



Celebrating Classical Music

Monterey Symphony Marks
80 Years of Excellence

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PHOTOGRAPHY BY MANNY ESPINOZA



Under the guidance of Music Director Jayce Ogren, the Monterey Symphony is celebrating its 80th anniversary.

The popularity of classical music has ebbed and flowed over the decades in the United States and is currently riding a wave of renewed popularity—buoyed surprisingly by an uptick in interest among listeners under 35. But since its inception, the Monterey Symphony has enjoyed a steady and loyal audience. Fun fact: “We sold out every concert in the 2024/2025 season,” says Symphony President and CEO Nicola Shangrow Reilly.

The Symphony was established in 1946 at a tea at the Carmel home of singer and business owner Grace Howden. Then as now, the organization presents varied programs of orchestral music—



both classical and contemporary—for the populations of both the Monterey Peninsula and Salinas. Over the years, many consummate professionals have taken up a baton to lead this esteemed orchestra and have been associated with prestigious musical organizations such as the New York Philharmonic, the Vienna Boys Choir and the San Francisco Ballet. The Monterey Symphony will celebrate its 80th anniversary over the 2025/2026 season under the guidance of Music Director Jayce Ogren.

“We are really lucky to have the support of this wonderful community,” Reilly says. “As one of the largest arts organizations in Monterey County, we feel we have a respon-



The Monterey Symphony is comprised of 75 tenured musicians with an incredible array of talent and, because orchestral musicians rarely play with just one organization, the resumes of these musicians include experience in symphonies all over the world.



In addition to its many concerts at the Sunset Center in Carmel, the Monterey Symphony will perform its “Love Letter to Paris” at Carmel’s Outdoor Forest Theater and, for students from all around Monterey County, at Sherwood Hall in Salinas.

sibility to our public.” Monterey Symphony is deeply committed to bringing musical instruction to children. “We bring the music to the kids, and work with local music teachers to enhance what their schools can’t provide.” Perhaps that type of outreach accounts for the interest of younger audiences.

The symphony is comprised of 75 tenured musicians. The professional life of an orchestral musician is rarely limited to one organization, and the symphony must maintain a list of players that can be slotted in. “Our substitute violinist list is more than 200 names long,” Reilly adds. But these are true pros, and the performances are always top tier.

Reilly has been with the symphony since

2016. “Going into our 80th year is exciting,” she says, “and we have some fun and interesting things scheduled to celebrate.” The season kicks off September 16 and 17



at the Outdoor Forest Theater with “Love Letter to Paris,” featuring “Can Can” from “Orpheus in the Underworld” by Jacques Offenbach, George Gershwin’s “Am-erican in Paris” and “La Vie

en rose,” made famous by the iconic Edith Piaf. Concerts celebrating the music of Rachmaninoff, Tchaikovsky, Grieg, Bruckner, Schubert and Haydn, among others, are also on the schedule.

Opening the full Symphony schedule October 18 is Saxophone Concerto + Rachmaninoff Symphony No. 2 followed by the world premiere of “Anemology” by Grammy-winning composer Steven Mackey, who began his musical journey as a rock guitarist. The program features saxophonist Timothy McAllister (playfully named the “World’s Greatest Living Classical Saxophone Player”). Reilly says, “Those two are some of the most fun classical music dudes to hang out with.”



The horn section for the 2025/2026 season of the Monterey Symphony includes Principal Daniel Nebel, Assistant Principal/Utility Alicia Mastromonaco, Caitlyn Smith-Franklin, Beth Zare and, pictured above left, Sadie Glass.



For the bars on a marimba, rosewood is the most desirable choice of wood, as it is the type that creates the best sound quality.

In April, an eclectic mix of composers are highlighted in "Wineglass Clarinet Concerto + Zappa + Beethoven's Eroica." Monterey Symphony's Composer in Residence John Wineglass will premier his new concerto "Democracy" with master clarinetist Mariam Adam. Frank Zappa, known for his unusual and masterful music, created the symphonic work "Dog Breath Variations," based on one of his compositions with the Mothers of Invention. The evening rounds out with Beethoven's Symphony No. 3, "Eroica."

"In May, we are collaborating with Secretary Leon Panetta in which he will narrate Aaron Copeland's 'Lincoln Portrait,'" Reilly adds. The Symphony will stage an 80th gala celebration in January 2026, featuring a 1940s theme and dancing to mark their milestone anniversary.

For more information, call 831/646-8511 or visit www.montereysymphony.org.