

For Immediate Release: April 20, 2022
2022-23 Season Press Kit

CAL PERFORMANCES AT UC BERKELEY ANNOUNCES ITS 2022–23 SEASON

ILLUMINATIONS: “HUMAN AND MACHINE”

Season-long theme connects world-class artists with scholarship at UC Berkeley, exploring interactions between technology, creative expression, and communication

Series Includes Six Performances:

Harpsichordist/fortepianist **Kristian Bezuidenhout** in his Cal Performances recital debut;
Colin Currie Group and **Synergy Vocals** performing the music of **Steve Reich**;
Sō Percussion performing recent works, including
multiple Bay Area premieres; the US premiere of **William Kentridge**’s *SIBYL*;
the West Coast premiere of **Michel van der Aa**’s *Blank Out*, featuring soprano **Miah Persson**; and
the Bay Area premiere of Octavia E. Butler’s *Parable of the Sower*, an opera by the daughter-mother
creative team of **Toshi Reagon** and **Bernice Johnson Reagon**

US PREMIERE OF ACCLAIMED SOUTH AFRICAN ARTIST AND DIRECTOR WILLIAM KENTRIDGE’S SIBYL

Performed in two parts, the work—a chamber opera that also incorporates film and animation—
explores the human desire and inability to know the future by examining the myth of the
Cumaen Sibyl through a modern lens

Cal Performances’ 2023 Gala

On March 17, the opening night of *SIBYL*, with Kentridge as honored guest

WEST COAST PREMIERE OF STEVE REICH’S TRAVELER’S PRAYER, A CAL PERFORMANCES CO-COMMISSION

Part of **Colin Currie Group** and **Synergy Vocals**’ *A Steve Reich Celebration*, honoring **Reich**’s 86th
birthday, and featuring two other landmark works by the composer:

Music for 18 Musicians and *Tebillim*

20 PREMIERES SEASON-WIDE

Dance works include the California premiere of **Kenrick “H2O” Sandy** and
Michael “Mikey J” Asante’s *Blak Whyte Gray: A Hip-Hop Dance Triple Bill*,
performed by **Boy Blue**; and the Bay Area premiere of **Mark Morris**’
The Look of Love, danced by **Mark Morris Dance Group** to songs by Burt Bacharach

In Music, **Sō Percussion** performs Bay Area premieres by **Angélica Negrón** and **Nathalie Joachim**, plus the West Coast premiere of *Let the Soil Play Its Simple Part*, a collaboration with Pulitzer Prize-winning composer **Caroline Shaw**, who also performs as guest vocalist; the **Danish String Quartet** performs the Bay Area premiere of a new work by **Anna Thorvaldsdóttir**, co-commissioned by Cal Performances for the quartet's ongoing Doppelgänger Project; and harpsichordist **Mahan Esfahani** performs the US premiere of **Brett Dean's** *ByrdSong Studies*

In Theater/Opera, the season features the US premiere of **William Kentridge's** *SIBYL*; the West Coast premiere of **Michel van der Aa's** *Blank Out*; and the Bay Area premiere of Octavia E. Butler's *Parable of the Sower*, an opera by **Toshi Reagon** and **Bernice Johnson Reagon**

**VIENNA PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA RETURNS
WITH CONDUCTOR CHRISTIAN THIELEMANN**

for three concerts of symphonic masterworks including Richard Strauss' *Alpine Symphony*, Bruckner's Eighth Symphony, and works by Brahms, Debussy, Mendelssohn, and Schoenberg

RISING-STAR ARTISTS MAKE THEIR CAL PERFORMANCES DEBUTS

including soprano **Ying Fang**, cellist **Zlatomir Fung**, pianist **Seong-Jin Cho**, violinists **Alexi Kenney** and **Rachell Ellen Wong**, and UK hip-hop dance theater troupe **Boy Blue**

2022–23 SEASON OPENING WEEKEND

Miami City Ballet in George Balanchine's *Jewels* opens the season, Friday–Sunday, September 23–25 at Zellerbach Hall, and the **Dover Quartet** makes its Cal Performances in-person debut at Hertz Hall, Sunday, September 25

