

Mondavi Center
UCDAVIS



Philharmonia Orchestra

Sanntu-Matias Rouvali, principal conductor

Víkingur Ólafsson, piano

Friday, October 17, 2025 | 7:30pm

Jackson Hall

THIS SEASON IS SPONSORED BY
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Our Friends



As we head into a new season of performances at the Mondavi Center, I'm feeling nostalgic and deeply grateful about some very good friends.

Before the Mondavi Center was even a glimmer in the

eyes of those that made it real, there was UC Davis Presents, and its volunteer support group, Friends of UC Davis Presents (now known as Friends of Mondavi Center). Then, as now, the Friends supported our work in a variety of ways. Over the years, their contributions have included fundraising, ushering our K-12 School Matinees, providing Mondavi Center tours, driving artists to classroom activities, helping us with our UC Davis student recognition days and, before the digital era, even helping us stuff envelopes. Just to name a few of the ways they have helped us meet our mission.

Much has changed since the Mondavi Center opened in 2002. Before the Center was built, UC Davis Presents was for decades an itinerant presenting program that utilized venues on campus, in the City of Davis, and Sacramento. For most of that pre-Mondavi Center era, the entire staff of UC Davis Presents was less than 10 people. The Friends helped make it possible to do a lot of good work with a very small staff. Today, we're a team of over 130 full-time, part-time, and student staff, plus hundreds of

volunteers. Together, we now operate what has become an important venue for West Coast tours and a major force in the performing arts, on campus and off.

What has not changed in all these years is the unwavering support of Friends of Mondavi Center. They may be a volunteer support group, but they are as much a part of our team as anyone. They are accomplished people with a passion for the performing arts, and they believe in the power of arts education and arts engagement. For that, I and my Mondavi Center colleagues are extremely grateful.

If you are an arts lover interested in service and volunteerism, I encourage you to learn more about Friends of Mondavi Center, and to consider joining them in their exceptional work on our behalf.

Learn more at mondaviarts.org/friends

With Gratitude,

Jeremy Ganter
Executive Director

ROBERT AND MARGRIT MONDAVI CENTER FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS PRESENTS

Philharmonia Orchestra

Santtu-Matias Rouvali, principal conductor

Víkingur Ólafsson, piano

PROGRAM

Si el oxígeno fuera verde

Gabriela Ortiz
(b. 1964)

Piano Concerto No. 5 in E-Flat Major, op. 73 ("Emperor")

Allegro

Adagio un poco mosso

Rondo: Allegro

Ludwig van Beethoven
(1770-1827)

INTERMISSION

Symphony No. 5 in E-Flat Major, op. 82

Tempo molto moderato-Allergro moderato-Presto

Andante mosso, quasi allegretto

Allegro molto-Misterioso

Jean Sibelius
(1865-1957)

Land Acknowledgement

We should take a moment to acknowledge the land on which we are gathered. For thousands of years, this land has been the home of Patwin people. Today, there are three federally recognized Patwin tribes: Cachil DeHe Band of Wintun Indians of the Colusa Indian Community, Kletsel Dehe Wintun Nation, and Yocha Dehe Wintun Nation.

The Patwin people have remained committed to the stewardship of this land over many centuries. It has been cherished and protected, as elders have instructed the young through generations. We are honored and grateful to be here today on their traditional lands.

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Program Notes

Si el oxígeno fuera verde

Gabriela Ortiz

Born: December 20, 1964, Mexico City, Mexico

In memory of Jorge Verdín (Clorofila)

Si el oxígeno fuera verde (If Oxygen Were Green) is a work dedicated to the memory of my friend and fellow Mexican musician Jorge Verdín, founder of the collective Nortec Collective, and known by his artist name “Clorofila.” Verdín’s musical originality lay in the way he combined electronic sounds with *banda* music from northern Mexico, forging a style that reflected the borderland experience between Tijuana and San Diego. I was fortunate to collaborate with Verdín on several occasions, whether as the graphic designer of my album *Únicamente la Verdad*, or helping me shape the electronic sounds used in my seventh string quartet with percussion, *Pico-Bite-Beat*.

Although I never had the chance to ask him why he chose the word *clorofila* (“chlorophyll”) as his artist name, I decided to take the meaning and implications of that word as a starting point for this piece, within the framework my sonic imagination.

Chlorophyll is a biomolecule of vital importance to life on our planet. Without it, the process of photosynthesis—carried out by plants and other organisms—would not be possible, and without photosynthesis, oxygen would not be present in our atmosphere. Nature is made up of numerous cycles that are fundamental to the functioning of ecosystems and the maintenance of life on Earth. These cycles are interdependent and form a complex network that keeps our environment in balance. They are essential for conserving natural resources and protecting the planet.

