber and orchestral music, opera, film, dance, and beyond.

First in the fall, Cal Performances presents **Steve Reich** at 90: *A Birthday Celebration* (October 24) in a program that showcases not only the composer’s classic works—including the Pulitzer-

winning Double Sextet and *Electric Counterpoint*, combining live and recorded guitar parts—but also Reich’s ongoing work as a composer, with the West Coast premiere of *In All Your Ways*, co-commissioned by Cal Performances. Two ensembles—more than 20 musicians in all—comprising some of the composer’s foremost interpreters and closest collaborators take on the program: the **Bang on a Can All-Stars**, world-renowned champions of new music for more than three decades; and the next-generation innovators **Ensemble Signal**, conducted by **Brad Lubman**.

Philip Glass also marks his 90th birthday during the 2026–27 season, and in celebration, Cal Performances presents the Complete Philip Glass Piano Etudes (November 20), featuring 10 accomplished pianists from all corners of the music world. Although the composer is perhaps best known for grand-scale works such as the opera *Einstein on the Beach* or the score to the film *Koyaanisqatsi*, these 20 etudes for solo piano, composed over nearly two decades, reveal Glass at his most personal and intimate. Featured pianists include the composer and acclaimed Glass interpreter **Timo Andres**; the highly regarded jazz and classical artist (and regular Andres piano duo partner) **Aaron Diehl**; up-and-coming young Mexican recitalist **Daniela Liebman**; and the lauded jazz keyboard virtuoso, composer, and MacArthur “Genius” Grant recipient **Jason Moran**. (Note: Philip Glass will not be present for this performance.)

This season also marks the 80th birthday of composer **John Adams**, whose work will be celebrated in a program by Cal Performances’ 2026–27 Ensemble in Residence, the Attacca Quartet. (February 28; see more in the Ensemble in Residence section below.)

Beyond birthday milestones, the 2026–27 music programming recognizes career highlights from three giants in their respective genres. Jazz trumpet virtuoso and Pulitzer-winning composer **Wynton Marsalis** returns to Berkeley (February 19) during his final tour as managing and artistic director of the **Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra**, after nearly 40 years at the helm of the big band famed for its unique blend of New Orleans swing, gutbucket blues, Ellingtonian precision, and pure technical skill. In another momentous leave-taking, folk and pop singing legend **Judy Collins** appears in *Sweet Judy Blue Eyes: The Farewell Tour* (October 18), sharing favorite songs, stories, and reflections from her influential career spanning more than six decades. Lastly, in not a farewell but a long-awaited debut of sorts—a first for Cal Performances audiences—the beloved viola da gamba master, early-music explorer/scholar, and ensemble director **Jordi Savall** expands upon the early-music format of past Berkeley appearances and looks to repertoire of a later era to present Beethoven’s early 19th-century

Symphonies Nos. 3 and 5 on period instruments at the helm of a full orchestra, his **Le Concert des Nations** (April 23). Earlier this decade, Savall and Le Concert des Nations released recordings of the complete Beethoven symphonic cycle on period instruments—receiving plaudits in the international press for the freshness and brio of their approach, as well as their faithful adherence to Beethoven’s own tempi and dynamic markings—but this is the first time Cal Performances audiences will experience their interpretation of these two iconic works fully in concert.

Attacca Quartet, Ensemble in Residence

Cal Performances welcomes a group at the vanguard of a new generation of American classical musicians as its 2026–27 Ensemble in Residence: New York’s Grammy Award-winning **Attacca Quartet**. Since its founding as a Juilliard student ensemble two decades ago, Attacca Quartet has drawn critical and popular praise for its insatiable curiosity for both the established and the new and intriguing. The quartet is equally at home in classics by the likes of Haydn and Beethoven and chart-topping pop by Billie Eilish and Finneas—along with works in other modern genres like contemporary classical, electronica, and video game music.

Attacca Quartet is also well-known for its collaborations with several of today’s leading composers, including Pulitzer winner **Caroline Shaw**, with whom they share two Grammy Awards (won in 2020 and 2023). In the first performance in its Cal Performances residency (January 31), the members of the quartet perform works by Shaw and are also joined on stage by the composer, on both voice and violin.

In the second program of its residency (February 28), Attacca Quartet commemorates the February 80th-birthday milestone of another Pulitzer-winning composer-collaborator—and longtime Berkeley resident—**John Adams**. The quartet has been performing Adams’ compositions since its founding and, over the course of its career, has also inspired a number of his works. Fittingly, this performance will feature the Bay Area premiere of a new Cal Performances co-commission by Adams, *Iron Jig*, an intense work inspired by the Baroque gigue and Irish jig traditions. The program also includes selections from Adams’ first work for string quartet, *John’s Book of Alleged Dances*; as well as one of Beethoven’s iconic “late quartets,” the String Quartet in A minor, Op. 132, with the famed, stately “Heiliger Dankgesang” movement of thanksgiving at its structural and emotional core.

Beyond these two concert programs, the quartet will expand its 2026–27 residency through campus engagement events, to be announced at a later date.

Early Music Series Revels in Vocal Masterworks, Storied Singers

The 2026–27 early music series offers a range of Baroque vocal masterworks, performed throughout the season in on-stage meetings of world-renowned singers and instrumentalists. As contemporary composer Jake Heggie wrote in the pages of *Gramophone*, “The staggering, joyful artistry of **Joyce DiDonato** reminds us that in any generation there are a few giants. ... Joyce sings and the world is suddenly brighter. She compels us to listen actively, to hear things anew.” The multiple Grammy Award-winning mezzo-soprano brings her singular warm tone and prodigious dramatic gifts back to Zellerbach Hall (February 10), joined by premier Italian period-music ensemble (and longtime DiDonato collaborators) **Il Pomo d’Oro Orchestra and Choir**, in a concert performance anchored by Purcell’s only true opera, *Dido and Aeneas*, an ageless tale of ill-fated lovers. The concert also includes another outstanding Baroque-era tragedy, Carissimi’s *Jephte*, an operatic *scena* performed by tenor **Nicholas Phan**, who will also sing the role of Aeneas in *Dido and Aeneas*.

