

# Livermore-Amador Symphony

Lara Webber, Music Director & Conductor

Arthur P. Barnes, Music Director Emeritus

Saturday, February 12, 2022, 8 p.m.

Bankhead Theater, Livermore



## The *Brilliance* of Youth

### Amazing Grace

Gently (based on the hymn “New Britain”—anonymous)

Jennifer Higdon

(b. 1962)

### Piano Concerto in A Minor

Opus 54

I. Allegro affettuoso

Celicia Thendean, soloist

Robert Schumann

(1810–1856)

### From Holberg’s Time (Holberg Suite)

Opus 40

I. Präludium (Allegro vivace)

II. Sarabande (Andante)

III. Gavotte (Allegretto)

IV. Air (Andante religioso)

V. Rigaudon (Allegro con brio)

Edvard Grieg

(1843–1907)

### INTERMISSION

with entertainment in the lobby by Element 116

### Lyric for Strings

Molto adagio

George Walker

(1922–2018)

### Violin Concerto No. 5 in A Minor

Opus 37

I. Allegro non troppo

II. Adagio

III. Allegro con fuoco

Dustin Breshears, soloist

Henri Vieuxtemps

(1820–1881)

### Zigeunerweisen

Opus 20

Moderato—Lento—Un poco più lento—Allegro molto vivace

Valery Breshears, violin soloist

Pablo de Sarasate

(1844–1908)

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Music Director position underwritten by the Chet and Henrietta Fankhauser Trust

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## Orchestra

### Conductor

Lara Webber

### First Violin

Elizabeth Rivard  
*Concertmaster*

Juliana Zolynas  
*Assistant  
Concertmaster*

Norman Back  
Feliza Bourguet

Judy Eckart

Lana Hodzic

Jackie Maruskin

Doug Morrison

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Fiona Xie

### Second Violin

Ursula Goldstein  
*Principal*

Anne Anaya

Mary Burchett

Jeana Ernst

Stacy Hughes

Denise Leddon

Jacqueline McBride

Nissa Nack

### Viola

Judy Beck  
*Co-Principal*

David Friburg  
*Co-Principal*

Lynda Alvarez

Ashley Bowers

Brandon Tran

Esteban Zapiain

### Cello

Peter Bedrossian  
*Principal*

Alan Copeland

Aidan Epstein

Kate Fisher

Joanne Lenigan

### String Bass

Aaron Plattner  
*Principal*

Richard Hibbs

Navaz Jasavala

### Flute

Marianne Beeler  
*Principal*

Beth Wilson

### Oboe

Eva Langfeldt  
*Principal*

Jeff Lenigan

### Clarinet

Kathy Boster

*Acting Principal*

Danielle Napoleon

### Bassoon

Doug Stark  
*Principal*

Katie Brunner

### Horn

Christine-Ann Immesoete  
*Principal*

James Hartman

### Trumpet

Michael Portnoff  
*Principal*

Bob Bryant

### Timpani

April Nissen

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### Librarians

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Stacy Hughes

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**The Livermore-Amador Symphony  
requires all musicians and guest artists to be fully vaccinated.**

**LAS is in full compliance with all current Alameda County health  
mandates plus rehearsal and performance-venue health policies.**

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## Next Concert: Vibrant Voices April 23, 2022

Nature, death, life, and eternity. The remarkable poet Emily Dickinson explores the essence of these themes in her poetry, and her words inspired Aaron Copland to set them to music. Soprano Heidi Moss Erickson joins the symphony to bring these vibrant American artists to life in a program celebrating springtime renewal and hope.

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## Program Notes

### Amazing Grace

(based on the hymn “New Britain”—anonymous)

Jennifer Higdon

(b. 1962)

The name Jennifer Higdon has been on musicians’ minds for decades, at first as that of an up-and-coming composer who would make her mark on the American musical landscape. She is now one of the most influential composers in the United States, if not the world.

First heard by the public on New Year’s Day 1773, the original hymn “Amazing Grace” was written by former slave ship captain and slave trader John Newton, later ordained by the Church of England. It was set to the now-famous tune “New Britain” in 1835. The irony that a famous spiritual was penned by a former slave trader is not lost. This is a piece that can easily move listeners to tears without their knowing why, and its history of catharsis may be unmatched by any other piece of music.