With these reflections in mind, I began to imagine particles of oxygen as sonic fractals ringing in the atmosphere, celebrating life in its purest, most essential form.

Just as fractal geometry features self-replicating patterns on different scales, in this piece I use rhythmic patterns and melodies that develop independently, gradually transforming through a mechanical sonic process akin to those found in nature. These groupings evolve through subtle variations, creating a sense of continuity and growth – forming diverse, intricate musical structures.

Si el oxígeno fuera verde is structured in four main sections, each conceived as an autonomous life cycle within an infinite universe:

1. Fractal structures and sound particles floating in the atmosphere

2. A nocturnal song nourished by the soul of a forest

3. The dawn of plants transforming light into oxygen

4. The dance of chlorophyll begins

The title’s metaphor suggests the fragile green murmur of life—where a disruptive, ecological nature can be imagined as a forest that, after a transformative event, reinvents itself and blooms with greater diversity and sustainability. The piece concludes with a final dance, becoming a symbol of the interdependence of all living beings—a reminder that each of us, as human beings, holds an urgent responsibility to help build a future that is more balanced and harmonious with the natural world.

— GABRIELA ORTIZ, MEXICO CITY, MAY 26, 2025

Piano Concerto No. 5 in E-Flat Major “Emperor”, op. 73 (1809)

Ludwig van Beethoven

Born: December, 1770, Bonn, Germany

Died: March 26, 1827, Vienna, Austria

“String snapper, hands on high” reads the chapter title on Beethoven in critic Harold C. Schoenberg’s *The Great Pianists*. Altogether apt, that description, and indicative of far more than a mere tangle of broken wires. It wasn’t just that Beethoven could pulverize the flyweight pianos of his day. It was the attitude underpinning that oh-so electrifying stage presence, all that charisma directed not only at the hapless instrument before him, but extended outward to encompass his entire dazzled/browbeaten audience. In many ways, Beethoven was the first virtuoso showman of the concert stage, and he paved the way for such barnstorming superstars as Niccolò Paganini and Franz Liszt.

Given that piano concertos were Beethoven’s chosen vehicles for his more exhibitionist public appearances, it’s a bit surprising that he didn’t write more than five. But there it is. Those five concertos carve out a clear evolution from the distinctly Mozartean vibe of No. 2 in B-flat Major (actually the first to be composed), to No. 5 in E-flat Major, as the formerly chamber-oriented and collaborative genre took on a David-and-Goliath aspect, the solo pianist placed in heroic combat against a looming orchestral opponent.

Napoleon’s terrifying siege of Vienna provides the historical underpinning to the altogether Beethovenian roar of the “Emperor” Concerto No. 5 in E-flat Major, Op. 73. In this, his final concerto, Beethoven answers despair with hope, terror with joy, and oppression with freedom.

A few words are in order about first-movement form in Viennese Classical concertos. Typically the orchestra plays through the first section (called the ‘exposition’) of the movement, after which the soloist joins in with a modified

repeat of those same materials. That so-called ‘double exposition’ form was well suited to an era when soloist and conductor were one and the same, but by the 19th century a division of responsibilities was becoming the norm, leaving the soloist just sitting (or standing) there with nothing to do while the conductor took the orchestra through the first exposition. Besides, that long wait before the soloist’s entrance was at odds with the increasingly gutsy persona of Beethoven’s concertos. He never actually rejected double-exposition form, but he started getting confrontational about it.

Piano Concerto No. 4 offers only a modest protest by opening with a beguiling little solo passage before the orchestra takes over, but Beethoven throws down a gauntlet with the Fifth. A single heraldic chord in the orchestra is answered by a flamboyant display from the soloist. Two more such exchanges follow, the piano solo waxing yet more eloquent and intricate with each effusion. Only then does the first movement settle into the usual orchestra-alone exposition. There had never been an opening like it, this grandiose kickoff to a supersized concerto for the Napoleonic era, and the first movement that followed was altogether unprecedented in not just length, but in emotional range, demeanor, and affect. Furthermore, Beethoven wasn’t about to let some hammy soloist wreak havoc on his meticulous structure with an improvised cadenza, so where such a thing would be expected, he wrote this footnote: *don’t play a Cadenza, but go right on to what follows.*

The *Adagio un poco mosso* slow movement might lead listeners to wonder if the performers have conspired to swap in a Chopin concerto on the sly. It’s even in the Chopinesque key of B Major, particularly felicitous to the hand’s natural shape on the keyboard, fingers long and high on the black keys, thumb short and low on the whites. A hymnlike theme in muted strings leads to a dreamy answer in the piano, marked to be played ‘dawning’ (*dämmernd*) with lavish use of the damper pedal, *pianissimo* and *espressivo*. Beethoven’s signature love for piano trills is on full display, as is his uncanny ability to extend phrases far beyond their usual durations.

