

**JUNE
8-11
2017**

OJAIMUSICFESTIVAL

THOMAS W. MORRIS ARTISTIC DIRECTOR VIJAY IYER MUSIC DIRECTOR

Ojai Music Festival and 2017 Music Director Vijay Iyer Announce the 71st Festival Program June 8-11, 2017

Vijay Iyer is joined by a community of artistic collaborators, including returning Ojai family members 2015 Music Director Steven Schick, International Contemporary Ensemble (ICE), Carnatic vocalist Aruna Sairam, flutist Claire Chase, and composer/percussionist Tyshawn Sorey

Iyer introduces Ojai to master musicians from various backgrounds and communities: Brentano Quartet; violinist Jennifer Koh; vocalist/composer Jen Shyu; Vijay Iyer Trio; Vijay Iyer Sextet; Tyshawn Sorey Double Trio; tabla virtuoso Zakir Hussain; saxophonist Rudresh Mahanthappa; trumpeter Wadada Leo Smith; and The Trio featuring Muhal Richard Abrams, George Lewis, and Roscoe Mitchell

Highlights of the 2017 Festival include the world premiere of Vijay Iyer's *Violin Concerto*, written for and performed by Jennifer Koh; the American premiere of Iyer's *Emergence* for trio and ensemble; *RADHE RADHE: Rites of Holi* with music by Iyer and film by Prashant Bhargava; the West Coast premiere of the opera *Afterword* by George Lewis; and *Yet Unheard* (world premiere of chamber version) by Courtney Bryan

Cal Performances' Ojai at Berkeley is slated for June 15-17, 2017 following the Ojai Music Festival

(November 16, 2016– Ojai, California) – The Ojai Music Festival, June 8-11, 2017, with Music Director Vijay Iyer celebrates diverse communities of music, artists, and collaborations in a weekend of stimulation and reflection.

Artistic Director Thomas W. Morris stated, "*Vijay Iyer is usually described as a composer, a pianist, an improviser, a collaborator, and a teacher. What really distinguishes him, however, is not just what he does but who he is and what he stands for. Vijay believes a life in the arts is a life of service in*

imagining, building, and enacting community that transcends heritage, nation, and creed. The 2017 Festival reflects these beliefs in the range of collaborators joining us - from Carnatic vocalist Aruna Sairam to percussionist/composer Tyshawn Sorey, to the virtuosic ensemble ICE, to trumpet legend Wadada Leo Smith; in the breadth of roles Vijay will play - from composer, to performer, to collaborator, to intellectual guide; and in the historical and social perspectives represented by the music and artists - from how so much of the Festival's foundation is based on the groundbreaking Association for the Advancement of Creative Music (AACM), to young composer Courtney Bryan's powerful tribute to Sandra Bland, a vivid testimony to music's ability to bring communities together in healing."

Vijay Iyer commented, "When I was invited to take on the role of Music Director for the 2017 Ojai Music Festival, it was a shocking but validating proposition. As an artist, I like to insert myself into situations where some might not necessarily imagine I belong. I have many different affinities musically, and also very real associations across different musical communities, generations, geographic locations, and traditions that speak to me and through me. Our 2017 Festival feels like a good opportunity to update the idea of what music is today. I know the hallowed history of this Festival and I've seen different versions of what it can be. I'm just glad that Tom Morris invited me to intervene, and to bring my people with me. I'm going to learn so much over those few days in June, and I believe everyone there will discover a great deal - not just about music, but about themselves."

[Watch Vijay Iyer Discuss the 2017 Festival](#)

Much of the four-day Festival programming revolves around the Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians (AACM), an organization founded in Chicago in 1965 by a group of African-American experimentalists. Musicians of the AACM were not only committed to an adventurous synthesis of music making strategies – contemporary and ancient, familiar and faraway – but their very being was framed out of the Civil Rights struggles of that era. *The New York Times*, on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the AACM a year ago said, "The AACM has been one of the country's great engines of experimental art, producing work with an irreducible breadth of scope and style." Some of the original founding AACM members, including Wadada Leo Smith, Muhal Richard Abrams, and Roscoe Mitchell will be featured 2017 Ojai artists, as will composer/trombonist George Lewis, whose book *A Power Stronger Than Itself: The AACM and American Experimental Music* tells the definitive history of the AACM. Lewis' opera *Afterword*, which is receiving its West Coast premiere, is based on the history of the organization.

The 2017 Festival begins on Thursday, June 8 showcasing the talents of Vijay Iyer. The program features two recent works by Mr. Iyer, the American premiere of *Emergence*, performed by ICE and the Vijay Iyer Trio conducted by Steven Schick; and the world premiere of his *Violin Concerto*, a co-commission by the Ojai Music Festival, Cal Performances in Berkeley, and the Boston Symphony Orchestra. The *Violin Concerto* was composed for and will be performed by violinist Jennifer Koh. The evening closes with a duo comprising Mr. Iyer and the celebrated trumpet player and a founder of the AACM, Wadada Leo Smith. Described by Mr. Iyer as his “hero, friend, and teacher,” Mr. Smith collaborates with the pianist on music that is “spellbinding and traverses musical identities.”