Jennifer Higdon’s moving setting of “Amazing Grace” was written in 1998. Higdon originally composed it as part of the larger vocal choir work *Southern Grace* and arranged a string quartet version for the Ying Quartet. A lush and classically tonal theme and variations, it moves through different tempi without pause, creating a feeling of inertia and momentum until it finally comes back to rest in the coda. Higdon adapted the string orchestra version performed tonight from her string quartet arrangement.

### Piano Concerto in A Minor

Opus 54, 1st movement

Robert Schumann

(1810–1856)

Schumann wrote his piano concerto in two parts, separated by a four-year gap. In 1841 he composed a fantasy for piano and orchestra dedicated to his wife, Clara. This was to become the first movement of the concerto. He completed the second and third movements in 1845, and the first performance was given in Leipzig in 1846, with Clara as the soloist.

Schumann’s concerto, although outwardly resembling the earlier models of Mozart and Beethoven, breaks new ground in several respects. Most strikingly, it moves away from the contemporary use of the concerto as a showcase for the virtuoso pianist—so much so that Franz Liszt called it a “concerto without piano.” There are, of course, highly demanding passages for the soloist. Overall, the piano and orchestra form an integrated whole, weaving subtle textures together with delightful lyricism.

The first movement opens with a dramatic outburst from the soloist, slightly reminiscent of the cadenza with which Beethoven opens the “Emperor” concerto, although much shorter. This is followed by a simple expressive melody, played by the woodwinds, from which much of the material of the first movement is derived. The piano and orchestra transform this melody into musical passages that are sometimes expansive, sometimes rhapsodic, and sometimes dramatic, and that always have striking originality.

### From Holberg’s Time (Holberg Suite)

Opus 40

Edvard Grieg

(1843–1907)

In the early eighteenth century, the Danish poet-dramatist Ludvig Holberg put Scandinavia on the map in European theatrical circles. So deftly humorous were his comedies that he was dubbed “the Molière of the North,” after the celebrated French dramatist. Norway, too, claimed Holberg, because, for a time, the dramatist had lived in Bergen, Edvard Grieg’s hometown.

For the bicentenary of Holberg’s birth, in 1884, the city of Bergen wanted to provide a festive salute. That this would take place during December and the stormy darkness of a Norwegian winter made no difference. Grieg—by then one of Europe’s most admired composers—was engaged to write a cantata to be performed outdoors around the new Holberg monument in the central marketplace, as well as another work for the concert hall. The weather on that day turned out to be pretty much as Grieg had predicted (“snow, hail, storm, and every kind of foul weather . . . And a cold afterwards, of course, or goodness knows what kind of illness!”), and his cantata was soon forgotten. But his other composition, *From Holberg’s Time*, a

Baroque-inspired dance suite originally created for piano and then rescored for string orchestra, had a much happier fate. Grieg dismissed it as “a perruque piece” (“a wig piece,” after the eighteenth century’s powdered wigs), but it became one of his most beloved works.

The *Holberg Suite* begins with a praeludium, or prelude, in Baroque toccata style, with a continuous flow of fast, energetic figures and rushing scales. Next comes a sarabande, in Baroque times a slow, stately dance in 3/4 time. Grieg follows this character, creating music of gentle, melancholy beauty. In third place, we hear a gavotte, a gracious, moderate-tempo dance. Grieg’s is charmingly pastoral in character and encloses a contrasting dance called a musette. The musette was originally danced to bagpipes, and we can hear the drone of the pipes in the lower strings. The fourth-movement air is an elegy-like song. It is the sorrowful heart of the *Holberg Suite*: a beautiful melding of Baroque style and Grieg’s own poignant lyricism. The suite closes with a rigaudon, a French dance with a cheerful, vivacious character. This one features violin and viola soloists imitating the spirited folk style of the Norwegian Hardanger fiddle, but in a very polished manner.

## Lyric for Strings

**George Walker**

(1922–2018)

George Walker was a graduate of both Oberlin and the Curtis Institute of Music. In 1945 he was the first African American to debut with a solo recital at Manhattan’s Town Hall and the first to perform with the Philadelphia Orchestra as the soloist for Rachmaninoff’s Piano Concerto No. 3. In 1950 he became the first African American to sign with a major artist management company, and he spent the next several years playing a series of high-profile concerts in nearly every European capital. In 1956 Walker became the first African American to graduate with a doctoral degree from the Eastman School of Music. Hired in 1961, he became the first tenured African American faculty member at Smith College. And finally, in 1996 Walker was the first African American to be awarded the Pulitzer Prize for Music, in recognition of his composition “Lilacs,” for voice and orchestra. At his death, in August 2018, Walker was one of the most decorated and revered composers in American history.