**PARTNERSHIP WITH THE UK'S ESTEEMED EARLY-MUSIC ENSEMBLE
THE ENGLISH CONCERT CONTINUES IN ITS SECOND SEASON**

with a performance of Handel's oratorio *Solomon*, featuring the **Clarion Choir** and guest soloists; mezzo-soprano **Ann Hallenberg** makes her Cal Performances debut in the title role

**ESA-PEKKA SALONEN RETURNS TO CAL PERFORMANCES
WITH THE SAN FRANCISCO SYMPHONY**

forging a closer connection between this renowned musical institution and Berkeley audiences

Berkeley, CA, April 20, 2022—Cal Performances' board of trustees co-chairs Jeffrey MacKie-Mason and Lance Nagel, and executive and artistic director Jeremy Geffen, today announce the

organization's 2022–23 season, offering Berkeley audiences the opportunity to experience more than 70 live music, dance, and theater performances. The season's programming celebrates legendary performers whose vision has transformed artistic practices in a wide variety of styles and genres, as well as emerging innovators who are expanding the work of veteran masters. Cal Performances supports the next generation of art through the creation and programming of new works, including three Cal Performances co-commissions and 20 premieres season-wide; as well as through the presentation of rising artists, many of whom are making their Cal Performances debuts. Six of this season's performances—which includes one US premiere, two West Coast premieres and four Bay Area premieres—are part of the third season of *Illuminations* programming, which this year is themed "Human and Machine." Through performances and related campus events, *Illuminations* continues its mission of connecting work of world-class artists to the intellectual life and ongoing scholarship at UC Berkeley.

Guiding the curation of such an eclectic season is Geffen's notion of the arts as a medium for fostering understanding and encouraging empathy. "Many of the works this season will bring joy and delight, and others will inspire reflection and stir debate. We are committed to presenting this wide range of artistic expression on our stages because the performing arts have an unparalleled power to promote empathy," said Geffen. "It is because of our audience's openness and curiosity that we have the privilege of bringing such thought-provoking, adventurous performances to our campus. Our community wants the arts to engage in important conversations, and to bring us together as we see and feel the world through the experiences of others."

***Illuminations*: "Human and Machine"**

Illuminations programming takes advantage of Cal Performances' unique positioning as both a world-class performing arts presenter and a part of one of the world's top-ranked public research universities. Each season, *Illuminations* takes up a pressing theme reflected in both the arts and scholarship, and offers the public a multifaceted understanding of the issue by connecting research on the UC Berkeley campus with world-class performances. This third season of *Illuminations* centers on the theme of "Human and Machine," investigating how technology continues to catalyze and challenge creative expression and human communication. Through programming that includes performances, public events, artist talks, and symposia, "Human and Machine" engages communities on and off campus to examine the evolution of musical instruments, the complex

relationships between technology creators and users, technology’s impact on the creative process, and questions raised by the growing role of artificial intelligence in our society.

“This concept of ‘Human and Machine’ has never been so pertinent to so many,” said Geffen. “Particularly over the course of the pandemic, the rapid expansion of technology’s role in improving communication and in helping us emotionally process unforeseen and, at times, extraordinarily difficult events has made a permanent mark on our human history. Our reliance on technology to communicate throughout time has, for better or worse, influenced how we understand others as well as ourselves. Throughout this *Illuminations* season, we will investigate how technology has contributed to our capacity for self-expression, as well as the potential dangers it may pose.”

Six performances comprise *Illuminations* core programming throughout the season, each one designed to provide a different perspective on the theme of “Human and Machine.” In addition to the US premiere of **William Kentridge**’s *SIBYL*—a chamber opera with elements of film and animation that implies connections between an oracle from ancient myth and modern-day algorithms in a meditation on the human desire to know the future (Mar. 17–19; see more in the [next section](#))—featured performances also include a visit by **Colin Currie Group** and **Synergy Vocals** in a program that celebrates the 86th birthday of Pulitzer Prize-winning composer **Steve Reich**, whose experimentation with electronic sounds, particularly looping and “phasing,” were transformative for 21st-century chamber music (Nov. 3). Their program includes the West Coast premiere of Reich’s *Traveler’s Prayer*, a Cal Performances co-commission (see “*Traveler’s Prayer*” section), as well as *Music for 18 Musicians* (1976) and *Tebillim* (1981).