That same month (February 21), in another early-music vocal masterpiece of awe-inspiring impact and scale (double orchestra, double chorus, and soloists): J. S. Bach’s crowning masterpiece, the *St. Matthew Passion*. Performed in its 300th anniversary year by two ensembles that are at the forefront of international Baroque vocal and instrumental performance—the **Monteverdi Choir** and **English Baroque Soloists**, the production also features the talents of conductor **Masaaki Suzuki** and a cast of soloists including tenor **Nick Pritchard** as the Evangelist and bass **Florian Störtz** as Jesus.

Returning for its annual, and always highly anticipated, Berkeley engagement is **The English Concert**, led from the harpsichord by conductor **Harry Bicket**, with a concert presentation of Handel’s 1726 opera *Alessandro* (April 25). The lively and charming work explores a love triangle of Macedonian conqueror Alexander the Great (sung here by French countertenor and Handel specialist **Christophe Dumaux**) and the two women vying for his affection: Lisaura (American soprano **Joëlle Harvey**) and Rossane (Australian mezzo-soprano **Xenia Puskarz Thomas**).

***Illuminations* Reflects on “Innocence & Experience”**

Cal Performances' annual *Illuminations*—a series of performances, lectures, and conversations—connects extraordinary artistry with groundbreaking scholarship to explore pressing topics of today. In 2026–27, *Illuminations: “Innocence & Experience”* explores how these intertwined forces transform each other and influence our sense of the world. The six performance programs in *Illuminations* tell poignant and transformative stories—of youthful idealism facing power, beauty shadowed by vulnerability, bodies carrying the weight of history—inviting participants to cultivate a deeper understanding of the forces shaping our humanity.

See above for descriptions of five of the six *Illuminations* performance programs of the 2026–27 season: The Australian Ballet (September 25–27), William Kentridge's *The Head & the Load* (November 12–15), Ambrose Akinmusire & Aszure Barton's *A a | a B : B E N D* (December 4–5), Compagnie Hervé Koubi's *Sol Invictus* (February 5–6), and Joyce DiDonato with Il Pomo d'Oro Orchestra and Chorus in Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas* (February 10).

The sixth *Illuminations* performance event, *James Reese Europe and the Absence of Ruin* (November 21), is the latest in a series of grand-scale, multidisciplinary productions from jazz pianist, composer, and MacArthur Fellow **Jason Moran** (who is also featured as pianist for the Philip Glass performance on November 20), joined on stage by his **Harlem Hellfighters** ensemble—longtime Bandwagon bandmates **Tarus Mateen** (bass) and **Nasheet Waits** (drums), plus a seven-piece horn section—with visuals by Oscar-nominated cinematographer **Bradford Young**. The program explores the life and legacy of James Reese Europe, the underrecognized Black American composer, bandleader, and World War I-era US military officer who landed in France with the celebrated, all-Black 369th Infantry Regiment (the “Harlem Hellfighters”) on New Year's Day 1918. Through their fierce fighting, the Harlem Hellfighters contributed to breaking the stalemate on the Western Front; and with their musical performances, they helped popularize the new spirit of jazz in a war-torn France fascinated with Black American culture.

Illuminations lectures, conversations, and other events are developed in partnership with *Illuminations* artists as well as UC Berkeley scholars, including members of the *Illuminations* Faculty Advisory Committee, whose wide-ranging expertise provides a multitude of perspectives and intersections with lines of academic inquiry. Additional events surrounding the core performances will be announced at a later date.

Golden Bear Circle Program Expands,

Bringing \$10 Premium Seats to More UC Berkeley Students

Among the myriad ways that Cal Performances contributes to the future of the performing arts, the organization invests actively in cultivating audiences of today and tomorrow, with a particular emphasis on expanding arts access to young people and students. As an integral part of one of the world's leading public universities, Cal Performances models the vital role the arts play in a well-rounded education and prioritizes initiatives that encourage students to attend world-class performances.

Approximately 45,000 enrolled UC Berkeley students have access to deeply discounted tickets through multiple Cal Performances programs, the most comprehensive of which guarantees 50% off all ticket prices for any presented event. While this and other access programs remain available (see full range of offerings at calperformances.org/ucb-students), the 2026–27 season marks a significant expansion of the organization's popular Golden Bear Circle program, which provides UC Berkeley students with access to premium seats at selected performances for just \$10 per ticket. Initially launched in 2022 providing \$10 tickets to 10–15 performances annually, the program now expands to include 40 presentations—making the best seats in the house available at a substantial discount for half of the events of Cal Performances' season.

Of the expansion, Jeremy Geffen said, "I am grateful to outstanding support from the Koret Foundation, which makes this exceptional access possible. That we will be able to impact even more UC Berkeley students through the power of live performance is extremely gratifying. Our Golden Bear Circle program works alongside additional discount and engagement opportunities to bring UCB students opportunities no other university can, and ensures that encounters with the performing arts are an integral part of their world-class public education."

Ticket Information

Subscription packages for Cal Performances' 2026–27 season go on sale to the general public beginning Tuesday, May 5, at noon PDT, and single tickets go on sale Tuesday, August 11. More details can be found at calperformances.org.

PRESS CONTACT:

Louisa Spier Media Relations Manager
Cal Performances
lspier@calperformances.org
(510) 643-6714