“Lyric for Strings” was composed when Walker was only 24 years old, and it has remained one of his most enduring compositions. Walker first conceived the music that became “Lyric” as a middle movement for his first string quartet and originally titled it “Lament,” in dedication to his grandmother who died the year prior. The piece fluidly and dramatically alternates between lush harmonies and stark solo passages that showcase the range of sounds possible in the string orchestra. In an interview not long before his death, Walker commented: “I never played a string instrument, but somehow strings have always fascinated me.” In “Lyric for Strings,” we hear the beginning of this lifelong fascination.

## Violin Concerto No. 5 in A Minor

**Henri Vieuxtemps**

Opus 37

(1820–1881)

Belgian Henri Vieuxtemps composed his Violin Concerto No. 5 in Germany for a competition, at the request of his friend Hubert Léonard, a professor at the Brussels Conservatory. The work’s three movements are played without pause.

Viennese critic Eduard Hanslick described Vieuxtemps’ concerti as “imaginative, gracious, well-made, and contrived with great technical knowledge.... He may be considered the finest composer among contemporary violinists and the finest violinist among contemporary composers.” Indeed, Vieuxtemps was considered one of the greatest violinists during his lifetime, combining virtuoso technique with beauty of tone and elegance of phrasing. As a composer, Vieuxtemps had an inimitable dramatic operetta style.

While studying violin with his father, who was a weaver by trade, Vieuxtemps managed an impressive local debut at the age of 6, catching the attention of violinist Charles de Bériot, who became one of his first teachers and mentors. As he gave multiple tours of Paris, Russia, Germany, and also the United States, Vieuxtemps enjoyed growing influence as a performer and composer. Additionally, Vieuxtemps was a pioneer of early Russian violin history, having been based in St. Petersburg for six years as court violinist to the czar. He also served as a violin professor at the Brussels Conservatory.

## Zigeunerweisen

Opus 20

**Pablo de Sarasate**

(1844–1908)

Pablo de Sarasate, a violin prodigy from Spain, won the patronage of none other than Queen Isabella II. That royal backing eventually enabled him to study in Paris, where his career truly began. He commissioned works from the great composers of his time, including Eduard Lalo, Max Bruch, Henri Wieniawski, and Camille Saint-Saëns, who recalled the young Sarasate as “a boy with such confidence and barely the outline of a mustache on his lip.” Sarasate also composed works to show off his dazzling virtuosic prowess.

The Romani people are one of Europe’s largest minorities, as they were in Sarasate’s times. Their collective history of persecution, as well as their vigorous embrace of life, is told in their music—tragedy alongside fiery, rollicking dances: their stunning prowess on the fiddle is legendary. Such is the tenor of Sarasate’s most famous composition, “Zigeunerweisen” (“Roma Airs”), which the composer wrote in 1878 to show off his own legendary violin skills.

For “Zigeunerweisen,” Sarasate was charmed by Western Europe’s love for Roma music from Hungary, thanks to both Brahms and Liszt. But the underlying tunes are really simply vehicles for virtuosic splendor. Sarasate unleashed a fiery spiccato (where the bow bounces on the strings), harmonics and artificial harmonics, and much more. “Zigeunerweisen” is a powerhouse of passion and technique, always an extremely challenging piece to play, and a tremendous delight to hear.

*Program notes compiled by Kathy Boster from Internet sources*

*Edited by Eva Langfeldt*

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## Music Director Lara Webber

Lara Webber, now in her eighth season as music director and conductor of LAS, is dedicated to inspiring audiences and community engagement through the power of symphonic music. She has been praised by fellow musicians for her musical depth, genuine expression, strong personal vision, and collaborative spirit. A Livermore resident, Webber has brought music to Tri-Valley elementary schools, coached chamber musicians, and advocated for the arts. She holds degrees in music from Oberlin and USC.



