

LIVERMORE AMADOR SYMPHONY

Lara Webber
Music Director & Conductor
Sat. February 15, 2025, 7:30 p.m.

Inside the Music talk by
Lara Webber, 7–7:15 p.m

Bankhead Theater, Livermore



EXPRESSIONS OF YOUTH

Ram Tori Maya (2019)

Reena Esmail
(b. 1983)

Joining the orchestra onstage:
members of the Cantabella Children's Chorus and
Indian Classical dancers Prita Mohanty and Keerthana Yellapragada

Violin Concerto in D Minor (1904, rev. 1905)

Jean Sibelius
(1865–1957)

Opus 47

I. Allegro Moderato

Ariel Pawlik-Zwiebel, soloist

Academic Festival Overture (1880)

Johannes Brahms
(1833–1897)

Opus 80

INTERMISSION

Cantabella Children's Chorus

will perform in the lobby at intermission.

Piano Concerto in A Minor (1868)

Edvard Grieg
(1843–1907)

Opus 16

I. Allegro molto moderato

Olivia Luan, soloist

Symphonic Variations on an African Air (1898)

Samuel Coleridge-Taylor
(1875–1912)

Opus 63

After the concert, the audience and performers are invited to enjoy a lobby reception hosted by the Livermore-Amador Symphony Guild featuring wines from Cuda Ridge and Las Positas Vineyards plus chocolates to sweeten your night.

Music Director position underwritten by the Chet and Henrietta Fankhauser Trust.

Orchestra

Conductor

Lara Webber

First Violin

Joseph Fath

Concertmaster

Juliana Zolynas

Assistant

Concertmaster

Norman Back

Feliza Bourguet

Judy Eckart

Kuan-Yu Liu

Jutta Massoud

Doug Morrison

Michael Peach

Nick Travia

Anthony Westrope

Second Violin

Ursula Goldstein

Principal

Anne Anaya

Stephanie Black

Lisa Burkhart

Jeana Ernst

Miriam Flock

Stacy Hughes

Susan Ivie

Jacqueline McBride

Nissa Nack

Johan Qin

Leslie Stevens

Viola

Dora Scott

Principal

David Friburg

Audrey Horning

Fernanda Van Atta

Cello

Peter Bedrossian

Principal

Nita Cooley

Kate Fisher

Chris Jackson

Joanne Lenigan

Paul Pappas

Elise Van Gelder

String Bass

Aaron Plattner

Principal

Richard Hibbs

Nick James

Navaz Jasavala

Flute

Marianne Beeler

Principal

Stacie Manuel

Kaitlyn McCain

Piccolo

Stacie Manuel

Kaitlyn McCain

Oboe

Eva Langfeldt

Principal

Jeanne Brown

English Horn

Jeanne Brown

Clarinet

Lesley Watson

Principal

Kathy Boster

Bassoon

Doug Stark

Principal

Katie Brunner

Contrabassoon

Richard Krishnan

Horn

Christine-Ann Immesoete

Principal

James Hartman

Roger Henderson

Bryan Waugh

Trumpet

Michael Portnoff

Principal

Bob Bryant

Anthony Manuel

Trombone

Diane Schildbach

Principal

Alice Williams

Bass Trombone

Marcus Schildbach

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Timpani

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Percussion

April Nissen

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Harp*

Kristin Lloyd

Librarians

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Ian Zolynas

* *The Symphony Guild is generously underwriting the harp position for the 2024–2025 season.*

Program Notes

Ram Tori Maya (2019)

In the words of the composer: “Ram Tori Maya is a bhajan by the ancient Indian saint-poet Barabas set to a melody by Ninu Majumdar. It speaks about how worldly distractions can prevent us from focusing on what is the most important and most sacred to each of us, and invites us to find that spirit within ourselves, and commit fully to it. I originally arranged this bhajan for our Shastra Summer Collaborative, to teach Hindustani singers to sing with a string quartet. But the music is so direct, so lilting, so engaging that when Carnegie Hall’s Link Up program approached me to write a new piece, I knew that the students would benefit from connecting with this ancient wisdom that is even more relevant in today’s world.”

Reena Esmail
(b. 1983)



Indian American composer Reena Esmail works between the worlds of Indian and Western classical music. A Los Angeles resident, Esmail writes orchestral, chamber, and choral works. She has written commissions for the Los Angeles Master Chorale, Seattle Symphony, Baltimore Symphony Orchestra, and Kronos Quartet. The Los Angeles Master Chorale’s 2020–2025 Swan Family Artist in Residence, she has been in residence with the Seattle Symphony, Tanglewood Music Center, and Spoleto Festival. Esmail holds a bachelor’s degree in composition from Juilliard School and master’s degrees and a doctorate from the Yale School of Music. She received a Fulbright-Nehru grant to study Hindustani music in India. Her doctoral thesis, “Finding Common Ground: Uniting Practices in Hindustani and Western Art Musicians,” explores the methods and challenges of the collaborative process between Hindustani musicians and Western composers.

