

# San Francisco Chronicle

## Bay Area classical music scene loosens up for the summer

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Mezzo-soprano Nikola Printz in Gluck's "Orfeo ed Euridice" at West Edge Opera.  
Photo: Cory Weaver

All through the year, the classical music world observes a pretty rigid hierarchy between performers and listeners, in which they stand on stage and send music our way while we wait to receive it. But during the summer, those divisions tend to soften a little — and sometimes even melt away completely. The music may be the same, but the spirit is looser, easier, more

forgiving. Being out of doors can help, and so can the opportunity to dive in and sing along with the experts.

## Merola Opera Program

Each summer brings a crop of young operatic up-and-comers to take part in the San Francisco Opera Center's multiweek training program. They're looking for the next stage in their career, and we're looking for the chance to spot the next Joyce DiDonato or Thomas Hampson. This summer's performances include two showcase concerts and the world premiere of "If I Were You," a new commission from San Francisco composer Jake Heggie.

**Schwabacher Summer Concert:** *Thursday and Saturday, July 11 and 13. San Francisco Conservatory of Music, 50 Oak St., S.F.*

**"If I Were You":** *Aug. 1-6. Herbst Theatre, 401 Van Ness Ave., S.F.*

**S.F. Merola Grand Finale:** *Aug. 17. War Memorial Opera House, 301 Van Ness Ave., S.F. \$25-\$80. 415-864-3330. [www.sfopera.com](http://www.sfopera.com)*

## Choral summer sing-alongs

For anyone who appreciates choral music but doesn't have the chops to get paid for singing it, the choral sing-alongs that proliferate every summer are a white-knuckle thrill — group karaoke for the classical crowd. Sight-reading your way through music you probably know only as a listener brings its own rewards. In weekly sessions hosted by either of two local groups, the Oakland Symphony Chorus and Schola Cantorum, you can work with leading local conductors to sing choral faves by Fauré, Verdi, Mendelssohn, Bach and more.

**Oakland Symphony Chorus Summer Sing-Ins:** *Wednesdays, July 10-Aug. 14. \$15. Oakland Masonic Center, 3903 Broadway, Oakland. 510-444-0801. [www.oaklandsymphony.org](http://www.oaklandsymphony.org)*

**Schola Cantorum Summer Sings:** *Mondays, July 8-Aug. 12. \$17. Los Altos United Methodist Church, 655 Magdalena Ave., Los Altos. 650-254-1700. [www.scholacantorum.org](http://www.scholacantorum.org)*

## San Francisco Symphony outdoors

Once the curtain comes down on the regular concert season at the end of June, the San Francisco Symphony moves shifts to lighter fare — not only in its regular home at Davies Symphony Hall, but outdoors as well. In addition to the orchestra's annual free concert at Stern Grove, conducted by Edwin Outwater, this summer brings a new offering alfresco: a series of concerts at Stanford's newly refurbished Frost Amphitheater, with Gemma New conducting music of Tchaikovsky, Beethoven and Ravel.

**San Francisco Symphony:** *2 p.m. Sunday, July 7. Free. Sigmund Stern Grove, 19th Avenue and Sloat Boulevard, S.F. July 10-14. \$30-\$110. Frost Amphitheater, 365 Lasuen St., Stanford. 415-864-6000. [www.sfsymphony.org](http://www.sfsymphony.org)*

## Music@Menlo

Since 2003, this vibrant chamber music festival, founded and led by cellist David Finckel and pianist Wu Han, has offered an annual roundelay of concerts, recitals, master classes, lectures and more. There's always an organizing theme, and this year's festival is arranged in consecutive chronological chunks, beginning in 1710 and proceeding through the present day. Expect a wide range of chamber repertoire, played with conviction and skill by a top-notch array of artists.

*July 12-Aug. 3. \$34-\$84. Center for Performing Arts at Menlo-Atherton, 555 Middlefield Road, Atherton, and Menlo School, 50 Valparaiso Ave., Atherton. 650-330-2030.  
www.musicatmenlo.org*

## **Valley of the Moon Music Festival**

This distinctive chamber festival, the brainchild of fortepianist Eric Zivian and cellist Tanya Tomkins, boasts a singular artistic focus — music of the Classical and Romantic periods played on period instruments — to go with its inviting Sonoma locale. This summer's programming plans to celebrate the 19th century women whose salons helped support some of the vibrant musical innovation of the period, with works by Fanny and Felix Mendelssohn, Chopin, Fauré and even Stravinsky.

*July 14-28. \$45. Hanna Boys Center, 17000 Arnold Drive, Sonoma. 800-595-4849.  
www.valleyofthemoonmusicfestival.org*

## **West Edge Opera**

The dynamic and always innovative West Edge Opera continues its forlorn search for a permanent performance home — but in the meantime, its annual three-opera season continues to be among the summer's most eagerly awaited musical offerings. This summer brings the first local production of “Breaking the Waves,” composer Missy Mazzoli's acclaimed 2016 adaptation of the Lars von Trier film, as well as inventive productions of Brecht and Weill's “Threepenny Opera” and Gluck's “Orfeo ed Euridice.”

*Aug. 3-18. \$19-\$125. The Bridge Yard, 210 Burma Road, Oakland. 510-841-1903.  
www.westedgeopera.org*

## **American Bach Soloists**

In addition to a regular year's worth of concert programs, Jeffrey Thomas and the American Bach Soloists host a two-week Academy and Festival every summer that brings young early-music performers — vocalists, instrumentalists and more — to the Bay Area for intensive workshopping, and then lets audiences hear the outcome. Performances this summer include Bach's B-Minor Mass, music of Vivaldi and Handel, and a program exploring Bach's influence on bluegrass and folk music.

*July 28-Aug. 11. \$30-\$98. San Francisco Conservatory of Music, 50 Oak St., S.F. 800-595-4849.  
www.americanbach.org*