

OJAI MUSIC FESTIVAL

CRITICAL ACCLAIM

“No arm’s-length tolerance of new music here. Upscale locals, Los Angeles intelligentsia and out-of-towners crowd Libbey Bowl’s near-primitive outdoor facilities for four days and devour music normal audiences might greet with bewilderment.”

The New York Times

“For a new music fan, Southern California’s Ojai Festival is about as close to nirvana as it gets.”

San Francisco Classical Voice

“No walls, no floor, no ceiling, no acoustic paneling. Just grass, trees, birds, bees, and earnest music making ... Ojai isn’t quite a fantasy island in the South Pacific, but its surreal, atmospheric beauty isn’t far removed ... Who would have thought that this quiet unassuming city ... would, for one weekend a year, become a mecca for today’s contemporary music intelligentsia and maintain a loyal following in the process?”

Symphony Magazine

“Then there are the birds and the frogs that provide their own ambient accompaniment, the sun dappling through the sycamores that overhang the Libbey Bowl, the moon rising and the glimmer of stars, wandering the arcade and art fair, and the camaraderie of sharing four days of music that make up the Ojai festival experience.”

Los Angeles Daily News

“Contradiction abides in loveable Ojai, California, an easygoing, bucolic hamlet of horse farms and orange groves that, once a year, turns itself into a Woodstock for hard-core devotees of new music...The surrounding mountains are so configured as to cause the village to turn rose pink each day at sunset. So beautiful it played Shangri-La in “Lost Horizon.”

Bloomberg News

“Ojai is an anomaly: small but internationally influential, primitive yet sophisticated.”

The New York Times

"Just as our ears were warming up, just as our backside was settling in, just as we were beginning to know the people sitting next to us... the Ojai Music Festival is over. See you next year. That's the beauty of the place, that's its magic. On Monday morning, you're still digesting the long weekend cram session of new music, unusual music, seldom-heard music – six concerts in less than 48 hours, for these ears – all held in the unlikely location of a public park in downtown Ojai. Who was it that said, 'Always leave them wanting more?' Ojai does."

Orange County Register

“Barricades come down in striking songs of love and sorrow, heaven and earth, conquerors and the conquered, the sacred and the profane, and the inexplicable ways of men.”

Los Angeles Times

“It has been 35 years since Steve Reich was last seen onstage at the Ojai Festival and he probably wouldn’t notice too many changes to the town in the meantime. For Ojai remains the contradiction of a quiet, trim, small town that happens to have been running one of the most radical music festivals for over 60 years.”

Musical America

"It's [The Festival] the rubbing-together of the primitive and the sophisticated that lends Ojai its charm. The outdoor setting removes the preciousness from serious musical endeavour without compromising standards, while its intimacy seals the performer-audience relationship..."

Financial Times

"... legendary in new-music circles. Here in the foothills 85 miles north of Los Angeles, Stravinsky, Copland, Boulez, Messiaen, Lukas Foss, Tilson Thomas, John Adams, Salonen, Mitsuko Uchida, Emanuel Ax, and the Emerson String Quartet have all found a brief musical haven."

Gramophone

"...it's the interaction of extraordinary composers, conductors and performers that gives Ojai its symbiotic essence and makes it a small but mighty festival."

Ventura County Star

"Along some 15 kilometers of the Pacific Ocean, Ojai is a dream corner of Ventura County. An hour and a quarter by car from Los Angeles...this small, calm, and fashionable city is located in one of the most wooded areas of Southern California. There are only fields of strawberries, citrus fruit, sycamores, eucalyptus, and oaks, which intersect the pleasant blue of a sky papered by mountains. With the coming evening, the sun fades to a color that surrenders to the drunken ecstasy of seeing Olivier Messiaen. Those familiar with Ojai call this the *pink moment*."

Le Monde

"...compact but wide-ranging... [one of] the summer's best performing arts festivals."

Travel & Leisure Magazine

"The programme asks you to look beyond yourself and try something new."

Financial Times

"With the real wind swirling in the performance space and driving the music, Nature contributed a third dimension."

Die Welt

"Ojai and its Music Festival are places apart. The intrusion of chain stores into the little town of 8,000, tucked in a gorgeously fertile valley in Ventura County, is strictly forbidden. So, too, does the festival go its own way. Held in Libbey Bowl, a rustic city park with an aged band shell, it emphasizes the new, the unusual and the difficult, and everyone who comes learns to relish the unlikelihood of it."

Orange County Register

"Since its founding, Ojai has won admirers for its adventurous programming that takes seriously the music of our time. Stravinsky, Copland, Messiaen and Pierre Boulez all journeyed here with their own works in hand. Audiences come expecting the unusual, the modern. They even welcome it."

New York Times

"The festival ended Sunday with Mahler's Ninth Symphony. It took off on the wings of a cawing crow in the golden late afternoon sunshine. Eighty minutes later, as the hills turned momentarily pink in the dying light, Mahler's ethereal closing page faded out into the croaks of distant frogs. Last weekend was one of the great ones."

Los Angeles Times

"In this case, it was not Vienna, nor Berlin, but the small festival of Ojai that – as far as the interpretation of great symphonic works is concerned – could be seen as the hub of the musical world."

Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung

"Like the magical clefs that seem to flutter with a bouncy verve and hand in the eucalyptus and oak trees that surround its home base of Libbey Bowl, the Ojai Music Festival retains a special, unique vibe in classical music circles as it nears the ripe age of 60."

Ventura County Star

"This brief festival continues to uphold a stellar reputation."

New York Times

"In the first half of the concert, the L.A. Opera Orchestra played this accompaniment as an orchestral solo, and sounded as if all aglow. To end the afternoon, a small chorus sang the vocal work urgently, just as Ojai turned its momentary sunset pink. The combination of setting and sentiment was spine-tingling."

Los Angeles Times

"Ojai seduces creative purpose. Soft hills rise up from the town. Huge eucalyptus trees surround Libbey Bowl. Jasmine is in the air. An old oak bends over the stage. Man-made objects have much to compete with; the Ojai Festival bends with nature in order to survive. A musical avant-garde that largely ignores its general audience might learn from that."

New York Times

"...enchanted Ojai — the scenic valley and the charmed festival setting in the rickety Libbey Park Bowl — still seduces. The best musicians continue to come and return. Exceptional composers are, as always, expected and feted."

Los Angeles Times

"It was quite the opening salvo for the little festival that always seems a step up from the regular season. The best musicians come here and are asked to play adventurous programs, many of them chock full of new music. The performances generally are better rehearsed than during the season, too. A listener who arrives here Friday evening can feast on six top-notch concerts in Libbey Bowl before the sun goes down on Sunday."

Orange County Register

"In the end it dies away very slowly: Boulez, with the gentlest of hand movements, coaxed one last instrumental breath after another out of the players, until nothing was left but a hush. Neither the orchestra nor the crowd—which demanded five curtain calls—wanted to see him go."

Ventura County Reporter

"The annual Ojai Festival is a miniature, less expensive California version of Salzburg — an out-of-the-way place where passionate musicians, critics and fans can gather, schmooze and pontificate, and in between listen to some world-class music."

Andante

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