



Sounds of the Americas: American Dance!

Featuring
Terrie Baune, violin

Program

Suite of Dances (1933)

Florence Price (1887 – 1953)

Rabbit Foot

Hoe Cake

Ticklin' Toes

Dancing Man Rhapsody (2016)

Libby Larsen (1950 –)

Terrie Baune, violin

INTERMISSION

Symphonic Dances (1940)

Sergei Rachmaninov (1873 – 1943)

I. Non allegro

II. Andante con moto (Tempo di valse)

III. Lento assai – Allegro vivace

Season Sponsors: John and Karen Colonias, John W. Kirk Estate, and
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February 7, 2025, 7:30 p.m. • Rossmoor Event Center
February 9, 2025, 2:00 p.m. • Leshner Center for the Arts

BIOGRAPHIES



In addition to being music director and conductor of the Diablo Symphony Orchestra, **Matilda Hofman** is conductor-in-residence of the Empyrean Ensemble at UC Davis and artistic director of the San Francisco–based Left Coast Chamber Ensemble. She also serves as a cover conductor for the San Francisco Symphony. California guest engagements include Festival Opera, the Fremont Symphony Orchestra, San Francisco Ballet, the Sacramento Ballet, Stanford University, Sierra Summer Festival, and at Sacramento Opera as assistant to Michael Morgan. Committed to education, she initiated an outreach program with the DSO that includes family concerts and ensemble performances in schools. With Left Coast, she successfully implemented Pathways, a new program that gives opportunities to underrepresented emerging composers. In Europe she has performed at the Guggenheim in Bilbao, Spain, as well as at the Salzburg Festival, Paris Autumn Festival, Berliner Festspiele, Holland Festival, and Luzerne Festival and has conducted alongside Ingo Metzmacher in performances of Luigi Nono’s *Prometeo*. In 2018 she was on the faculty for the soundSCAPE new music festival in Italy. She has worked with Ensemble Modern, SWR Symphonieorchester, Ensemble Recherche, Bochumer Symphoniker, and Kammerakademie Potsdam. She has served as a conducting fellow at the Aspen Music Festival and School and has received awards from the League of American Orchestras and the Conductors Guild of America. In the 2024–25 season, Hofman will be conductor-in-residence at the University of the Pacific and a guest conductor at the Eastman School of Music, where she will also lead rehearsals and work with graduate conducting students. She was guest conductor for the Oberlin Opera Theater’s November 2021 production of George Handel’s *Acis and Galatea*, featuring Oberlin Conservatory students in the Vocal Studies Division and the Oberlin Orchestra. She holds degrees from Cambridge University, the Royal Academy of Music, and the Eastman School of Music.



Co-concertmaster of the Oakland Symphony, **Terrie Baune** is also concertmaster of the North State Symphony and the Eureka Symphony; a member of the new-music ensemble Earplay; music director of the TBAM Festival in Trinidad, California; and associate director of the Humboldt Chamber Music Workshop. Her professional credits include four years as a member of the National Symphony Orchestra of Washington, DC; two years as a member of the Auckland Philharmonia of New Zealand; and concertmaster positions with the Fresno Philharmonic and the Rohnert Park Symphony. For more than 20 years, she was concertmaster of The Women’s Philharmonic, with which she participated in more than a hundred premieres and made several recordings, including one as soloist in the Maddalena Lombardini Violin Concerto No. 5 and as soloist in the world premiere of Chen Yi’s *Chinese Folk Dance Suite for Violin and Orchestra*, commissioned for her. She has also had solo pieces written for her by Pablo Ortiz and Ross Bauer, among others. She enjoyed working under the baton of the late Michael Morgan since the time they were both undergraduates at Ohio’s Oberlin Conservatory, from which she graduated in 1978 after winning the Oberlin Concerto Competition. She also won the grand prize at the prestigious Fischhoff Chamber Music Competition in South Bend, Indiana, the largest chamber music competition in the world. Baune’s interest in the violin began when she attended San Francisco Symphony concerts with her mother at age 8 and decided “that being in the middle of that big bunch of violins making that wonderful sound was what [she] wanted to do.” Asked what it’s like to perform onstage with an orchestra, Baune provided the analogy of river canoeing: “Once you start, there’s no going back and you have to deal with each potential derail as it comes along. And at the end of the trip, you realize that you’ve seen and heard amazing things and you will never be the same person as before.”