The *Adagio* doesn’t come to a clear stop. A bit of harmonic *legerdemain* in the solo piano recaptures the original key of E-flat Major and leads into the joyous finale. Beethoven casts the movement as a rondo, in which cyclic repeats of a central reprise alternate with contrasting episodes. That sounds simple enough to put together, but rondos are actually potential quicksand, prone to deadly tedium as those reprises keep coming back, each more predictable than the last. Beethoven tackles the problem by blurring the distinctions between reprises and episodes while darting hither and yon to unexpected keys. Of course it works. Beethoven doesn’t do tedium.

Nota bene: we don’t really know why it’s called the Emperor, apropos though the title may be. However, we do know that

Beethoven didn’t play the 1811 Leipzig premiere; his deafness had intensified to the point that he decided not to chance it and bestowed the privilege on his student Carl Czerny, he of the umpty-million piano exercises that have shrivelled young souls for generations.

—SCOTT FOGLESONG

Symphony No. 5 in E-Flat Major, op. 82 (1915–1919)

Jean Sibelius

Born: December 8, 1865, Hämeenlinna, Finland

Died: September 20, 1957, Järvenpää, Finland

The Sibelius Fifth Symphony emerged during a time of devastating troubles. Russia’s 1917 February and October Revolutions had initiated Finland’s move towards independence, but the 1918 eruption of a brief yet catastrophic civil war had intensified old hatreds, as wartime acts of terror hardened into political suppression and retaliation after the battles had ended. Only with the end of World War I could the long process of healing begin, as Finland transformed itself into a modern presidential republic.

Cultural monument he may have been, but Jean Sibelius was not immune to the civil war’s depredations, and peacetime presented but scant solace. Although the young Sibelius had blazed as a beacon for Finnish resistance during the “Russification” of Finland in the early years of the century, he was uneasy in the new republic. Increasingly he felt out of step with the aggressive modernism of contemporaries such as Schoenberg and Stravinsky. His private life offered little consolation: enormous debts, marital strain, and several deaths darkened his mood still further. He sought refuge in alcohol.

Work offered some relief, but his creative output was limited mostly to lighter fare and the functional pieces that he, as the country’s national composer, was expected to provide. Those helped to pay off debts but brought him little artistic satisfaction.

Yet all was not lost. The wild cranes on their autumn migrations still filled the skies over his country home Ainola, their seasonal reappearance an affirmation for an artist who found elemental spiritual truth in the natural world. The composer of *Pohjola’s Daughter* and the Fourth Symphony was by no means a spent force. *Symphony No. 5 in E-flat Major, Op. 84*, the sole major composition of the 1915–1919 period, stands at the tipping point of Sibelius’s compositional career, in which a torrent of works lead up to the First World War, followed by steadily-diminishing output over the post-war years: the sixth and seventh symphonies, incidental music to Shakespeare’s *The Tempest*, and that haunting evocation of the northern wild, *Tapiola* of 1926. Then comes a rapid *decrescendo* ending in silence for the long years remaining until 1957 and his death at ninety-one.

After the youthful, echt-Tchaikovskian Symphony No. 1, Sibelius's remaining six symphonies manifest three overall affects. Symphonies 2 and 5 are big-boned and Romantic; 3 and 6 partake of a distinctly Classicist bent; 4 and 7 are introspective and modernist. Not surprisingly, it's those two 'Romantic' symphonies that have enjoyed the most success with listeners. The radiant Second has always been popular, while the Fifth is treasured for its heroic mood and opulence.

The Fifth is noted for its grandeur, but that's hardly the whole story. Its approximately seven-year gestation and formal complexity give witness to its deep artistic conviction and scrupulously managed inspiration. The symphony doesn't so much begin as it materializes out of a cloud of hushed horn calls, the whole made of winds and brass only until ghostly underlying strings usher in an expanded sonata form that gradually gives way to a faster, scherzo-like treatment, all within a single movement.

There's more to the mid-place *Andante mosso* movement than might be immediately apparent, or perhaps one should say, immediately audible. Ostensibly it's a theme-and-variations affair based on a gentle tune of a slightly melancholic cast, but the typical laundry-list nature of variations is here almost wholly absent, thanks to Sibelius's skillful fashioning of an overall three-part structure to encompass his variations, enhanced by subtle previews of materials to be heard in the finale.

