



# *The Sea in Us*

Featuring  
Eva Kahn, cello

## Program

The Sea in Us (world premiere)

Josiah Tayag Catalan (1989)  
(DSO composer-in-residence)

Cello Concerto, Op. 37 (1946)

Erich Wolfgang Korngold (1897 – 1957)

Mélodie, Op. 20 (1887)

Alexander Glazunov (1865 – 1936)

*Evan Kahn, cello*

## INTERMISSION

La Mer (The Sea): Three Symphonic Sketches (1905)

Claude Debussy (1862 – 1918)

I. From Dawn to Noon on the Sea

II. Play of the Waves

III. Dialogue of the Wind and the Sea

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**March 28, 2025, 7:30 p.m. • Rossmoor Event Center**

**March 30, 2025, 2:00 p.m. • Leshner Center for the Arts**

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## BIOGRAPHIES



In addition to being music director and conductor of the Diablo Symphony Orchestra, **Matilda Hofman** is conductor-in-residence of the Emyrean 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.



San Francisco-based conductor and composer **Jaco Wong** embraces his American education while being deeply rooted in his Hong Kong upbringing. In addition to his interest in diverse repertoire—ranging from symphonic, operatic, and choral to contemporary music, jazz, and pop—Wong pushes boundaries of the traditional concert music setting with multidisciplinary projects and innovative ways of exploring topics of science, philosophy, and culture. He serves as an assistant conductor of the San Francisco Symphony, associate conductor of Opera Parallèle, and music director at Pacific Palisades Presbyterian Church and was previously an assistant conductor of the Oakland Symphony. Several of his compositions have been published and performed. As an active educator, Wong serves as the orchestra director of the Harker School and is on the conducting faculty at San Francisco Conservatory of Music Pre-College Division and the music director of the Santa Rosa Symphony Youth Orchestra. He was formerly the resident conductor of the Great Wall Youth Chinese Orchestra and the choral director and musical vocal director of Palisades Charter High School. Wong holds a professional studies certificate in orchestral conducting from the San Francisco Conservatory of Music and a double master's degree in music composition and choral conducting from University of Southern California, where he was the recipient of a Morten Lauridsen Endowed Scholarship.



California-based cellist **Evan Kahn** has been praised as “a cellist deserved of serious listening” for bringing his “electrifying ... nuanced and colorful” style to all of his collaborations, from concerti to chamber music to contemporary performances. He has commissioned and premiered more than 60 works by composers from around the world, including his father's cello concerto. Kahn holds principal positions in four orchestras: San Francisco Opera, New Century Chamber Orchestra, Opera San Jose, and the San Jose Chamber Orchestra. Dedicated to the orchestral craft, he has also performed with the Cleveland Orchestra, LA Opera, and San Francisco Symphony and as acting principal cellist with the Britt Music and Arts Festival. He is the resident cellist of several Bay Area small ensembles, including Ninth Planet, After Everything, and the Farallon Quintet. Kahn received a master's degree in chamber music at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music, studying with Jennifer Culp. He graduated with college and university honors from Carnegie Mellon University, where he studied with David Premo. He plays on a cello by Italian luthier Carlo Carletti, c. 1900, and a bow made for cellist Lynn Harrell by archetier Paul Martin Siefried.



**Josiah Tayag Catalan**, the DSO's 2024–2025 composer-in-residence, is a Filipino-American composer born in New York City and raised in the San Francisco Bay Area. Recently his compositional interests have centered on discovering the intersections of music influenced by traditional, avant garde, popular, and indigenous Philippine music. He has been a finalist in the Thailand International Competition Festival and has been awarded prizes from NACUSA, the Sacramento State Festival of New American Music, the Megalopolis Saxophone Orchestra, the American Prize Composer's Awards, and the San Francisco Contemporary Music Players. His music has been commissioned and performed internationally by individuals and groups such as the Left Coast Chamber Ensemble, Earplay, Emyrean Ensemble, the Lydian and Arditti String Quartets, the MANA saxophone quartet, the Megalopolis Saxophone Orchestra, Citywater, violinist Miranda Cuckson, percussionist Chris Froh, and soprano Helena Sorokina. Currently Catalan is serving as a lecturer in music theory, composition, and world music at Sacramento State University and UC Davis. He received his PhD at UC Davis in composition and music theory.

## PROGRAM NOTES: *The Sea in Us*

Composer **Josiah Tayag Catalan** writes: The title and idea of “**The Sea in Us**” come from the Filipina poet Edith Tiempo’s “Wandered Far.” In this poem, I found her describing the sea as a metaphor for lived and spiritual memories that remain within her as well as the sea as a barrier that separates us physically from the communities we are ancestrally connected to.