**The Diablo Symphony Association gratefully
acknowledges sponsorship of the Yen Liang Young
Artist Competition \$1,500 first-place honorarium by
City National Bank.**

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PROGRAM NOTES: *Sounds of the Americas: American Dance!*

Florence Price, born into a mixed-race family in Little Rock, Arkansas, received early musical training from her musically accomplished mother. Price performed her first piano recital at 4 and entered the New England Conservatory of Music at 14, graduating in 1906. She later became head of the music department at Clark Atlanta College, the first Black college in the Southern United States. After marrying civil rights attorney Thomas Price, she returned to Little Rock from Georgia. They had two daughters and, amid escalating racial tensions in 1927, moved to Chicago as part of the Great Migration of African Americans to that city. Price continued her studies at the Chicago Musical College, the University of Chicago, and the American Conservatory of Music. Her marriage ended following the 1929 Wall Street crash. After she and her daughters moved to the home of African American composer Margaret Bonds, Price worked on her first symphony while nursing a fractured foot. She wrote, “I found it possible to snatch a few precious days in the month of January in which to write undisturbed. But, oh dear me, when shall I ever be so fortunate again as to break a foot?” The symphony won first prize in the Rodman Wanamaker Competition’s orchestral division. Its premiere by the Chicago Symphony Orchestra made Price the first Black female composer to have a full-length work performed by a major American orchestra. Singer Marian Anderson also championed Price’s work, performing her spiritual arrangements before national audiences. Price worked in every facet of music—as a teacher, pianist, organist, and composer (she even wrote popular songs under a man’s pen name). Her more than 300 works—which include chamber and orchestral works, concerti, songs, and organ and piano pieces—balance European symphonic structure and idioms with those of African American spirituals, folk songs, and the blues. Most of Price’s works were in manuscript form when she died and remained virtually unknown until 2009, when a trove of her papers was discovered in an abandoned house near Chicago and retrieved by the University of Arkansas. In 2018 publisher Schirmer gained the rights to Price’s catalog, and her works are becoming increasingly available. Price originally composed her *Suite of Dances* in 1933 as a set of three piano pieces. She arranged them for wind band in 1939 (with the subtitles “Hoe Cake,” “Rabbit Foot,” and “Ticklin’ Toes”) and reset them as a suite for symphony orchestra in 1951. The work delightfully evokes the style of southern Black folk tunes, and its three movements are upbeat, with obvious, sometimes syncopated, dance rhythms. The last movement evokes the juba, a fast-paced dance with African roots that used the body to create rhythmic sounds through clapping and stamping. The dancers—prohibited from having drums out of fear that they would transmit coded messages—were able to communicate complex ideas and emotions without words (thus preserving and transmitting cultural knowledge), even under the watchful eyes of plantation owners. The juba’s complex rhythms, including syncopations, and improvisational style also laid the groundwork for the development of tap dance in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Contemporary composer **Libby Larsen** is one of America’s most-performed living composers. She earned her undergraduate, master’s, and doctoral degrees from the University of Minnesota School of Music (the latter in 1978) and has composed more than 500 works in a wide range of genres, from intimate vocal and chamber music to massive orchestral works and more than 15 operas. Her compositions draw from a broad and eclectic range of influences that include boogie-woogie, Dixieland jazz, Gregorian chant (learned from nuns at the Catholic school she attended), Berlioz, James Brown, and Bach. In 1973 she cofounded the Minnesota Composers Forum (now the American Composers Forum), a national force in supporting living composers and new music. The first female composer-in-residence with a major orchestra, she premiered her first symphony, “Water Music” (1985), with the Minnesota Orchestra. Her awards include a 1993 Grammy, a Peabody Medal (2010), and a Lifetime Achievement Award from the American Academy of Arts and Letters (2000). She was elected to the American Academy of Arts and Letters in 2024. A strong supporter of new opera (in her words, “indie opera”), she was artistic director of the Virginia Arts Festival’s John Duffy Institute for New Opera from 2014 to 2020. She has recorded extensively, and her 2003 work “Womanly Song of God” at one time served as a kind of anthem for the San Francisco Girls Chorus. Larsen has said, “It is the composer’s task to order and make sense of sound, in time and space, to communicate something about being alive through music.” She certainly accomplished this in her *Dancing Man Rhapsody*, written in 2016 for today’s soloist, violinist Terrie Baune. Combining jazz, classical, and rock idioms, the piece consists of five descriptively titled sections played without a break. The first (“Soft Shoe, Swing”) opens with offbeat finger snaps and a swinging line in the solo. “A Sudden Conga” then breaks out abruptly with a Latin percussion riff before the violins and brass engage in vigorous exchanges. A jazzy plucked string bass provides a continuous pulse in the third section (“A Minute Waltz”); strings soar with blazing melodies; lush lyricism invites introspection; and cadenza-like passages in the solo violin transition to a faster, repeated rhythm. In the infectious “Backwards, in High Heels,” which follows, the repeated notes morph into the “Chopsticks” theme. References to children’s songs and tunes by Mozart and Gershwin are also heard (listen for “Fascinating Rhythm”). The solo violin interjects with jazzy riffs and passages of building wild energy. The final section (“Dancin’ with Kravitz”—a reference to funk musician Lenny Kravitz) cavorts and spirals with a stomping, fervent drive until it ends with one final explosive violin solo. Wanting to convey a sense of finding oneself through music, Larsen, in her own words, created a “cornucopia of music and motion” centered on the image of a “guy dancing his way through the world—doing a conga and a stroll.” With hopes that the audience will engage itself in the energy of the piece, she offers a musical invitation to “come inside and feel what it’s like.”