Webber has held the positions of both assistant and associate conductor of the symphony orchestras of Baltimore and Charleston and music director of the Charleston Symphony Orchestra Chorus. She is music director of the Palo Alto Philharmonic. Her guest-conducting activities have included multiple performances with the symphonies of Houston, Pittsburgh, Santa Barbara, and Modesto, among others. She has served as cover conductor for the

San Francisco Symphony and the National Symphony Orchestra and was a conductor of the Emmy-nominated Disney’s Young Musicians Symphony Orchestra. Webber’s operatic associations include posts as the assistant conductor at Glimmerglass Opera and conductor of the Baltimore Opera Studio.

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## Element 116

Element 116 is a band composed of middle and high school students from several Livermore-area schools and named after Livermore’s own chemical element, Livermorium, which has atomic number 116. Under the lead of director Matt Finders, a renowned jazz musician and composer who grew up in Livermore, they play a mix of jazz, Latin, rock, and swing.



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## Competition for Young Musicians Winners

### Cecilia Thendean—Piano

Cecilia Thendean, age 13, started taking piano lesson from Anna Poklewski at the age of 5. Recently, Cecilia also started lessons from Ilana Vered. Cecilia has won numerous prizes, including first prize at the V Future Stars International Piano Competition in the Young Musicians category, first prize Platinum Medalist at the 2020–2021 Canadian International Music Competition in the Junior Performer category, second prize at the 2021 Chicago International Music Competition, and more. She also won the Vivace Award at the 2020 Vivace Music Festival and was invited to perform in Wilmington, North Carolina, alongside Marina Lomazov, Joseph Rackers, and Ara Gregorian. Cecilia is currently enrolled in the San Francisco Conservatory of Music pre-college division, studying cello under Eric Sung. She performed the first movement of Mendelssohn's Piano Concerto No. 1 at the January 2020 LAS Guild meeting and is a winner of the 2021–2022 LAS Competition for Young Musicians. Besides playing piano, Cecilia enjoys reading, math, and playing cello and oboe.



### Dustin Breshears—Violin

Dustin Breshears, age 14, is in ninth grade at the Oakland School for the Arts. He began violin lessons at age 4 with David Mallory. By the age of 7, Dustin was studying at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music pre-college division under William Barbini, and he currently studies with Zhao Wei. Dustin also is coached by his accompanist, Ayke Agus. Dustin has soloed with four different orchestras since the age of 6. He has won numerous solo awards, including the Parnassus-San Francisco Conservatory of Music Concerto Competition, Palo Alto Philharmonic Concerto Movement Competition, 1st Place ASTA-San Francisco Competition, 1st Place ASTA-Sacramento Competition, 1st Place CAPMT-Sacramento Competition, 1st Place DVC-HNU Strings Competition, and 1st Place Classical Masters Competition and is a winner of the 2021 Pacific Musical Society & Foundation Competition. As a member of the Stars Aligned Siblings Quartet, Dustin is a recipient of the 2021 Jack Kent Cooke Young Artist Award. He is a winner of the 2021–2022 LAS Competition for Young Musicians.



### Valery Breshears—Violin

Valery Breshears, age 12, is in seventh grade at the Oakland School for the Arts. She began violin lessons at age 2 with David Mallory. At age 5, Valery started to study at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music pre-college division under William Barbini; she currently studies with Zhao Wei. Additionally, Valery is coached by her accompanist, Ayke Agus. Valery has soloed eight times with six different orchestras since the age of 6. She has won numerous solo competition awards, including the Parnassus-San Francisco Conservatory of Music Concerto Competition, Fremont Symphony Nafisa Taghioff Award, 1st Place U.S. International Music Competition, 1st Place ASTA-San Francisco Competition, 1st Place ASTA-Sacramento Competition, and more, and is a winner of the 2021 Pacific Musical Society & Foundation Competition. Valery is a recipient of the 2021 Jack Kent Cooke Young Artist Award as a member of the Stars Aligned Siblings Quartet. She is performing tonight as a winner of the 2020–2021 LAS Competition for Young Musicians.



*Note:* Lauren Kim, a winner of the 2020–2021 Competition and now a college student in Virginia, is unable to join us this evening due to pandemic-related travel disruptions.

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*continued on the next page*

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Please contact Judy Eckart  
judy@justjudy.com

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**APBarnesSociety@livermoreamadorsymphony.org.**

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