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Songs of Youth, Hope, and Solidarity

Sunday, November 5, 2023 at 4 PM

Old First Church

1751 Sacramento St. at Van Ness Ave.

San Francisco, CA 94109

(415) 474-1608 www.oldfirstconcerts.org

Old First Concerts' piano is a New York Steinway D model, circa 1980, with Hamburg action. It was donated by The Stanley Ibler Fund, and is maintained by David Love Piano Service and Restoration.

ABOUT OLD FIRST CONCERTS

- Great venue for music with beautiful acoustics and amazing Steinway concert grand piano.
- Primarily local emerging and mid-career professional musicians presenting innovative programs.
- Every concert offers new insights and virtuosic performances.
- Complimentary refreshments served at intermission or after the concert.
- An independent 501(c)3 non-profit organization devoted to presenting music at affordable prices, especially for low-income seniors and students.
- Solo, chamber music, and world music concerts year-round since 1970.

DONATING TO OLD FIRST CONCERTS

Ticket sales provide about 38 percent of our operating revenue each year. In addition, we rely on support from private foundations and Grants for the Arts from the city of San Francisco. Our generous individual donors complete the picture. We invite you to join us in our mission to connect audiences and local musicians and build up the classical music and world music scene in San Francisco. Donations are tax-deductible and donating on our website is easy and secure: www.oldfirstconcerts.org/give/, or checks can be mailed to:

Old First Concerts, 1751 Sacramento Street, San Francisco, CA 94109.
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Enjoy free concerts, make new friends, and help support your favorite non-profit organization! Volunteering with Old First Concerts is a wonderful opportunity for students, seniors, or anyone with a passion for music—and we'll work with your availability!

contact: curtishuth@oldfirstconcerts for more information.

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Following us on **Facebook** is a great way to keep informed about the latest concert information. While you are there, don't forget to **share** events with your friends and hit the "Like" button liberally. [facebook.com/oldfirstconcerts/](https://www.facebook.com/oldfirstconcerts/)

You can also find us on **Instagram @oldfirstconcerts** with information about upcoming events plus photos and videos from our concerts.

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COMING UP AT OLD FIRST CONCERTS

Monday, October 16 at 7 pm

Amateur Music Network presents Sarah Cahill's Backstage Pass

with guest artist Jason Vieaux, guitar

How does a jazz pianist create a unique arrangement of a standard? Why do notation and improvisation seem like such separate worlds? We'll explore these questions and more in this new series, with guest artists demonstrating and revealing the secret processes behind their music.

Sunday, January 28 at 4 pm

Ives Collective

Presenting powerful live music experiences through fresh and informed interpretations of established masterworks and under-appreciated gems, the Ives Collective's winter set builds on last season's commitment to presenting lesser heard works by women composers, with works by Mélanie Bonis and Dame Ethel Smyth.

Monday, February 5 at 7:30 pm

Earplay—*The Poetry of Physics*

Challenging the audience to broaden its concept of music with new emotional and auditory experiences, Earplay performs the World Premiere of stellar Chilean-American composer Miguel Chuaqui's Ad Hoc, West Coast Premieres by Suzanne Sorkin and Yotam Haber, and works by Kaija Saariaho and Ines Thiebaud.

OLD FIRST CONCERTS DONORS

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PROGRAM

Hanns Eisler (1898–1962)

Piano Sonata No. 3 (1943)

I. —

II. Adagio

III. Allegro con spirito

Hyo-shin Na (b. 1959)

Piano Study 3 (2001)

Hyo-shin Na

Song So Old (2022) West Coast Premiere

Intermission

Frederic Rzewski (1938–2021)

from **The People United Will Never Be Defeated!** (1975)

(36 Variations on “¡El pueblo unido jamás será vencido!”)

Theme – With determination

Var. 19 – With energy

Var. 20 – Crisp, precise

Var. 21 – Relentless, uncompromising

Var. 22

Var. 23 – As fast as possible, with some rubato

Var. 24

Var. 25 – With fluctuations

Var. 26 – In a militant manner

Var. 27 – Tenderly, and with a hopeful expression

Var. 28

Var. 29

Var. 30

ABOUT THE MUSIC

Hanns Eisler (1898–1962) *Piano Sonata No. 3* (1943)