This piece alludes to some of those faint memories of the Philippines within me as well as the desire in recent years to find those connections with my heritage across the vast Pacific Ocean that separates us. In the music, you will hear this represented in the strings playing hollow and scintillating sounds; the orchestra playing reconfigurations of music, harmonies, and rhythms of indigenous cultures in Mindanao I have had the opportunity to spend time with over the last couple years; and the *kulintang* (Philippine gong instrument) representing the thread I find as one of the biggest ancestral musical connections between the Philippines and many artists in the Bay Area and the US who are part of the Philippine diaspora.

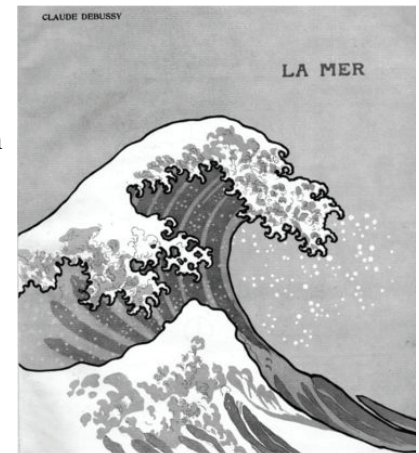
**Erich Korngold** was born to a Jewish family in Brünn, Austria-Hungary (now Czech Republic). He grew up in Vienna, where his father, Julius, was an influential music critic. A child prodigy, Korngold began studies at the Vienna Conservatory at 9 but left the conservatory the next year, after Gustav Mahler (who called him a genius) recommended he study with composer, conductor, and teacher Alexander Zemlinsky. During his four years with Zemlinsky, Korngold completed numerous compositions, including an ambitious four-movement piano trio and a ballet (*The Snowman*) that was performed at the Vienna Court Opera to great acclaim when he was 13. His Piano Concerto No. 2, completed that year, was performed throughout Europe by Artur Schnabel. His opera *The Dead City* (written when he was 23) became one of the greatest hits of the 1920s but was banned by the Nazi regime because of Korngold’s Jewish ancestry. In 1932 he traveled to the US to adapt Mendelssohn’s music for the Warner Brothers film *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*. He traveled between the US and Europe until 1938, when the spread of Nazism forced him to leave Europe for good. He settled in California, and in that year, he won an Academy Award for Best Original Score for *The Adventures of Robin Hood*, the first time an Oscar was awarded to a composer rather than a studio music department. With his operatic background, Korngold revolutionized cinematic music into the richly romantic, intricate, and melodic Germanic Warner Brothers house sound of the 1930s and 1940s. Among the techniques borrowed from Germanic opera tradition, the use of leitmotifs (musical themes for characters, items, or concepts) has greatly influenced the film music of today. In 1946 Korngold wrote the score for the film *Deception*, a melodrama about the goings-on between a pianist (played by Bette Davis), a cellist, and a composer. A key plot element is a concerto written, to devious ends, for the cellist (before the composer catapults down a staircase after being shot to death by the pianist, who happens to be the cellist’s wife). Korngold expanded the score’s solo cello passages (from the deviously motivated concerto) into his one-movement **Cello Concerto Op. 37 in C**, premiered in Los Angeles the year the film was released. Dramatic passages and stunning lyrical melodies evidence its dual origins: German Romanticism and Hollywood cinema. The musical texture is homophonic—where a single dominant melody is accompanied by chords or harmonies in other voices—and the turbulent opening, a lyrical slow section, and a grand recapitulation recall the structure of a traditional three-movement concerto. An opening gong and dramatic orchestral chords summon the first of two contrasting themes: a melody in the cello marked “*Allegro moderato, ma con fuoco*” (moderately fast but with fire!) that sets a stormy mood. A rich, lyrical second theme emerges and becomes the basis for an extended slow section. Finally, a rapidly paced recapitulation of the first theme morphs into an adrenaline-filled cadenza—with echoes of “The Flight of the Bumblebee”—that increases in speed and pitch as it leads to a grand ending, complete with cymbal crashes and definitive chords.

**Alexander Glazunov**, born and raised in St. Petersburg, was the major Russian symphonic composer in the post-Tchaikovsky generation. Known for its conservatism, his music formed a bridge between the Russian and the German styles of composition. Glazunov possessed a remarkable ear for melody, orchestration skills, a mastery of tonal harmony, and a sharp musical mind that enabled him to memorize pieces of music after only one hearing. Among Glazunov’s first teachers was the composer—and master of orchestration—Rimsky-Korsakov, who promoted his student’s Symphony No. 1, composed in 1881, when Glazunov was 16. Another primary influence was Franz Liszt, whom he visited in Germany in 1884. Glazunov achieved fame in Russia and internationally by age 21 and became a professor of instrumentation at the St. Petersburg Conservatory at 34. He was elected director of the conservatory in 1905, a post he held until he left Russia permanently, in 1928. He was instrumental in the reorganization of the conservatory after the end of World War I (possibly the main reason he waited so long to go into exile in Paris). He worked tirelessly to improve the curriculum, raise the standards for students and staff, and defend the institution’s dignity and autonomy. His compositions included symphonies, orchestral/choral works, violin and piano concerti, and a virtuoso and lyrical concerto for alto saxophone composed in 1934. (He died in Paris in 1936 but was buried, at his request, in St. Petersburg.) Glazunov’s highly expressive “**Mélodie**,” the first piece in Op. 20’s *Two Pieces for Cello and Orchestra*, was written in 1888 and shares similarities in style and mood with works by other Russian composers, including Tchaikovsky and Borodin. Its lyrical single movement features lush, sonorous orchestration; gentle, flowing rhythms; and a focus on the expressiveness of the cello, which takes the lead in presenting the poignant, flowing melody so beautifully conveying the warmth of Russian Romantic music.