Joining LAS and Cantabella Children’s Chorus in this performance are talented dancers Prita Mohanty and Keerthana Yellapragada, interpreting “Ram Tori Maya” with a beautiful rendition of the epic tale Ramayana through the lens of Odissi dance, one of India’s oldest and most revered classical dance forms. The story of Ramayana holds deep moral, spiritual, and emotional truths. The choreography, expertly crafted by Manasi Padhi, follows this story, beginning with the *Swayamvar* of Lord Rama and Sita. Sita, the princess of Mithila, chooses Lord Rama as her life partner. Rama is exiled, and Sita is abducted by the deceitful Ravana. After a final confrontation, good ultimately triumphs over evil.

Violin Concerto in D Minor (1904, rev. 1905)

Opus 47 (first movement)

Jean Sibelius

(1865–1957)

The Sibelius violin concerto is one of the most beloved and frequently performed violin concerti in the classical repertoire. Sibelius himself had aspired to be a violin virtuoso in his youth, and this concerto reflects his deep understanding of the instrument’s capabilities. It is known for its emotional intensity, virtuosic demands, and uniquely Nordic atmosphere. Originally premiered in 1904 but deemed too difficult, the revised version was premiered by the renowned violinist Karel Halíř under the baton of Richard Strauss.

The first movement opens with a hauntingly beautiful orchestral introduction, establishing a dramatic and melancholic atmosphere. The solo violin enters with a lyrical theme, characterized by its sweeping lines and rich emotional depth, showcasing expressiveness and technical virtuosity. This movement weaves together intricate melodies and vigorous rhythms, reflecting the Finnish composer’s unique style, which blends traditional folk elements with Romantic expressiveness. As the movement unfolds, dynamic contrasts and thematic development create a sense of tension and release, culminating in a powerful climax that highlights the soloist’s prowess. Throughout, Sibelius’s masterful orchestration complements the violin, enriching the narrative and enhancing the overall emotional impact of the work.

Academic Festival Overture (1880)

Opus 80

Johannes Brahms

(1833–1897)

Johannes Brahms's "Academic Festival Overture" is a spirited and celebratory work written as a gesture of gratitude to the University of Breslau, which had awarded the composer an honorary doctorate in music. Brahms, who was initially hesitant to accept the degree, chose to mark the occasion by composing a piece that was both festive and lighthearted, in contrast to the more serious and profound character of much of his earlier work. Throughout the composition, Brahms not only honors the university that awarded him the honorary degree but also invites the listener to experience the joy, wit, and intellectual engagement he himself felt in his relationship to the world of academia and music.

The overture opens with a lively and energetic introduction, featuring bold brass fanfares and sweeping strings. The music quickly develops into a theme that is both jubilant and dignified, a fitting prelude to the larger celebration. Brahms cleverly incorporates a series of student anthems and drinking songs throughout the piece, blending traditional German melodies with his own masterful orchestral writing. These familiar tunes, such as "Gaudemus Igitur" ("So Let Us Rejoice," a well-known academic song) and "Wir hatten gebauet ein stattliches Haus" ("We Had Built a Stately House") are woven into the fabric of the overture with intricate counterpoint and harmonic textures.

Piano Concerto in A Minor (1868)

Opus 16 (first movement)

Edvard Grieg

(1843–1907)

Edvard Grieg's Piano Concerto in A Minor, composed in 1868, remains one of the most beloved works in the piano concerto repertoire. Its first movement immediately presents the signature fusion of Romantic expression and Norwegian folk influences that are characteristic of Grieg's music. The music begins with a flourish, placing the solo piano front and center. Next is a striking orchestral fanfare, first introduced by the strings and then taken up by the brass, giving it an energetic, almost heraldic quality. The orchestral chords establish the key of A minor, and the tension builds before the piano enters, immediately giving the impression of a grand narrative beginning to unfold. This introduction presents the main theme, a fanfare-like figure that plays a significant role throughout the movement. When the piano enters, it does so dramatically, with the same fanfare-like theme first heard in the orchestra. The piano's version is full of virtuosity, with rapid runs and wide intervals.

