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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: April 2, 2021

[Cal Performances at Home online press kit](#)

For a complete list of all *Cal Performances at Home* performances currently available visit [calperformances.org/buy](http://calperformances.org/buy)

**CAL PERFORMANCES AT UC BERKELEY PRESENTS  
BANG ON A CAN PERFORMING JULIA WOLFE'S *STEEL HAMMER*  
AS PART OF THE *CAL PERFORMANCES AT HOME*  
PERFORMING ARTS STREAMING SERIES  
THURSDAY, MAY 6 AT 7PM (PDT)**

**This performance is part of Cal Performances' *Illuminations: Fact or Fiction* series, and will be viewable on demand for three months, through August 4, 2021**

**Spring 2021 streaming series features a digital watch party on select Thursday evenings through June 10, 2021**

**Berkeley, April 2, 2021** — Cal Performances at UC Berkeley presents **Bang on a Can** in a virtual premiere of a new film, *Steel Hammer*, based on the acclaimed oratorio by the Bang on a Can's co-founder, Pulitzer Prize winner **Julia Wolfe**, debuting with an interactive digital watch party on May 6, 2021 at 7pm (PDT). In *Steel Hammer*, Wolfe creates a musical combination of every version of the traditional American folktale of John Henry, weaving together more than 200 versions of the story into an expansive allegory about the human cost of industrialization and the role of perspective in storytelling. A work that explores the historical truths—and untruths—of the industrial age, *Steel Hammer* is presented as part of Cal Performances' *Illuminations: Fact or Fiction* series, which investigates the ways artists and scholars balance the art of storytelling with questions of historical accuracy, exploring the tension between “creative license” and what happens when alterations of fact impact our ability to tell the difference between what is true and what is false.

Following its debut, Julia Wolfe's *Steel Hammer* will be available for viewing on demand through August 4, 2021. The performance is one of 12 newly produced, full-length performances in the Spring 2021 *Cal Performances at Home* performing arts streaming series, a continuation of the ambitious series launched in fall 2020. Filmed on stages all over the world—in renowned venues and

recording studios in the locations where the artists are sheltering in place—all artists currently planned for the spring series were originally booked to perform in person at UC Berkeley as part of Cal Performances’ 2020–21 live season, which was cancelled due to the coronavirus pandemic. The debut of each Spring performance, on select Thursday evenings through June 10, 2021, will be celebrated with a digital watch party accompanied by participatory live chat. Every performance (except where noted) will be viewable on demand for three months following its debut. A complete list of all *Cal Performances at Home* performances currently available can be found at [calperformances.org/buy](https://calperformances.org/buy). The performances will be supplemented with free artist talks, interviews, lectures, and panel discussions shared on the **Beyond the Stage** web page at [calperformances.org/learn/beyond-the-stage](https://calperformances.org/learn/beyond-the-stage).

**WHO** *Cal Performances at Home* premieres a new film, *Steel Hammer*, based on the acclaimed oratorio by the Bang on a Can’s co-founder, Pulitzer Prize winner Julia Wolfe. In *Steel Hammer*, Wolfe creates a musical combination of every version of the traditional American folktale of John Henry, weaving together more than 200 versions of the story into an expansive allegory about the human cost of industrialization and the role of perspective in storytelling. The music marries folk cadences with driving rhythms in Wolfe’s layered compositional style. The film soundtrack, recorded by the Bang on a Can All-Stars and vocal trio, features hammered dulcimer, mouth harp, bones, clogs, banjo, and metal percussion.

**WHAT** Newly produced, full-length, streaming performance.

**Program:**

Julia Wolfe/ *Steel Hammer*

Bang on a Can All-Stars

Robert Black, *bass*

David Cossin, *percussion*

Vicky Chow, *piano*

Arlen Hiusko, *cello*

Mark Stewart, *electric guitar, mountain dulcimer, harmonica*

Ken Thompson, *clarinets, harmonica*

Molly Netter, *voice*

Rebecca Hargrove, *voice*

Sonya Headlam, *voice*

This performance is part of the [Illuminations: Fact or Fiction](#) series.

**WHEN** Streaming debut Thursday, May 6 at 7pm (PDT). Following the debut, this performance will be available to view on demand for three months until August 4, 2021.

**WHERE** Viewable online, streamed to any device with an internet connection. Access to the event will be provided upon registration. For more information on how to view *Cal Performances at Home*, please visit [calperformances.org/at-home/frequently-asked-questions](https://calperformances.org/at-home/frequently-asked-questions).

**TICKETS** \$15 for a single viewer, \$30 for two viewers, and \$60 per household viewing. \$5 tickets are available for UC Berkeley students.

Tickets are available at [calperformances.org/buy](https://calperformances.org/buy) or by phone at (510) 642-9988.

## **MORE**

**CONTENT:** Video of a conversation between composer Julia Wolfe and Cal Performances executive and artistic director Jeremy Geffen will be available to stream for free beginning at 12pm (PDT) on Monday, May 3 at [calperformances.org/beyond-the-stage](https://calperformances.org/beyond-the-stage).

By the time Julia Wolfe’s *Steel Hammer* debuts on May 6, the *Cal Performances at Home* library of offerings will feature Spring 2021 performances streamable on demand by the **Takács Quartet**, harpsichordist **Mahan Esfahani**, pianist **Mitsuko Uchida**, soprano **Christine Goerke** and pianist **Craig Terry**, pianist **Jeremy Denk**, vocalist **Jazzmeia Horn**, and soprano **Renée Fleming**. For a complete list of all *Cal Performances at Home* performances currently available visit [calperformances.org/buy](https://calperformances.org/buy). All performances are available for three months following their debut date except where indicated.

Nearly 60 *Now, More Than Ever* YouTube playlists of the performing arts, curated by Jeremy Geffen since the beginning of sheltering-in-place orders, can be found at [calperformances.org/nmte](https://calperformances.org/nmte).

**PRESS** Complimentary press passes are available for reviewing journalists. To request a press pass for this performance, please email [publicrelations@calperformances.org](mailto:publicrelations@calperformances.org).

Photos of Julia Wolfe are available to download from the [online press kit](#).

**CALENDAR EDITORS, PLEASE NOTE:**

**CAL PERFORMANCES PRESENTS**

**DEBUT WATCH PARTY**

**Thursday, May 6, 7pm (PDT)**

*Following the debut, this performance will be available to view on demand for three months, from May 7 through August 4, 2021.*

**Bang on a Can**

**Julia Wolfe’s *Steel Hammer***

Bang on a Can All-Stars

Robert Black, *bass*

David Cossin, *percussion*

Vicky Chow, *piano*

Arlen Hlusko, *cello*

Mark Stewart, *electric guitar, mountain dulcimer, harmonica*

Ken Thompson, *clarinets, harmonica*

Molly Netter, *voice*

Rebecca Hargrove, *voice*

Sonya Headlam, *voice*

**Program:**

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