Later in the season, the daughter-mother creative team of **Toshi Reagon** and **Bernice Johnson Reagon** (who has appeared at Cal Performances multiple times as a founding member of Sweet Honey in the Rock) bring the Bay Area premiere of Octavia E. Butler’s *Parable of the Sower* (May 5–6). The pair describes the work as a “congregational opera,” which Toshi Reagon defines as a performance that encourages everyone present to “occupy a space and an energy together, and to take that togetherness as an opportunity.” Based on Butler’s startlingly prescient 1993 novel and its sequel, the story follows a young Black woman through a dystopian American future wracked by climate change, pharmaceuticals gone awry, and social and political chaos, as she nurtures a new

religion fueled by empathy and collective action. The evening-length, fully staged production is directed by **Eric Ting** and **Signe V. Harriday**.

Other performances provide additional focus for *Illuminations* activities this season:

harpsichordist/fortepianist **Kristian Bezuidenhout** charts the evolution of keyboard technology in his Cal Performances recital debut (Oct. 30); **Sō Percussion** performs new and recent compositions that engage the quartet with musical “machines” and electronic environments (Nov. 12); and **Michel van der Aa**’s chamber opera *Blank Out* explores memory and trauma through storytelling that integrates 3D film projection (Apr. 28–29).

UC Berkeley’s Center for Law & Technology; Center for New Media; Center for New Music and Audio Technologies; Division of Computing, Data Science, and Society; and Graduate School of Journalism are among campus partners who will collaborate with Cal Performances on related *Illuminations* programming and events.

US Premiere of William Kentridge’s *SIBYL* and Opening Night Gala

Acclaimed South African artist **William Kentridge** directs the US premiere of *SIBYL*, Kentridge’s most recent theatrical production, a chamber opera with elements of film and animation (Mar. 17–19). Opening night of the production’s three-performance run will also be marked by a gala to benefit key Cal Performances initiatives, with Kentridge as guest of honor.

Kentridge has been revered in the art world for more than 40 years, primarily for his prints and animated films, which have often reflected the social and political turmoil and the dynamic culture of his home country. In the world of live performing arts, Kentridge has recently been praised for original productions of works by Berg, Mozart, and Shostakovich that have been performed at premiere opera venues the world over, from the Metropolitan Opera to the Opéra National de Paris. Next spring, Berkeley audiences will have the rare opportunity to experience Kentridge’s latest production as part of Cal Performances’ 2022–23 *Illuminations* programming.

Kentridge’s *SIBYL* is inspired by the myth of the Cumaean Sibyl. In ancient tradition, the sibyl lived at the mouth of a cave where pilgrims frequently traveled to ask their most pressing questions. The sibyl wrote her answers on leaves she placed at the mouth of her cave, but before the pilgrims could

retrieve these predictions, the wind scattered the leaves, providing no way to ascertain which answers corresponded to which questions. The work wrestles with the natural desire to know the future and the helplessness humans feel before powers and technologies that obscure that knowledge. The first part of the program, *The Moment Has Gone*, is a short film with live music. The second part, the chamber opera *Waiting for the Sibyl*, is performed by nine vocalists and dancers interacting with Kentridge’s distinctive stage design, which features hand-painted sets, animated ink drawings, swirling projected text, collage, and shadow play. The music for both parts of the production is composed by **Nhlanhla Mahlangu** and **Kyle Shepherd**, and layers South African vocal harmonies with rhythmic chants and piano accompaniment.

Cal Performances’ Gala benefit on Friday, March 17, 2023, featuring Kentridge as honored guest, is an intimate gathering featuring a pre-show cocktail reception and a dinner following the performance. All proceeds support Cal Performances’ artistic initiatives and education programs. Further details will be announced.

