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[Press Room](#)



An image of Vân-Ánh Võ is available for download from the Cal Performances [press room](#).

**CAL PERFORMANCES AT UC BERKELEY PRESENTS
VÂN-ÁNH VÕ AND BLOOD MOON ORCHESTRA
IN THE WORLD PREMIERE OF VÕ'S
SONGS OF STRENGTH
SATURDAY, DECEMBER 4
AT ZELLERBACH PLAYHOUSE**

Part of Cal Performances' *Illuminations*: "Place and Displacement" series this season
Berkeley, November 4, 2021— Cal Performances at UC Berkeley presents composer and multi-instrumentalist **Vân-Ánh Võ** and her **Blood Moon Orchestra** in the world premiere of Võ's *Songs of Strength*, an evening-length musical work that draws upon diverse musical and cultural traditions to explore the immigrant experience, on Saturday, December 4 at 8pm at Zellerbach Playhouse. The concert is part of Cal Performances' *Illuminations*: "Place and Displacement" programming this

season, which explores effects of migration and gentrification on individuals and communities through a wide variety of performances, public programs, and academic encounters.

Originally from Vietnam and based in Northern California for nearly 20 years, Võ is a virtuoso performer of the 16-string *dàn tranh* (zither), as well as an ensemble leader and Emmy Award-winning composer. She last performed at Cal Performances in March 2018 with Kronos Quartet and Rinde Eckert in Jonathan Berger's *My Lai*. With this performance of *Songs of Strength*, she makes her Cal Performances debut as a leader.

Võ's *Songs of Strength* celebrates the voices and struggles of women and immigrants by placing the music from her native culture in conversation with contemporary sounds from around the world. The suite of new music features Iranian singer/songwriter **Mahsa Vahdat**, rapper **Kev Choice**, and breakdancer **Tunjie**, plus Võ's multicultural Blood Moon Orchestra—with texts in English, Farsi, and Vietnamese. The music and lyrics highlight struggles for liberation that transcend geographic, ethnic, and temporal boundaries in a search to overcome oppression and social inequality.

Vocalist Mahsa Vahdat was born in Tehran where she earned her BA in Music and studied Persian traditional music, but is barred from performing in her country of birth because of restrictions on female vocal performance. She is a celebrated performer and composer, and this fall was a recipient of a prestigious Hewlett 50 Arts Commission in Folk and Traditional Art. Breakdancer Tunjie performed with Alonzo King LINES Ballet for six years and in 2015 was recognized with a Princess Grace Award. Rapper Kev Choice is an MC, a pianist, producer, composer, educator, and activist who has worked with Michael Franti, Goapele, Too Short, The Coup, Zion I, and Souls of Mischief, and served as Ms. Lauryn Hill's musical director. The Oakland Symphony under music director Michael Morgan commissioned Choice's *Soul Restoration Suite* and the San Francisco Symphony's online series *Currents* featured Choice in a piece he composed.

In the three-movement work *Songs of Strength*, Võ creatively melds narrative styles from different cultures—combining hip hop vocal cadences with the Vietnamese song form *a dao*, a genre sung by women to entertain men; setting texts by Persian poet Rumi alongside Vietnamese poems by Ho Xuan Huong; and basing a politically charged musical section on the *Cheo*, a form of Vietnamese opera used as social and political satire, to re-contextualize traditional and contemporary practices.

This performance is part of Cal Performances' *Illuminations* programming this season exploring the theme of "Place and Displacement". The composers, performers, and collaborating artists in "Place and Displacement" presentations have each been touched by the devastating but also catalyzing effects of migration, exile, dislocation, and separation, on both hyper-local and international scales. In expansive presentations, their works explore loss and renewal, disempowerment and hope, and seek paths forward for reclaiming and celebrating the vital culture and connections that can fall victim to political and social upheaval. Learn more about *Illuminations*: "Place and Displacement" events and programs at calperformances.org

A video of Vân-Ánh Võ in conversation with Cal Performances Executive and Artistic Director Jeremy Geffen will be available on the [Beyond the Stage web page](#) at least one week before the performance. A Cal Performances-produced video about Võ in which she discusses the art, cultures, and traditions that inspire her and introduces viewers to the traditional, hand-constructed Vietnamese instruments featured in three of her compositions can be viewed on the [Songs of Strength event page](#).

Ticket Information

Tickets for *Vân-Ánh Võ: Songs of Strength* on Saturday, December 4 at 8pm at Zellerbach Playhouse are \$56 (prices subject to change). Half-price tickets are available for UC Berkeley students. Tickets are available through the Ticket Office at Zellerbach Hall, at (510) 642-9988, at calperformances.org, and at the door. For more information about discounts, go to calperformances.org/discounts.

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CALENDAR EDITORS, PLEASE NOTE:

Saturday, December 4, 8pm

New Music

Vân-Ánh Võ and Blood Moon Orchestra
Songs of Strength (World Premiere)

Zellerbach Playhouse
Bancroft Way at Dana Street,
UC Berkeley campus

Program: Originally from Vietnam and based in Northern California for nearly 20 years, Vân-Ánh Võ is a virtuoso performer of the 16-string *đàn tranh* (zither), as well as an ensemble leader and Emmy Award-winning composer. Cal Performances audiences already know Võ through her many

collaborations with Kronos Quartet—most recently performing in Jonathan Berger’s *My Lai*. In this, the world premiere of her latest project, she celebrates the voices and struggles of women and immigrants by placing the music from her native culture in conversation with contemporary sounds from around the world. Võ’s *Songs of Strength* features a collection of voices—Iranian singer/songwriter Mahsa Vahdat, rapper Kev Choice, and breakdancer Tunjie, plus Võ’s multicultural Blood Moon Orchestra—with texts in English, Persian, and Vietnamese.

Tickets: \$56 (prices subject to change)

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