## PROGRAM NOTES: *The Sea in Us*

When the French composer **Claude Debussy** was a child, his nonmusical, financially struggling family was living in Paris when the Franco-Prussian War broke out, in 1870. To escape the siege of Paris at the end of the war, the 7-year-old Debussy moved with his mother and sister to an aunt's home in seaside Cannes, where he received his first piano lessons during their year there. In Paris his father, Manuel, joined the revolutionary Paris Commune, formed after Prussia defeated France in early 1871. While jailed after the Commune fell to the French army in May, Manuel met the son of pianist Madame Mauté, who accepted the 9-year-old Debussy as her student after hearing of his talent. He entered the Paris Conservatoire a year later and studied there for the next 11 years, constantly challenging traditional fundamentals of form and harmony. In 1884 he won France's Prix de Rome and related three-year scholarship to the French Academy at Rome's Villa Medici, but growing unhappy, he abandoned the scholarship after two years and returned to Paris. His life was also complicated by chaotic relationships and scandal, although his second troubled marriage, to his mistress (and mother of his only child), lasted from 1908 until his death in 1918. Inspired by the arts (including the music of Wagner and Mussorgsky, the paintings of Monet, and the seascapes of the English painter Joseph Turner), his music is known for harmonies that dissolve rather than resolve; pedal points (sustained tones during which at least one dissonant harmony is sounded); bitonality (simultaneous use of two different musical keys); pentatonic scales (scales with five whole steps per octave, typically heard in Asian music, including Indonesian gamelan music); and glittering, fragmented passages. In many ways, his harmonies and musical structure echo the Impressionism in art that captured fleeting moments and sensations rather than detailed realism. Debussy saw music as "a free art, boundless as the elements, the wind, the sky, and the sea" and called the sea "my friend." His many musical depictions of the sea culminated in the three-movement *La Mer*, a "part symphony and part tone poem" epic that evokes the sea's ever-changing moods, eddies, and mysteries. Composed between 1903 and 1905, it particularly reveals the influence of Turner's seascapes, gamelan music, and Japanese artist Hokusai's print "Under the Wave off Kanagawa" (partially reproduced on the cover of the first published *La Mer* score). Debussy called the work's movements "symphonic sketches" suggesting the spirit of the ocean. The first movement evokes the sun rising to full splendor over the water—a progression from near-darkness in which objects are indistinct to brightness that reveals them clearly. After soft celli announce the dawn, the music, like water, swells and retreats in appearing and disappearing melodic fragments, some employing pentatonic scales. Finally, a brass chorale suggests the ocean's depths as the sun travels across the sky. The middle movement (an interlude between the forceful first and third movements) opens quietly before a playful scherzo—with irregular rhythms, non-Western scales, and intricate textures—emerges to portray the unpredictable motion of wind-driven waves that alternately break apart and come back together. As the movement concludes, the sea's unsettled surface gives way to the return of expansive serenity. The final movement represents the wind in often turbulent dialogue with the sea. Opening with the threat of an approaching storm, the music becomes stronger and more ominous, leading to the emergence of an exquisite melody, "as if a mermaid were singing." A sense of buoyancy is created by multiple iterations of simple themes heard against kaleidoscopic, multilayered textures. Evocations of the first movement's "chorale from the depths"; an oompah section with timpani, cymbals, and bass drum; and a galloping pattern of recurring hoofbeats in the strings are also heard (was Debussy echoing Walter Crane's 1892 painting *Neptune's Horses*, in which phantom beasts materialize from a cresting wave?). Finally, forceful dissonance washes in as rain, lightning, and wind join and waves surge, before the work ends with a resounding timpani stroke.



"Under the Wave off Kanagawa" by Katsushika Hokusai

**The Diablo Symphony Association gratefully  
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The mission of the Diablo Symphony Orchestra is to enrich the lives and cultural climate of our community by performing a diverse repertoire of live classical music and making it accessible to our region's diverse population. We foster the next generation of young musicians, provide educational programs, and offer performing opportunities to local musicians.

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The grant will be used to bring Walnut Creek school children to Diablo Symphony concerts at the Leshner Center for the Arts. The orchestra will also take concerts to Walnut Creek Schools during the school year.

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