After World War I, the German composer Hanns Eisler studied with Arnold Schoenberg until 1923, then moved to Berlin and began collaborating with writer Bertolt Brecht on music for plays, film scores, and songs—especially political and protest songs such as the *Solidaritätslied*. His music was subsequently banned by the Nazi Party. He fled Germany and eventually emigrated to the United States, settling in Los Angeles in 1942 and reuniting with Schoenberg and Brecht. Here in the United States, Eisler composed music for Hollywood and for documentaries, as well as plenty of songs and instrumental music. It was a brief stay. During the Red Scare after World War II, Eisler was deported in 1948 due to his previous involvement with the Communist Party of Germany. These were his last words in the United States: “I could well understand it when in 1933 the Hitler bandits put a price on my head and drove me out. They were the evil of the period; I was proud at being driven out. But I feel heartbroken over being driven out of this beautiful country in this ridiculous way.” –KLS

Hyo-shin Na (b. 1959) *Piano Study 3* (2001)

Piano Study 3 (2001) was commissioned by the Los Angeles consortium Piano Spheres. The pianist Susan Svrcek had taken an interest in my music, and I wrote the piece for her. It's a set of variations on a simple Norwegian melody that describes the physical appearance and character of a girl named Marcan Covcona. Such a melody is sung without announcing who is being referred to, yet the intended person would recognize herself in it. I was fascinated by the simple, direct, honest nature of the song and tried to write music that was permeated by it. Susan gave the first performance of the piece in Pasadena. –Hyo-shin Na

COMING UP AT OLD FIRST CONCERTS

Friday, December 15 at 8 pm

Young Women's Chorus of San Francisco

The award-winning chorus returns to Old First Concerts for its beloved annual *Carols by Candlelight* performance. Start your holiday season with this exquisite candle-lit concert, presenting traditional carols and those re-envisioned – alongside original seasonal works.

Saturday December 16 at 8 pm

Golden Bough—Christmas in a Celtic Land

Share the laughter, song and joy with rare versions of Celtic songs of Winter, and a unique take on better known Christmas Carols.

Sunday, December 17 at 4 pm

KITKA—Wintersongs—Shira Cion, Director

What sustains us in times of darkness, scarcity, uncertainty, and hardship? Kitka's *Wintersongs* program this year is a musical response to this question, featuring songs that express wonder and gratitude for the miracle of creation, the diversity of life on Earth, and the mysterious influences of heavenly bodies.

Sunday, January 7 at 2 pm

Sarah Cahill, piano

Sarah Cahill, hailed as “a sterling pianist and an intrepid illuminator of the classical avant-garde” by *The New York Times* and “a brilliant and charismatic advocate for modern and contemporary composers” by *Time Out New York*, has commissioned and premiered over seventy compositions for solo piano. For this concert, she will perform Samuel Coleridge-Taylor's *Forest Scenes, Op. 66*, along with other works.

For tickets & more information visit www.oldfirstconcerts.org

COMING UP AT OLD FIRST CONCERTS

Friday, November 10 at 8 pm

Matthew Bengtson, *piano*

The World Premiere of Roberto Sierra's *Piano Sonata no. 13*, alongside West Coast Premieres of works by Ingrid Arauco, Curt Cacioppo, and Luke Carlson. Bengtson's recent recording of Sierra's piano works was called "among the most thrilling piano recordings I've heard in recent years" by *Fanfare*.

Sunday, November 12 at 4 pm

Nato, *violin*

Presenting the emotion, poetry, and heart of the solo violin, Canadian-born violinist Nato brings four masterworks to inspire Bay Area music lovers. With a barn-burner program uniting the best 20th century solo violin works (Bartók, Bacewicz, Prokofiev, Ysaÿe), come share in Nato's particular excitement for this special repertoire; a program that captures the spirit of modern music.

Monday, October 16 at 7 pm

Amateur Music Network presents Sarah Cahill's Backstage Pass

with guest artist Lisa Mezzacappa, *bass*

How does a jazz pianist create a unique arrangement of a standard? Why do notation and improvisation seem like such separate worlds? We'll explore these questions and more in this new series, moderated by Sarah Cahill, with guest artists demonstrating and revealing the secret processes behind their music.

Sunday, December 10 at 4 pm

Ragazzi Boys Chorus, Silicon Valley—*Light and Love*

Kent Jue, *Artistic & Executive Director*

Join GRAMMY Award-winning Ragazzi Boys Chorus, Silicon Valley as they open our hearts and illuminate the season with messages of love, hope, and peace in their program *Light and Love*.