West Coast Premiere of Steve Reich’s *Traveler’s Prayer*, a Cal Performances Co-commission Colin Currie Group, an ensemble of percussion, strings, keyboards, and winds, founded by its namesake, acclaimed percussionist **Colin Currie** specifically to perform the music of Pulitzer Prize-winning composer **Steve Reich**, is joined by **Synergy Vocals** as they present the West Coast premiere of a new Reich work, *Traveler’s Prayer* (Nov. 3). Co-commissioned by Cal Performances, *Traveler’s Prayer* is a setting of Old Testament texts from Genesis, Exodus, and Psalms that frequently accompany the traditional Hebrew Traveler’s Prayer; each excerpt deals with the concept of travel. Having created *Traveler’s Prayer* as a deeply reflective work, Reich notes, “While these verses [in *Traveler’s Prayer*] can certainly apply to travels by air, car, or boat, they can also be applied to travel from this world to the next.”

Traveler’s Prayer is one of three compositions performed as part of *A Steve Reich Celebration*, a program that highlights the impact of Reich’s innovations on chamber music in honor of the composer’s 86th birthday. The program provides critical context for Cal Performances’ 2022–23 *Illuminations* theme, “Human and Machine.” (See [“Illuminations” section](#).)

Additional Premieres During the 2022–23 Season

The 2022–23 season features 20 premieres, emphasizing Cal Performances' commitment to supporting new works with the power to transform the canon.

In Dance this season, Cal Performances welcomes UK hip-hop dance theater troupe **Boy Blue** in the California premiere of the Olivier Award-nominated *Blak Whyte Gray: A Hip-Hop Dance Triple Bill* (Dec. 9–11). Created by choreographer **Kenrick 'H20' Sandy MBE** and composer **Michael 'Mikey J' Asante MBE**, the three-part work combines popping, krump, and African dance, set to a layered electronic score. **Mark Morris Dance Group** returns with the Bay Area premiere of Morris' new *The Look of Love: An Evening of Dance to the Music of Burt Bacharach* (Feb. 17–19). Following the success of his Beatles tribute *Pepperland* in the 2018–19 season, Morris again teams up with musical collaborator **Ethan Iverson** in an homage to Burt Bacharach's songs, with music performed live and costumes by **Isaac Mizrahi**.

In New Music, **Sō Percussion** visits for two concerts of new and recent works, many of them by a new generation of composers. The ensemble's first appearance this season (Nov. 12) includes the Bay Area premieres of **Angélica Negrón's** *gone* and *regresar* and **Nathalie Joachim's** *Note to Self*. Pulitzer Prize-winning composer **Caroline Shaw**, who won a Grammy this year for a work she composed for Sō Percussion, joins the quartet for its second visit, in the spring (Apr. 20). For this performance, Shaw appears as guest vocalist in the West Coast premiere of *Let the Soil Play Its Simple Part*, a set of 10 songs she co-composed with the members of the quartet that draws inspiration from James Joyce, ABBA, American roots music, plainchant, Christian hymns, and stories from the Old Testament.

In Chamber Music, the **Danish String Quartet** returns to perform Schubert's *Rosamunde* Quartet and the Bay Area premiere of a new work by Icelandic composer **Anna Thorvaldsdottir**, a Cal Performances co-commission (Apr. 14). The concert continues the ensemble's ongoing *Doppelgänger* Project, a three-season partnership that pairs Schubert late string quartets with newly co-commissioned works inspired by the Schubert compositions. New string quartets by Bent Sørensen and Lotta Wennäkoski are also part of this project during Cal Performances' current 2021–22 season.

In Early Music, harpsichordist **Mahan Esfahani** performs the US premiere of *ByrdSong Studies*, a new composition written for solo harpsichord by Australian composer **Brett Dean**, currently serving as Composer in Residence for the London Philharmonic Orchestra. Dean's *ByrdSong Studies* incorporates prerecorded voices and celebrates English Renaissance composer William Byrd's influential style and the transgressive mass settings he wrote for Catholic services during the Protestant Reformation.