That finale—complex, challenging, and subject of numerous analytical studies—is celebrated for the broadly swinging “swan” theme with its swooping, paired horns. “Today at ten to eleven I saw 16 swans,” wrote Sibelius in his diary of April 21, 1915. “One of my greatest experiences! Lord God, that beauty! They circled over me for a long time. Disappeared into the solar haze like a gleaming, silver ribbon.” The grandly expansive melody threads through the entire movement, eventually morphing into a majestic peroration on the way to the series of massive hammerstrokes that conclude this noble and deeply heartfelt pillar of the modern symphonic repertory.

—SCOTT FOGLESONG

Scott Foglesong is the Chair of Music Theory and Musicianship at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music. A Contributing Writer and Pre-Concert Lecturer for the San Francisco Symphony, he also writes program notes for the California Symphony, Oregon Symphony, and Grand Teton Music Festival, among other groups. As a pianist, he studied at the Peabody Conservatory and SFCM.

About the Artists

Santtu-Matias Rouvali Conductor

The 2025/26 season continues Santtu-Matias Rouvali's tenures as Principal Conductor of the Philharmonia Orchestra and Honorary Conductor of Tampere Philharmonic Orchestra, close to his home in Finland.

Deepening his strong relationship with New York Philharmonic, summer 2025 marked Rouvali's second appearance at Bravo! Vail Festival with the orchestra and soloists Miah Persson and Yulianna Avdeeva-Neudauer. The summer also saw Rouvali conduct the Cleveland Orchestra at Severance Hall, and the Philharmonia Orchestra in their continued residency in Mikkeli, Finland, as well as performances in Hamburg, Bucharest, Rimini and Merano.

Throughout this and previous seasons, he continues his relationships with top-level orchestras and soloists across Europe, including Munich Philharmonic, Berliner Philharmoniker, Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio France, Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin, Orchestra dell'Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia, Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, and he returns to North America for concerts with New York Philharmonic and The Cleveland Orchestra. This season, he also appears with The Philadelphia Orchestra, Oslo Symphony, Rotterdam Philharmonic and Vienna Symphony Orchestras.

Rouvali works with many international soloists including Bruce Liu, Lisa Batiashvili, Seong-Jin Cho, Nicola Benedetti, Jean-Yves Thibaudet, Nemanja Radulović, Stephen Hough, Augustin Hadelich, Nikolai Lugansky, Christian Tetzlaff, Gil Shaham, Baiba Skride and Ava Bahari.

Continuing their strong touring tradition, Rouvali and Philharmonia Orchestra tour the United States in October 2025 and are joined by Clara-Yumi Kang for a tour of Korea in December 2025. In January 2026, they embark on an extensive tour of Europe with concerts in cities including Brussels, Frankfurt, Munich and Vienna.

The 2024/25 season was Rouvali's final as a Chief Conductor of Gothenburg Symphony, following a successful eight-year tenure. It was marked by a tour to Germany and Czech Republic, followed up by a celebration concert in Gothenburg. He completed his Sibelius Cycle recording with Alpha Classics, the previous releases of which have been highly acclaimed with awards including Gramophone Editor's Choice award, the Choc de Classica, a prize from the German Record Critics, the prestigious French Diapason d'Or 'Découverte', and Radio Classique's 'TROPHÉE'.



Philharmonia Records' first release – a double CD album *Santtu conducts Strauss* – was released in March 2023 following recent releases of Tchaikovsky's *Swan Lake* and Prokofiev's Symphony No. 5. *Santtu Conducts Mahler*, the second album from Philharmonia Records, was released in September 2023. *Santtu conducts Stravinsky*, released in March 2024, was the third album from Philharmonia Records featuring *The Firebird Suite* and *Petrushka*. Another prominent CD – Beethoven's *Triple Concerto* with Benjamin Grosvenor, Nicola Benedetti and Sheku Kanneh-Mason – was released on Decca in May 2024.

Víkingur Ólafsson

Piano

Víkingur Ólafsson is one of the most celebrated classical artists of our time; a unique and visionary musician who brings his profound originality to some of the greatest works in music history. His recordings resonate deeply with audiences around the world, reaching over one billion streams and winning numerous awards including the 2025 GRAMMY for Best Classical Instrumental Solo for his album of Bach's *Goldberg Variations*, *BBC Music Magazine* Album of the Year, and Opus Klassik Solo Recording of the Year (twice). Other notable honours include the Rolf Schock Music Prize, *Gramophone's* Artist of the Year, Musical America's Instrumentalist of the Year, the Order of the Falcon (Iceland's order of chivalry) as well as the Icelandic Export Award, given by the President of Iceland.