Hyo-shin Na *Song So Old* (2022) West Coast Premiere

The title and inspiration of *Song So Old* for piano solo came from the text of a Navajo Native American song called *Coyote Songs*. This song was sung to dispel unwelcome spirits at the Navajo Enemy Way ceremony. The syllables of the text have no meaning; instead they reproduce the barking of coyotes and the hoot of owls: "heya heya heya a yo ho yo ho yaha" and etc. *Song So Old* was co-commissioned by the Elaine and Richard Fohr Foundation and Kevin Lee Sun. –Hyo-shin Na

Frederic Rzewski (1938–2021) excerpts from *The People United Will Never Be Defeated!* (1975) (36 Variations on "¡El pueblo unido jamás será vencido!")

"¡El pueblo unido jamás será vencido!" is a popular Chilean chant for social change. In 1973, three months before the democratically elected President Salvador Allende was deposed by a military coup aided by the United States' CIA, the composer Sergio Ortega was walking through the plaza and heard the chant shouted by a street singer. "I sat down at my piano and thought about the experience in the plaza and the events at large. When I reproduced the chant of the people in my head, the chant that could not be restrained, the entire melody exploded from me: I saw it complete and played it in its entirety at once. The text unfurled itself quickly and fell like falling rocks upon the melody."

The text begins: "On your feet! Sing that we will triumph. Advancing already are flags of unity. And you will come marching beside me, and by doing so, you will witness your song and your flag blossom. The light of a red dawn already announces the life that will come."

As the chant inspired Ortega, so Ortega's song inspired Frederic Rzewski: "I first heard Sergio Ortega's song at a concert given by the Chilean group Inti-Illimani at Hunter

College in the fall of 1974, which Ursula [Oppens] and I both attended. We walked out onto the street singing the melody, and it never left us from that time on.”

For the 200th anniversary of American independence, Frederic Rzewski had been commissioned by the Kennedy Center to write a piano work for Ursula Oppens that would serve as a companion to Beethoven’s *Diabelli Variations*. With Ortega’s melody in mind, and with the *Diabelli Variations* and Bach’s *Goldberg Variations* as influences (“I did my final exam at Princeton University about [the *Goldberg Variations*]. The formal similarities are obvious, even if there are 33 (*sic*) instead of 36 variations”), Rzewski’s 36 variations on Ortega’s theme were written in 1975 as a result. There are six sets of six variations, and each set’s sixth variation is a summation of the motives and characters of the preceding five. There is also a plan of key relationships: beginning with D minor for the theme and variation 1, the keys of the variations follow the circle of fifths (A minor, E minor, etc.) until returning to D minor for variation 13. Another circle of fifths is employed for the last two sets of variations.

Through the course of the hour-long work, Rzewski includes quotations of the Italian revolutionary song *Bandiera Rossa* and of Bertolt Brecht and Hanns Eisler’s working song *Solidaritatslied*—as he states, “in reference to the Italian people who in the ’70s opened their doors to so many refugees from Chilean fascism” and as “a reminder that parallels to present threats existed in the past and that it is important to learn from them.” As a whole, the work represents Rzewski’s immense consciousness of “the active relationship between music and the rest of the world.” –KLS

ABOUT THE MUSICIAN

With “probing seriousness” (*Performing Arts Monterey Bay*) and “a stunningly beautiful palette of colors” (*Peninsula Reviews*), pianist **Kevin Lee Sun** interprets music old and new. In 2011, Sun won the Silver Medal at the Virginia Waring International Piano Competition in California for his performances of the classical canon. In 2021, for his visionary programming of 20th-century music, he was the sole pianist to be named Finalist of the Berlin Prize for Young Artists in Germany. These honors have led Sun to perform a diverse repertoire around the world, including at the Elbphilharmonie in Hamburg, the Arnold Schoenberg Center in Vienna, the Villa Elisabeth in Berlin, and the Banff Centre in Canada. Masterworks for solo piano that Sun has performed recently in recital include Bach’s *Goldberg Variations*, Schubert’s *Wanderer Fantasy*, Schumann’s *Kreisleriana*, Schoenberg’s *Suite for Piano*, and Hyo-shin Na’s *Rain Study*.

A native of Sacramento, California, Sun earned his B.A.S. in biology and classics at Stanford University, his M.M. in piano at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music, and his D.M.A. in piano performance and literature at the Eastman School of Music. He also was a Stanford Medical School student for three years. With his diverse educational background, Sun has co-authored numerous peer-reviewed journal articles of original research in the fields of child and adolescent psychiatry, student mentorship, and Platonic philosophy.

Sun began his piano studies in Sacramento with Sylvia and Tien Hsieh, who fostered his musical talent. He later studied with Lorna Peters at Sacramento State, Alexander Kobrin at Eastman, Sharon Mann at SFCM, and Thomas Schultz at Stanford. In 2023, Sun was appointed Assistant Professor of Piano at Duquesne University in Pittsburgh.