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Photo credit: Stefan Cohen. Images of Christian Reif and the SFS Youth Orchestra are available for download in the [SFSYO Press Kit](#)

## **SAN FRANCISCO SYMPHONY YOUTH ORCHESTRA CELEBRATES 35TH ANNIVERSARY IN THE 2017–18 SEASON**

**SFSYO and the International Contemporary Ensemble commission ... *within the shifting grounds* ... by Iranian composer Anahita Abbasi; World premiere performance on March 4 will be live-streamed via the San Francisco Symphony's [Facebook page](#) at approximately 2:20 pm PST**

**March 4 concert also includes Beethoven's *Symphony No. 7*, and small ensemble music by Gabrieli, Ruggles, R. Strauss, and Michael Burritt**

**SFSYO 35th Anniversary Season culminates May 13 with performance of Stravinsky's *Le Sacre du printemps*, Fauré's *Pelléas et Mélisande*, and Ligeti's *Concert Românesc***

**SAN FRANCISCO, February 16, 2018**—The San Francisco Symphony Youth Orchestra celebrates its 35th anniversary this season. Recognized as one of the finest youth orchestras in the world, the SFSYO presents two concerts in March and May that showcase its remarkable artistry in programs that include symphonic core repertoire, rarely heard orchestral works, and the world premiere of ... *within the shifting grounds* ... by Iranian composer Anahita Abbasi. SFSYO musicians are selected from hundreds of applicants from the greater Bay Area through annual auditions and receive a pre-professional caliber tuition-free orchestra experience. SFSYO musicians receive weekly coaching by SFS musicians, have opportunities throughout each season to work with various esteemed visiting artists, as well as rehearsals and performances at Davies Symphony Hall under the direction of Wattis Foundation Music Director Christian Reif. To date, the Youth Orchestra has embarked on ten international tours including appearances at the Amsterdam Concertgebouw and Berliner Philharmonie, and released ten recordings.



Composer Anahita Abbasi attends a SFS Youth Orchestra rehearsal of her new composition at Davies Symphony Hall. Photo courtesy of the SFS.

This season the SFS Youth Orchestra partnered with the International Contemporary Ensemble (ICE) to commission ... *within the shifting grounds* ... by Iranian composer Anahita Abbasi, and will give its world premiere performance at Davies Symphony Hall on March 4, to be live-streamed on the Symphony's Facebook page [www.facebook.com/sfsymphony](http://www.facebook.com/sfsymphony) at approximately 2:20 pm Pacific Standard Time.



*Members of the International Contemporary Ensemble rehearse Anahita Abbasi's new composition with Youth Orchestra Music Director Christian Reif and the SFS Youth Orchestra. Photo courtesy of the SFS.*

Through EntICE, a new education program by ICE in which leading composers from around the world write new works for youth ensembles, ICE musicians work with the SFSYO through the entire collaborative process of bringing a new composition to life, and will perform with the Youth Orchestra in concert. "I was immediately intrigued when ICE called me to say that the San Francisco Symphony would like to commission me to write a piece for the talented SFSYO," says Anahita Abbasi. "Our goal is to introduce these young musicians to contemporary music, and to work with a diverse palette of sounds and techniques in order to open their minds, ears and imaginations." She continues, "I myself am very interested in how the quality and colors of a sound and its gestures carry endless variations of combinations, and how their position in the space plays with our perception. This prompted me to write this piece for 12 soloists scattered in the hall along with the full orchestra. The young musicians of the SFSYO, ICE, and Christian Reif are incredible musicians, coaches, and the best collaborators I could hope for!" The program also includes small ensemble works that showcase various sections of the orchestra, including **Giovanni Gabrieli's *Canzon septimi toni a 8*** and ***Sonata pian'e forte*, Carl Ruggles' *Angels for Muted Brass*, Strauss' *Serenade for Winds in E-flat major*, and Michael Burritt's *Fandango 13 for Six Percussionists*. The program concludes with **Beethoven's *Symphony No. 7 in A major***.**

Reif and the SFSYO conclude the season on May 13 in a program featuring **Fauré's *Suite from Pelléas et Mélisande*, Opus 80**, **Ligeti's *Concert Românesc***, and **Stravinsky's *Le Sacre du printemps*** [1947 version].