Grieg's writing enables the piano to shine as both a soloist and an equal partner with the orchestra. A contrast emerges when the piano shifts to the second theme. This theme is introduced in the orchestra, and then the piano repeats it with subtle ornamentation, providing a tender and reflective mood. The theme has a sweeping, lyrical, almost folk-like character, a hallmark of Grieg's style. Then come numerous opportunities for the pianist to demonstrate virtuosity, including rapid octave runs and cascading arpeggios, leading to a brilliant and intense climax. In a recapitulation, the pianist continues to demonstrate both technical brilliance and emotional depth, until a coda brings the movement to its conclusion. The final passage has energetic and rapid piano figurations accompanied by the orchestra's bold fanfares until the movement ends in thrilling triumph.

Symphonic Variations on an African Air (1898)

Opus 63

Samuel Coleridge-Taylor

(1875–1912)

Samuel Coleridge-Taylor was a leading figure in the late Romantic period, and his music is often characterized by a blend of Western classical idioms with influences drawn from his African heritage. (His father emigrated to England from Sierra Leone.) He studied at the Royal College of Music in London, where he was trained as a composer, and his works are notable for including European as well as African musical elements. In addition to composing symphonic and choral works, Coleridge-Taylor was a passionate advocate for the African diaspora, and his music reflects a desire to both preserve and celebrate African musical traditions in the context of Western classical forms.

“Symphonic Variations on an African Air” was composed at a time when racial and cultural identity was a topic of growing importance. Coleridge-Taylor’s use of African melodies not only elevated the music of his heritage but also challenged and enriched the Western classical tradition. The piece stands as a prominent example of his ability to blend classical music with themes inspired by African folk melodies. He presented African music not as an exotic “other” but as a rich, complex, and worthy source for symphonic treatment.

This work, one of Coleridge-Taylor’s most popular compositions, was first performed in 1901. The “African air” Coleridge-Taylor used is the strikingly simple and deeply expressive African American song “I’m Troubled in Mind,” which offered him the perfect springboard for his exploration of harmonic, rhythmic, and orchestral color. This theme is followed by several variations, each of which transforms aspects of the original theme. The opening is a gentle yet rhythmically compelling melody that evokes the spirit of African music through its distinctive pentatonic scale, which was characteristic of many African folk tunes. The melody is elaborated upon as it passes through the orchestra, with different sections offering their own interpretations of the tune. The variations explore contrasting moods, from the playful and energetic to the lyrical and tender. The lush textures of the full orchestra combine with the often intricate interplay between the woodwinds, strings, and brass, with rhythms and harmonies often drawing from African-inspired patterns. The piece also subtly blends elements of European classical music, such as the use of counterpoint, thematic development, and orchestral textures. In its later variations, the work becomes more virtuosic, showing Coleridge-Taylor’s technical brilliance and his ability to create musical contrasts. By the time the piece reaches its conclusion, the theme has been transformed beyond recognition, making for a dramatic and stirring return to the opening air.

Program notes written by Kathy Boster

Edited by Eva Langfeldt

Competition for Young Musicians Winners

Ariel Pawlik-Zwiebel—Violin

Ariel Pawlik-Zwiebel, age 17, is a senior at Campolindo High School in Moraga and studies violin with Eugene Chukhlov.

Ariel performs regularly as a soloist and recitalist and recently played public concerts with his father, pianist Markus Pawlik, in Phoenix, San Rafael, Pleasanton, Walnut Creek, and other cities. This past August, they performed in a co-production of the San Francisco International Piano Festival with Noontime Concerts at Old St. Mary’s Cathedral in San Francisco, and they look forward to touring Europe this upcoming summer. Ariel performed solo works recently with the Contra Costa Performing Arts Society, the Junior Bach Festival, and at the Peninsula Holocaust Memorial Commemoration and will also be performing as a soloist with the Young People’s Symphony Orchestra (YPSO) and the Prometheus Symphony Orchestra this season.



As a chamber musician, Ariel plays with the Young Chamber Musicians program in Kohl Mansion. He has attended the Bowdoin International Music Festival twice and participated in the YPSO Chamber program. Ariel toured Japan as concertmaster of YPSO this past summer and was the concertmaster of the Festival Orchestra at the Bay Area Youth Orchestra Festival (BAYOF) in January 2024.

He has won numerous top prizes, including, among others, competitions of the Berkeley Etude Club, Pacific Musical Society, US Open, DVC-HNU Strings, and the Silicon Valley Philharmonic, and was a laureate of the International Grumiaux Competition in Belgium.

Olivia Luan—Piano

Olivia Luan, a talented 15-year-old musician who attends Amador Valley High School in Pleasanton, began her musical journey at the age of 4 and currently studies under Markus Pawlik. She has distinguished herself in numerous competitions, winning Second Prize at the 2024 United States Open Music Competition Showcase Piano Solo; First Prize at the 2024 US International Open Music Competition; and First Prize at the 2023 Crescendo International Music Competition, where she performed at Carnegie Hall. Olivia's achievements also include the Silver Award at the 2021 International Young Artists Competition and Second Prizes in the International Great Composers Competitions for Best Mendelssohn Performance, Best Beethoven Performance, and Masters of Piano Concerto.