PROGRAM NOTES: *Sounds of the Americas: American Dance!* (cont.)

Sergei Rachmaninov (1873–1943) was born into a wealthy family in Russia during the late Romantic period of classical music. He entered the St. Petersburg Conservatory at 9 under scholarship, after his family's estates had been sold to settle his father's gambling debts. He transferred to the Moscow Conservatory after his academic studies lapsed following the divorce of his parents and the death of a young sister. Studies there with the strict pianist and professor Nikolay Zverev and others shaped his future career as a conductor, composer, and virtuoso pianist. He graduated at age 19 in 1892, having already composed his first piano concerto and an opera that earned him the conservatory's highest honor. His iconic Piano Prelude in C-Sharp Minor followed later that year (the opening chords evoking the Kremlin's carillon chimes gave it the name "Bells of Moscow"). His first symphony, however, was brutally panned following a chaotic premiere in 1885, leading to a period of depression that stopped him from composing until 1900, when treatment that included hypnosis led to the composition of his Piano Concerto No. 2. His works include multiple piano concerti, preludes, sonatas, symphonies, and operas, plus many songs for voice and piano. Four were written in Germany during stays there from 1906 to 1909, the year he made his first United States tour. Often reflecting his Russian heritage, Rachmaninov's compositions are known for sweeping melodies, lush orchestration, emotional expression, virtuosity, and passages of chromatic counterpoint (the simultaneous playing of multiple melodies with notes that are outside their respective keys). Aspects of liturgical music are often incorporated, particularly the funeral mass's "Dies irae" chant, describing the fate of sinners at the Last Judgment. Rachmaninov wanted to leave Russia in the early months of the 1917 Russian Revolution but was unable to obtain exit visas until an unexpected invitation to perform in Scandinavia was received in October, providing acceptable grounds for travel. With few possessions and little money, Rachmaninov arrived in Sweden on Christmas Eve with his wife and two daughters. In January 1918, they settled in Denmark and subsequently departed for the United States in November. Love of homeland persisted, however, and the observance of Russian customs continued in their new home. Rachmaninov found success as a conductor and soloist, but constant tours left little time for composing. He completed only six compositions—two of them at his Swiss lakefront villa—between 1918 and his 1943 death in California (where he and his wife were then living). His last major orchestral work, *Symphonic Dances* was composed during a vacation on Long Island, New York, in 1940. Strongly echoing memories of a lost homeland, it resurrects ideas from sketches for a ballet score rejected as "unballetic" in 1915. Combining these ideas with new themes, Rachmaninov concurrently composed two versions, one for two pianos titled *Fantastic Dances* and one for orchestra (*Symphonic Dances*). Its first movement (marked "Non allegro") opens with a strong rhythmic pulse in the violins, soon joined by the timpani. A lively melody in the winds appears over this foundation, followed by punctuated chords that conjure up the "Dies irae." The influence of American jazz is heard when an alto saxophone—an instrumental novelty in symphonic music at the time—interjects a lyrical melody in the movement's center. As the movement ends, quotes from the composer's ill-fated First Symphony are heard. The second movement's waltz ebbs and flows, with meters repeatedly vacillating from 6/8 and 3/8 to 9/8, leaving the listener off-kilter; interruptions by the trumpets add to this effect. The finale takes the form of a chase, as intertwining quotations from the "Dies irae" and the chant "Blessed art thou, Lord" (an ancient church chant adapted by Rachmaninov for his 1915 *Vespers*) coalesce as a battle between the pessimistic "Dies irae" message and the optimistic *Vespers* chant representing resurrection, with the resurrection theme emerging victorious—at this point in his score, the composer wrote the notation "Hallelujah"!



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