In Theater and Opera, Cal Performances presents the US premiere of **William Kentridge's** chamber opera *SIBYL* (Mar. 17–19; see "[Illuminations: 'Human and Machine'](#)") section.) In addition, composer and producer **Michel van der Aa** brings the West Coast premiere of his genre-defying new chamber opera *Blank Out*, a meditation on tragedy, memory, and loss that blurs reality and recollection (Apr. 28–29). Soprano **Miah Persson** is the sole performer onstage, and throughout the work, she interacts with a video of her character's grown son (baritone **Roderick Williams**), sings along with layered recordings of her own voice, and films herself as she navigates a miniature set, the imagery projected in real time to create the 3D backdrop that she inhabits onstage. Additional premieres in theater and opera include the Bay Area premiere of Octavia E. Butler's *Parable of the Sower*, an opera by **Toshi Reagon** and **Bernice Johnson Reagon**, (May 5–6: see "[Illuminations: 'Human and Machine'](#)") section.)

Along with the premieres listed above, additional premieres are as follows. In Dance, **Eifman Ballet** performs the West Coast premiere of **Boris Eifman's** *Russian Hamlet*. In Recital, cellist **David Finckel** and pianist **Wu Han** perform the California premiere of **Pierre Jalbert's** *Ephemeral Objects*; and violinist **Alexi Kenney** performs the California (in-person) premieres of **Paul Wiancko's** Nocturne from *X Suite*, and new works by emerging composers **Salina Fisher** and **Angélica Negrón**. In Early Music, the **Tallis Scholars** perform the West Coast premiere of **Nico Muhly's** *Rough Notes*. In New Music, **Colin Currie Group** and **Synergy Vocals** perform the West Coast premiere of **Steve Reich's** *Traveler's Prayer*, and **Eco Ensemble** performs the world premiere of **Edmund Campion's** *The Velvet Algorithm* and US premiere of **Toshio Hosokawa's** *Voyage V*.

Christian Thielemann Leads the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra

The **Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra** returns to Zellerbach Hall for the first time since 2014 with longtime collaborator **Christian Thielemann** on the podium, for three programs of symphonic

masterworks that traverse Austro-German Romanticism, with a splash of French Impressionism. Program highlights include Schoenberg's *Transfigured Night* and Strauss' *An Alpine Symphony* (Mar. 7); Mendelssohn's *Hebrides Overture*, Debussy's *La mer*, and Brahms' Second Symphony (Mar. 8); and Bruckner's sweeping Eighth Symphony, a signature showpiece for the orchestra (Mar. 9).

Rising-Star Artists Make Their Cal Performances Debuts

Several young recitalists, many of them recent competition winners who are performing in concert halls the world over, will make their Cal Performances debuts this season. "One of the best things Cal Performances can do for the arts and arts-lovers is give opportunities to performers and creators early in their careers," said Geffen. "By extending that invitation, that faith, Cal Performances provides a platform to inspire new artists whose fresh perspectives help to expand and mold their genres for current and future generations. To experience these artists' performances is to heighten our artistic sensibilities and our understanding of what is possible within the traditional art forms we love."

Lyric soprano **Ying Fang** sings a program of songs by Schubert, Schumann, Mahler, Richard Strauss, and others (Nov. 6). Award-winning cellist **Zlatomir Fung** performs an eclectic program that matches a repertoire staple by Beethoven with an arrangement of Ives songs and contemporary works by **Judith Weir** (Nov. 20); his program concludes with a masterful cello sonata imbued with rich blues sonorities, composed by George Walker. Highlights of pianist **Seong-Jin Cho**'s Berkeley debut include Brahms' *Handel Variations* and Schumann's *Symphonic Etudes*, Op. 13 (Dec. 8).

Two violinists appearing at Cal Performances for the first time bring imaginative and varied programs to Hertz Hall. **Alexi Kenney**'s recital, titled *Shifting Ground*, matches movements from J.S. Bach's Sonatas and Partitas for solo violin with new compositions by fresh voices in contemporary music: **Du Yun**, **Samuel Adams**, **Reena Esmail**, and **Angélica Negrón** (Feb. 26). **Rachell Ellen Wong** presents a recital on Baroque violin, performing a signature work, Biber's Sonata No. 5; a solo arrangement of Tartini's *The Devil's Trill*; and sonatas by Corelli, Herrando, Veracini, and J. S. Bach (Oct. 23).