### About Anahita Abbasi



**Anahita Abbasi** is an Iranian composer of acoustic and electro-acoustic music whose works have been performed around the world in festivals such as Darmstadt Ferienkurse, Ircam (Manifeste Academy), Matrix ( Experimental studio des SWR), Impuls festival, Time of music, and Atlas festival, among many others. In 2014, she received the work-scholarship from Experimentalstudio des SWR in Freiburg. A recipient of a 2015 Morton Gold ASCAP young composers award, Abbasi was also nominated in 2017 as the "women composers of our time" alongside Kaija Saariaho and Isabel Mundry. She is one of the founders of Schallfeld Ensemble in Graz, Austria. Anahita Abbasi (b. 1985, Iran) graduated from the University of Music and Performing Arts in Graz, Austria, where she studied music theory with Clemens Gadenstätter and composition with Beat Furrer and Pierluigi Billone, while working closely with Georges Aperghis, Franck Bedrossian and Philippe Leroux. Abbasi currently resides in San Diego and is pursuing her Ph.D. in Composition with Rand Steiger at the University of California San Diego.

### About the International Contemporary Ensemble



The **International Contemporary Ensemble** (ICE) is an artist collective committed to transforming the way music is created and experienced. As performer, curator, and educator, ICE explores how new music intersects with communities across the world. The ensemble's 35 members are featured as soloists, chamber musicians, commissioners, and collaborators with the foremost musical artists of our time. Works by emerging composers have anchored ICE's programming since its founding in 2001, and the group's recordings and digital platforms highlight the many voices that weave music's present.

A recipient of the American Music Center's Trailblazer Award and the Chamber Music America/ASCAP Award for Adventurous Programming, ICE was also named the 2014 Musical America Ensemble of the Year. The group currently serves as artists-in-residence at Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts' Mostly Mozart Festival, and previously led a five-year residency at the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago. ICE has been featured at

the Ojai Music Festival since 2015, and has appeared at festivals abroad such as Acht Brücken Cologne and Musica nova Helsinki. Other recent performance stages include the Park Avenue Armory, The Stone, ice floes at Greenland's Diskotek Sessions, and boats on the Amazon River.

New initiatives include OpenICE, made possible with lead funding from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, which offers free concerts and related programming wherever ICE performs, and enables a working process with composers to unfold in public settings. DigitICE catalogues the ensemble's performances in a free online streaming video library. ICE's First Page program is a commissioning consortium that fosters close collaborations between performers, composers, and listeners as new music is developed. EntICE, a side-by-side youth program, places ICE musicians within youth orchestras as they premiere new commissioned works together. Inaugural EntICE partners include Youth Orchestra Los Angeles and The People's Music School in Chicago. Yamaha Artist Services New York is the exclusive piano provider for ICE. Read more at [iceorg.org](http://iceorg.org).

### **About Christian Reif**



[Christian Reif](#) was appointed the San Francisco Symphony's Resident Conductor and Wattis Foundation Music Director of the San Francisco Symphony Youth Orchestra in the 2016-17 season. In this role, he assists Music Director Michael Tilson Thomas and several guest conductors with subscription concerts, touring, semi-staged productions, recordings and other special projects. In addition, he conducts the San Francisco Symphony in selected *Concerts for Kids*, *Adventures in Music*, and *Music for Families* concerts, which annually draw more than 26,000 young people and their families from throughout the Bay Area to Davies Symphony Hall. Reif, a native of Germany, made his San Francisco Symphony debut in September 2015 leading the West Coast premiere of Ted Hearne's *Dispatches*. Highlights of Reif's 2016-17 season include leading the Deutsche Staatsphilharmonie Rheinland-Pfalz in the opening concert of the International Festival Heidelberger Frühling, performing Mozart's *Jupiter* Symphony and Mahler's "*Das Lied von der Erde*" with Michelle DeYoung and Toby Spence. He also led the Kitchener-Waterloo Symphony and the Berkeley Symphony in several critically acclaimed concerts. Reif curated a SFS Soundbox concert in March 2017, titled "*Rebel*"

featuring music by composers who struggled with political oppression and censorship, spanning an arc from Germany's Weimar Republic over Soviet Union to contemporary America.