November 2025 sees Ólafsson present his latest album, *Opus 109*, which places Beethoven's Piano Sonata No. 30 Op. 109 at its heart. In an illuminating and thrilling musical dialogue with Schubert, J.S. Bach and other works by Beethoven, it traces the lineages that converge on this masterpiece of the piano literature. He tours the anticipated new programme widely, bringing it to the greatest concert halls across Europe and North America.

In 2025–26 Ólafsson opens the season and tours the US with Philharmonia Orchestra as Featured Artist, as well as returning to the Berlin Philharmonic with Semyon Bychkov and the Czech Philharmonic with Sir Antonio Pappano. He also reunites with John Adams and the LA Philharmonic for performances of *After the Fall*, the piano concerto written expressly for him. Ólafsson will mark the Kurtág centenary celebrations in 2026 and appear as artist in residence at Cal Performances in Berkeley, California and at MUPA, Budapest.

Philharmonia Orchestra

Founded in 1945, the Philharmonia Orchestra is one of the world's great orchestras.

Finnish conductor Santtu-Matias Rouvali took up the baton as Principal Conductor in 2021, and Marin Alsop joined him as Principal Guest Conductor in 2023. They follow in illustrious

footsteps: Herbert von Karajan, Otto Klemperer, Ricardo Muti, Giuseppe Sinopoli, Christoph von Dohnányi, Vladimir Ashkenazy and Esa-Pekka Salonen are some of the key figures who have honed the renowned Philharmonia sound over eight decades.

The Orchestra has premiered works by Richard Strauss, Sir Peter Maxwell Davies, Kaija Saariaho, Errollyn Wallen, Laufey and many others, and performs with many of the world's most admired soloists.

The Philharmonia thrives on creative collaborations: in the 2025/26 season, pianist Víkingur Ólafsson is Featured Artist, Gabriela Ortiz is Featured Composer, and dance, mime, theatre and drag artists Thick & Tight are Artists in Residence.

The Philharmonia is resident at the Southbank Centre in the heart of London, and also holds residencies in Basingstoke, Bedford, Canterbury and Leicester, at Garsington Opera and at the Three Choirs Festival. In each of these residencies, the Orchestra is deeply embedded in the community. Projects with primary and secondary schools, children in foster care, people living with dementia and their carers, young people learning instruments, and adults who face barriers to experiencing the arts, all testify to the many ways music enriches our lives.

This season the Philharmonia celebrates its 80th birthday with initiatives including offering 80 free tickets for first-time bookers to every concert in its London season; recruiting a team of 80 volunteers to help provide a warm welcome; reaching 80 schools with Orchestra Unwrapped, its programme of schools' concerts and teacher training; and establishing Philharmonia Social, a chance for audience members to meet and find out more about the orchestra.

The Philharmonia tours extensively throughout Europe and has performed in China, Colombia, Japan, Mauritius and the United States. In October 2025 the Orchestra embarks on a major US tour, culminating in two performances at Carnegie Hall. The season also includes a tour of Korea, and performances at the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam, the Musikverein in Vienna, and many other leading European venues.

The Philharmonia is known for embracing innovative technology. The Orchestra's recordings include benchmark LPs, more than 150 film and videogame soundtracks, and streamed performances. Its recording of Beethoven's Symphony No. 5 is travelling through interstellar space on board the Voyager spacecraft, and its immersive installations and virtual reality (VR) experiences have introduced many thousands of people to orchestral music.

The Philharmonia Records label was established in 2023. The Orchestra has released live recordings of major works by Strauss, Mahler, Stravinsky and Shostakovich, with Santtu at the helm.

The Philharmonia's Emerging Artists Programme nurtures and develops the next generation of instrumentalists and composers, with a focus on increasing diversity within the classical music industry.

The Philharmonia is a registered charity. It is proud to be supported by Arts Council England and grateful to the many generous individuals, businesses, trusts and foundations who make up its family of supporters.



Philharmonia Orchestra

Santtu-Matias Rouvali, Conductor

Víkingur Ólafsson, Piano

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Robin Totterdell
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Donal Bannister
Philip White **

BASS TROMBONE

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TIMPANI

Håkon Kartveit

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Paul Stoneman
Tom Edwards

†† Professor at the Guildhall
School of Music and Drama

† Professor at the Royal
Academy of Music

** Professor at Trinity College
of Music

† Professor at the Royal
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For more information on supporting the Mondavi Center, visit MondaviArts.org or call 530.752.0563. *This list reflects all gifts received as of March 14, 2022.*

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