

Jeremy Geffen
Executive and Artistic Director

Jeremy Geffen, Executive and Artistic Director, provides the overall artistic vision and executive leadership of Cal Performances, UC Berkeley's performing arts presenter. Geffen is motivated by the deeply-held belief that the performing arts hold unparalleled opportunities—for inspiration, for joy, for understanding, for community, for well-being, and for personal evolution—for all who experience them. In his role, he strives to combine the work of the greatest performers of our time with the unique intellectual resources of UC Berkeley.

Impact at Cal Performances

Geffen joined Cal Performances as Executive and Artistic Director in April of 2019. In his first year, Geffen led Cal Performances in the development and launch of what is now a trademark of Cal Performances' innovative programming each season: *Illuminations*. Through a combination of performances and public programming, the series puts groundbreaking UC Berkeley scholarship into conversation with world-class music, dance, and theater to shed light on pressing topics that have the power to shape the future and transform our understanding of the world. *Illuminations* themes have included "Place & Displacement," "Human & Machine," "Individual & Community," and "Fractured History," among others.

Before the completion of Geffen's first year at Cal Performances, the COVID-19 pandemic caused an unexpected halt to live performances. During this challenging and unprecedented period, Geffen helped the organization to quickly pivot by producing *Cal Performances at Home*, an entirely new digital streaming model for performances that enabled the organization to maintain community with patrons and arts-lovers—across six continents, in 36 countries, and in 49 US states—as well as support artists and staff despite the physical closure.

Throughout his tenure with the organization, Geffen has consistently upheld the high quality of artistry presented on Cal Performances' stages, curating an unmatched range of performances by world-renowned figures, as well as by rising stars new to Cal Performances audiences. In recent seasons, he has played a critical role in providing new opportunities for Bay Area audiences to deepen their connection with a number of international artistic thought leaders via artist residencies. Season-long artists in residence have included vocalist and composer Angélique Kidjo, visual artist and stage director William Kentridge (whom Cal Performances brought into a UC Berkeley campus-wide role of artist in residence), pianist Mitsuko Uchida, and soprano Julia Bullock. He also played a principal role in renewing an eight-year-long residency with The Joffrey Ballet; developed the Maria Manetti Shrem and Elizabeth Segerstrom California Orchestra Residency for Cal Performances and the Philharmonic Society of Orange County, featuring the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra with conductor Yannick Nézet-Séguin; established a multi-year commitment to The English Concert performing a series of Handel operas and oratorios with conductor Harry Bicket; and has continued the organization's foundational commitments to Mark Morris Dance Group, as well as Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater's annual week-long residency, which was recently celebrated as the

centerpiece of Cal Performances' 2024 gala. Other notable performances during his time have included the US premiere of *SIBYL* (part of William Kentridge's residency); the West Coast premiere of American Modern Opera Company' production of Messiaen's *Harawi*; many commissions and world premieres in both dance and music; and the debuts of artists of exceptional promise, new to the Bay Area

In 2024, Geffen guided the organization in redefining its mission and vision and charting its next five years via an extensive strategic planning process. The resulting plan identified five areas of focus for Cal Performances in its work to expand reach and impact: artistic leadership, which includes broadening the range of perspectives and voices reflected onstage; audience development, particularly for Bay Area arts patrons and UC Berkeley students; university integration; financial strength; and people, systems, and venues, which outlines meaningful investments in Cal Performances' staff, trustees, and infrastructure.

As he leads Cal Performances into the future, Geffen also contributes his expertise to the broader arts community through his participation on a variety of committees. He currently serves on the advisory entities for the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center's Bowers Program (previously CMS Two); on the executive committee of the Avery Fisher Artist Program, including the Avery Fisher Career Grant and the Avery Fisher Prize; and on the advisory boards of the Fondazione delli Arti Venezia and the National Advisory Council of the Music Academy of the West.

Background

Before joining Cal Performances in 2019, Geffen spent more than two decades as an arts administrator, and many more years as an arts enthusiast. Immediately prior to coming to UC Berkeley, he served as senior director and artistic adviser at Carnegie Hall, where he was responsible for the overall program planning and thematic development of the approximately 160 performances that annually comprised the concert season, as well as the creation of a wide range of audience education programs.

Prior to his appointment at Carnegie Hall in 2007, Geffen was the vice president of artistic administration for the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra (2005–07) and the artistic administrator of the New York Philharmonic (2000–05). From January 1998 until September 2000, he was the associate artistic administrator for the Aspen Music Festival and School where, in addition to the scope of his regular activities, he taught courses in music at Colorado Mountain College, hosted a weekly classical music program on KAJX Radio, and, at age 26, became the Aspen Institute's youngest-ever seminar moderator.

Born in Cape Town, South Africa and raised in Newport Beach, California, Geffen first developed a love for performing arts around age 13, when he had the opportunity to learn to play the viola through a music program at his middle school. In music, he found a powerful medium through which to communicate inchoate emotions. Geffen went on to study viola performance at university; when an injury prevented him from playing professionally, he channeled his passion into arts administration so that he might continue to inspire personal connection to the arts, build community, and support impactful art and artists through the creation of meaningful opportunities to engage with music, dance, and theater.