Christian Reif recently completed two seasons as conducting fellow with the New World Symphony in Miami, where he was mentored by SF Symphony Music Director Michael Tilson Thomas. Reif completed his master of music in conducting at the Juilliard School under Alan Gilbert, where he received the Charles Schiff Conducting Award. He also studied with Dennis Russell Davies at the Mozarteum Salzburg. In summer 2015, Reif conducted the Tanglewood Music Center Orchestra in several world premieres as part of Tanglewood's 75th anniversary summer, which led to his appointment as a Tanglewood conducting fellow for the summer of 2016. During that appointment, he stepped in for Seiji Ozawa, conducting the Seiji Ozawa International Academy Switzerland. He has also worked as assistant and cover conductor for the Los Angeles Philharmonic and Boston Symphony Orchestra, and in 2014, he served as assistant conductor for Alan Gilbert at the New York Phil Biennial. Reif won the German Operetta Prize 2015, awarded by the German Music Council. He is currently a member of Germany's Conductor's Forum (Dirigentenforum).

### **About the SFSYO**

Now celebrating its 35th Anniversary Season, the [San Francisco Symphony Youth Orchestra](#) (SFSYO) is recognized internationally as one of the finest youth orchestras in the world. Founded by the [San Francisco Symphony](#) in 1981, the SFSYO's musicians are chosen from more than 300 applicants in annual auditions. The SFSYO's purpose is to provide an orchestral experience of pre-professional caliber, tuition-free, to talented young musicians from the greater Bay Area. The more than 100 diverse musicians, ranging in age from 12 to 21, represent communities from throughout the Bay Area. The SFSYO rehearses and performs at Davies Symphony Hall under the direction of Wattis Foundation Music Director Christian Reif, whose first season with the Orchestra was 2016–2017. Jahja Ling served as the SFSYO's first Music Director, followed by David Milnes, Leif Bjaland, Alasdair Neale, Edwin Outwater, Benjamin Shwartz, and Donato Cabrera, who stepped down at the conclusion of the 2015-16 season.

As part of the SFSYO's innovative training program, musicians from the San Francisco Symphony coach the young players each Saturday afternoon in sectional rehearsals, followed by full orchestra rehearsals with Reif. SFSYO members also have the opportunity to work with many of the world-renowned artists who perform with the SFS each week. SFS Music Director Michael Tilson Thomas, SFS Conductor Laureate Herbert Blomstedt, Sir Simon Rattle, Kurt Masur, Valery Gergiev, Leonard Slatkin, Yo-Yo Ma, Isaac Stern, Yehudi Menuhin, Vladimir Ashkenazy, Midori, Joshua Bell, Gil Shaham, Sarah Chang, and many others have worked with the SFSYO. Of equal importance, the students are able to talk with these prominent musicians, asking questions about their lives, their professional and personal experiences, and about

music. The SFSYO has toured internationally on ten different occasions, garnering rave reviews and critical acclaim for its artistry. Its alumni have won positions in many major orchestras throughout the US and in Europe.

**Calendar editors, please note:**

Tickets to the SF Symphony Youth Orchestra's 2017–18 season are on sale at [www.sfsymphony.org](http://www.sfsymphony.org), (415) 864-6000, and at the Davies Symphony Hall Box Office, located on Grove Street between Franklin and Van Ness.

All concerts are at Davies Symphony Hall, 201 Van Ness Avenue, San Francisco.

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## SAN FRANCISCO SYMPHONY YOUTH ORCHESTRA

[Sunday, March 4, 2018 at 2 pm](#)

**Christian Reif** conductor  
**International Contemporary Ensemble**  
**San Francisco Symphony Youth Orchestra**

<b>GABRIELI</b>	<i>Canzon septimi toni a 8</i> (Ch. 172)
<b>RUGGLES</b>	<i>Angels for Muted Brass</i>
<b>GABRIELI</b>	<i>Sonata pian'e forte</i> (Ch. 175)
<b>STRAUSS</b>	<i>Serenade in E-flat major, Opus 7</i>
<b>Michael BURRITT</b>	<i>Fandango 13</i>
<b>Anahita ABBASI</b>	<i>... within the shifting grounds ...</i>
<b>BEETHOVEN</b>	<i>Symphony No. 7 in A major, Opus 92</i>

**Tickets:** \$55 reserved seating, \$15 general admission.

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## SAN FRANCISCO SYMPHONY YOUTH ORCHESTRA

[Sunday, May 13, 2018 at 2pm](#)

**Christian Reif** conductor  
**San Francisco Symphony Youth Orchestra**

<b>FAURÉ</b>	<i>Suite from Pelléas et Mélisande, Opus 80</i>
<b>LIGETI</b>	<i>Concert Românesc</i>
<b>STRAVINSKY</b>	<i>Le Sacre du printemps</i> [1947 revision]

**Tickets:** \$55 reserved seating, \$15 general admission.

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