In the Dance series, East London hip-hop dance theater troupe **Boy Blue** makes its Cal Performances debut with *Blak Whyte Gray: A Hip-Hop Dance Triple Bill* (Dec. 9–11). The company is

known for its command over a vast canon of stylistic influences, integrated into its hip-hop choreography. “Since its founding, Boy Blue has rapidly elevated to center stage—and there’s no question as to why. Their singular approach to dance exhibits total mastery over the art, both in their technical ability to draw effortlessly from so many stylistic influences, and in their storytelling ability to communicate powerful emotions through movement,” said Geffen. (See “[Additional Premieres.](#)”)

Season Opening Weekend with Miami City Ballet and the Dover Quartet

Opening weekend is in September, with two performances meant to encapsulate both the variety and energy reflected in the new season. Famed for its dedication to the repertoire, style, and technique of George Balanchine, **Miami City Ballet** returns to Zellerbach Hall for the first time in more than a decade to open the 2022–23 season with the choreographer’s seminal ballet *Jewels* (Sep. 23–25). The iconic 1967 work is a triptych of dances evoking French (“Emeralds”), American (“Rubies”), and Russian (“Diamonds”) ballet traditions and was inspired by the choreographer’s visit to the jeweler Van Cleef & Arpels, with music by Fauré, Stravinsky, and Tchaikovsky. That same weekend in Hertz Hall, the **Dover Quartet** makes its in-person debut after an enthusiastically received virtual performance during the 2020–21 *Cal Performances at Home* season, with Haydn’s *Emperor* Quartet, Mendelssohn’s third quartet from his Op. 44 set, and Amy Beach’s 1929 quartet, a work built on Alaskan Inuit melodies (Sep. 25).

Multi-Season Partnership Continues with The English Concert

Berkeley audiences are invited to deepen their relationship with Handel’s iconic works for a second consecutive year with a performance by the esteemed British early-music ensemble **The English Concert**, directed by **Harry Bicket**. Each of the group’s annual visits features a concert performance of a complete Baroque oratorio or opera by Handel; in this second year of a multi-season Cal Performances collaboration, The English Concert brings its production of Handel’s 1748 oratorio *Solomon* (Mar. 5). Swedish mezzo-soprano **Ann Hallenberg** sings the title role for the performance, which also features the **Clarion Choir** with soloists. *Solomon* is based on Biblical stories of the great king’s wisdom and celebrates a golden age of peace, piety, and prosperity. The work features a double chorus, memorable arias such as “Will the sun forget to streak,” and well-loved orchestral passages such as “Arrival of the Queen of Sheba” for oboe and strings.

**San Francisco Symphony Performs Halloween Season Concert;
Music Director Esa-Pekka Salonen Returns to Zellerbach Hall**

Cal Performances brings the renowned musicianship of the **San Francisco Symphony** to the East Bay this fall with a Halloween season concert of macabre orchestral works including Mussorgsky's *Night on Bald Mountain*; Liszt's *Totentanz (Dance of Death)* featuring piano soloist **Bertrand Chamayou**; and Berlioz' *Symphonie fantastique* (Oct. 21). **Esa-Pekka Salonen** enriches the performance from the podium in his first return to Cal Performances since being appointed Music Director of the San Francisco Symphony. Salonen's past appearances at Cal Performances have included a composer portrait (2012–13 season) and performances as the principal conductor of the Philharmonia Orchestra of London (2012–13 and 2016–17 seasons and, most recently, in the world premiere performance of Jimmy López' *Dreamers* oratorio during the 2018–19 season).

Venue and Ticket Information

Subscription packages for Cal Performances' 2022–23 season go on sale to the general public beginning Tuesday, April 26, at noon, and single tickets go on sale Tuesday, August 9. More details about Cal Performances' 2022–23 season, including a full listing of on-sale dates, can be found at calperformances.org.

###

PRESS CONTACT:

Louisa Spier

Cal Performances

Media Relations Manager

(510) 643-6714

lspier@calperformances.org