

**Jeremy Geffen**  
**Executive and Artistic Director**

**Jeremy Geffen**, Executive and Artistic Director, provides the overall artistic perspective and executive leadership of Cal Performances—UC Berkeley’s performing arts presenter and producer—and UC Berkeley’s Student Musical Activities. As the leader of an arts organization based on a world-renowned university campus, Geffen aims to combine the unique intellectual resources of UC Berkeley with the work of the greatest performers of our time, and to harness the transformative power of the performing arts to encourage empathy and understanding.

**Impact at Cal Performances**

Geffen joined Cal Performances as Executive and Artistic Director in April of 2019. One of his most innovative contributions has been his development and leadership of Cal Performances’ *Illuminations* series, which was conceived during his first year with the organization. *Illuminations* programming connects groundbreaking UC Berkeley scholarship to themes taken up and examined by the world-class music, dance, and theater presented by Cal Performances. Activities—which include performances, panel discussions, lecture demonstrations, Q&As, and more—shed light on pressing topics that have the power to shape the future and transform our understanding of the world. In previous years, *Illuminations* themes have included “Fact or Fiction,” “Music and the Mind,” “Place and Displacement,” and “Human and Machine.” During the 2023–24 season, *Illuminations* activities will address concepts of “Individual & Community.”

Before the completion of Geffen’s first year at Cal Performances, the organization was faced with a significant unforeseen challenge as live performances came to a halt due to the COVID-19 pandemic. During peak period of shutdowns, Geffen and Cal Performances maintained community and steadfastly supported artists by quickly developing an entirely new model of performance for the organization via *Cal Performances at Home*, a program that offered 26 full-length digital performances and two special events during its first year, with additional videos available to stream during the following seasons. As a means of celebrating the power of live performance during this time, Geffen also curated more than 60 *Now More Than Ever* playlists of upwards of 300 video performances by great artists past and present.

During Cal Performances’ 2022–23 season, Geffen and Cal Performances staff presented a wide range of performances by world-renowned talent, as well as by rising stars new to Berkeley audiences. Returning artists and new talent included the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra, Mark Morris Dance Group, gambist and conductor Jordi Savall, The English Concert, Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, pianist Seong-Jin Cho, Baroque violinist Rachell Ellen Wong, and vocalists Ying Fang and Joyce DiDonato. Under Geffen’s leadership, Cal Performances also spearheaded a campus-wide residency during the 2022–23 academic year with South African artist William Kentridge, who brought the US premiere of his *SIBYL* to Cal Performances in spring 2023. Along with *SIBYL*, the season featured approximately 20 world, national, and regional premieres, including the first West Coast performance of Steve Reich’s *Traveler’s Prayer*, one of three

season-wide co-commissions by Cal Performances. Student engagement was particularly noteworthy that season, with activities including the creation of new UC Berkeley student pricing initiatives such as the Golden Bear Circle, which—when combined with existing student discounts and outreach activities—significantly increased student attendance; the launch of Cal Performances’ *Illuminations* Human & Machine Song Contest, which provided the campus community with the opportunity to work with artificial intelligence (AI) and other technological mediums to create an original song/composition as a means of exploring the boundaries of artistic collaboration between humans and machines; and the continuation of Berkeley/Oakland AileyCamp (in its 21st year in 2023), which annually provides local middle school students the opportunity to attend an intensive dance and personal development program on campus completely free of charge.

Under Geffen’s continued leadership, the 2023–24 season features an expansive array of performances, including 10 company debuts; a robust recital series showcasing five local debuts by rising-star performers; and many new works, including the West Coast premiere of *Taylor Mac & Matt Ray’s Bark of Millions*, six world premieres spanning music and dance, and additional local and regional premieres performed by nearly every dance company presented during the season. Cal Performances also continues to invest in long-term relationships with acclaimed and established artistic partners, this year announcing a renewed multi-season residency by The Joffrey Ballet, which brings its first full-length narrative ballet to Zellerbach Hall; and renowned pianist Mitsuko Uchida as Artist in Residence in March 2024. At the center of Cal Performances’ 2023–24 season is the *Illuminations* theme of “Individual & Community,” which includes seven unique performances that span music, dance, and theater, as well as new campus partnerships that will enrich community and campus conversations around the theme. This season will also see continued support for crucial student engagement programs benefiting young people of all ages, including the Golden Bear Circle discount program for UC Berkeley students (this year featuring 12 performances), SchoolTime matinee performances for children K–12, AileyCamp, and the Berkeley Unified School District middle school residency program.

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 comprise 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. Geffen's belief in the arts as a medium for fostering understanding and nurturing empathy continues to shape his artistic direction of Cal Performances.

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