In addition to her piano accomplishments, Olivia is passionate about biology, dance, and the string bass. She plays in her school's wind ensemble and was selected as the principal bass for the 2023 California Junior High School All-State String Orchestra.

Cantabella Children's Chorus

After performing with the symphony in Ram Tori Maya this evening, the award-winning Cantabella Children's Chorus Honors Choir will perform in the lobby during intermission. The choir will be directed by Bailey Sako, with piano accompaniment by Joshua Hart. Singing tonight are Natalia Bharaj, Amy Chen, Clarissa Huber, Madeline Katreeb, Helen Li, Ena Lim, Isha Matlapudi, Talia McKenzie, Diya Mitragotri, Adithi Mukesh, Taylor Rush, Justine Stokes, Sriha Trivedi, Riya Upadhyaya, and Rohini Vrajmohan. Learn more at www.cantabella.org.

Music Director Lara Webber

Lara Webber 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. Now in her eleventh season as music director and conductor of LAS, she has brought music to Tri-Valley elementary schools, coached chamber musicians, and advocated for the arts.

Webber holds degrees in music from Oberlin and USC and 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. Her operatic associations include posts as assistant conductor at Glimmerglass Opera and conductor of the Baltimore Opera Studio.



Special Donation Match a Success!

LAS was one of the organizations selected in late 2024 for a matching gift possibility as part of the Giving Tuesday campaign of the Community Health and Education Foundation, CHEF. Between December 3 and December 10, 2024, Livermore-Amador Symphony supporters donated \$10,000 to LAS through CHEF. In turn, with the addition of \$5K in matching funds, CHEF sent a check for \$15,000 to LAS!

Donors (Corrections or questions? Please contact Judy Eckart, judy@justjudy.com)

The Livermore-Amador Symphony Association and Guild gratefully acknowledge donations received since February 2024 from the following.

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Members of the A.P. Barnes Society bequeathed donations to the symphony or have included the symphony in their estate plans. For information, please contact LAS Association President Tim Barry, president@livermoreamadorsymphony.org.

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The Livermore-Amador Symphony Association and Livermore-Amador Symphony Guild gratefully acknowledge funding support from:

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Youth Orchestra Registration Is Open



LASYO, the Livermore-Amador Symphony Youth Orchestra, is a summer orchestra open to musicians ages 11 (or in 6th grade) through 21. High school graduates (by first rehearsal) and above are welcome at no tuition. Don Adkins returns as music director this year. Auditions are on May 3 and 10 in Livermore; rehearsals are on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 7 to 9:30 p.m. from June 17 through July 22 (no rehearsal on July 24), with a dress rehearsal on Friday July 25 from 7 to 9 p.m. A free public concert on the evening of Saturday July 26 will begin at 7 p.m. at First Presbyterian Church Livermore.

Go to www.livermoreamadorsymphony.org/lasyo.html for a link to the registration form, which is due by April 26. **All registration forms are to be mailed to Betsy Hausburg, 526 Maple St., Livermore CA 94550, with a \$40 registration fee.** Questions? Please contact Betsy Hausburg, the LASYO program coordinator, at vdt.director@gmail.com.



Sipping for the Symphony: March 28 at Cuda Ridge

Mark your calendar for Friday March 28 from 5 to 7 p.m., when the Symphony Guild will hold another Sipping for the Symphony event at Cuda Ridge Wines, 2400 Arroyo Road in Livermore. The Guild will dish up appetizers, gift basket drawings, live music from The Jammies (yay!), and a beautiful, sunset venue overlooking the vineyards. This event is especially for orchestra, Guild, and Association members but is open to the public. Drop by, and bring along a friend or two! You will not want to miss this gentle early-evening welcome to our Livermore spring.



Next Concert: Romantic Masterpieces, April 12

Inside the Music, 7–7:15 p.m.; concert at 7:30 p.m.

Violin virtuoso Elizabeth Pitcairn returns to Livermore to perform Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky's thrilling violin concerto, playing her legendary 1720 Red Mendelssohn Stradivarius. The concert concludes with one of the most deeply spiritual and exciting symphonies of the Romantic era, César Franck's Symphony in D minor. Join us for an evening loaded with virtuosity and beautiful familiar melodies.

Livermore-Amador Symphony is a member of the Livermore Cultural Arts Council and a resident company of the Bankhead Theater. LVPAC is a sponsor of this event.



YouTube



Live at

The Bankhead

www.livermoreamadorsymphony.org