The two-part Friday afternoon concert on June 9 features flutist Claire Chase performing a selection from her recent *Density 2036* project, a 22-year program conceived by Ms. Chase in 2014 to commission an entirely new body of repertory for solo flute each year until the 100th anniversary of Edgard Varèse groundbreaking 1936 flute solo. Following *Density 2036* will be a rare performance by Tyshawn Sorey’s Double Trio in a program called “*The Inner Spectrum of Variables*.” Mr. Sorey made his Ojai debut last year composing music for and performing in the *Josephine Baker Portrait*.

Friday evening’s concert features the West Coast premiere of George Lewis’ opera *Afterword*, for a small ensemble and three singers, performed by ICE with soprano Joelle Lamarre, contralto Gwendolyn Brown, and tenor Julian Otis, all of whom sang in the 2016 American premiere of the work in Chicago, and with Steven Schick conducting. A 2002 MacArthur Fellow, George Lewis is a composer, theorist, musicologist, and virtuoso trombonist with an endowed chair at Columbia University. His *A Will to Adorn* was performed during the 2015 Ojai Music Festival. Mr. Lewis is the author of *A Power Stronger than Itself: The AACM and American Experimental Music*, a prizewinning, comprehensive cultural history of this influential organization and its members. The opera *Afterword* draws from the book’s own afterword, consisting of transcribed dialogues and testimonials about the AACM’s founding in 1965. *Afterword* will be semi-staged and directed by Sean Griffin.

Saturday afternoon’s two-part concert on June 10 begins with a program by the Brentano Quartet. In addition to performing the entire two-century range of standard quartet repertoire, the Brentano Quartet has a strong interest in both old and new music. The concert features music by György Kurtág and Mozart, as well as Vijay Iyer’s *Mozart Effects*, written for the quartet. Following this will be *Conduction®* led by Tyshawn Sorey, who is widely considered to be among the most important young artists at the intersection between composed and improvised music. *Conduction®* is a gestural language invented by the acclaimed cornetist and composer Lawrence D. “Butch” Morris. As defined by the composer, “*Conduction®* is the practice of conveying and interpreting a lexicon of

directives to construct or modify sonic arrangement or composition; a structure-content exchange between composer/conductor and instrumentalists that provides the immediate possibility of initiating or altering harmony, melody, rhythm, tempo, progression, articulation, phrasing, or form through the manipulation of pitch, dynamics (volume/intensity/density), timbre, duration, silence, and organization in real-time. *Conduction*® is a 60-minute piece of new music for an ensemble of 20 players being composed in real time - none of the performers nor conductor have a note of music in front of them.”

The Saturday evening centerpiece is *RADHE RADHE: Rites of Holi*, commissioned five years ago by Carolina Performing Arts at The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill to celebrate the centennial of Stravinsky's *Le Sacre du printemps*. *RADHE RADHE: Rites of Holi* is a vivid and mesmerizing multimedia collaboration by Mr. Iyer and filmmaker Prashant Bhargava (who passed away in 2015 at the age of 42), exploring another sort of rite of spring, the Hindu festival of Holi, famous for its revelry of color in celebration of the love between the divine Krishna and Radha. In northern India, Mr. Bhargava filmed ravishing hi-definition images of an eight-day Holi festival, later editing the footage into a finished 37-minute film with Stravinsky's *Sacre* musical structure as the basis for its film structure. Mr. Iyer composed a new score as the musical complement to Mr. Bhargava's visual ballet, drawing at times on the rhythms and chants of the Holi festival. The result is one of Mr. Iyer's warmest, most colorful creations to date, as rich melodically as it is texturally. The work is for an ensemble of 13 players that will be performed by ICE and conducted by Steven Schick, who will accompany the projected film live on the Libbey Bowl stage. The first half of the concert will be the West Coast premiere of a new version of *Le Sacre du printemps* arranged by composer Cliff Colnot for the same instrumental forces.

The final day of the Festival on Sunday, June 11 is a mini-festival of improvisation. It begins in the early morning with a free concert of living legends that will be one of the historical highlights at Ojai – The Trio featuring octogenarian pianist Muhal Richard Abrams, George Lewis on trombone and laptop, and Roscoe Mitchell on assorted woodwinds. Mr. Abrams and Mr. Mitchell were among the founders of the AACM. The afternoon concert presents Vijay Iyer and his close collaborator for more than twenty years, the award-winning saxophonist Rudresh Mahanthappa, joining forces with two living giants of Indian classical music: celebrated Carnatic vocalist Aruna Sairam and tabla maestro and world music pioneer Zakir Hussain. This day realizes one of Vijay Iyer's dreams for the 2017 Festival, to create a new musical fabric with these remarkable artists together in Ojai. The Festival closes with Vijay Iyer and his all-star sextet including bassist Stephan Crump, Tyshawn Sorey on drums, alto saxophonist Steve Lehman, Graham Haynes on cornet and flugelhorn, and tenor

saxophonist Mark Shim, an ensemble *The New York Times* has said, “addresses original music with a gripping sense of purpose.”

In addition to the main concert lineup there will be two Daybreak concerts both starting at 9am at Zalk Theatre at Besant Hill School in the upper Ojai for Ojai Music Festival members. On Friday, June 9 the performance features Jen Shyu, experimental vocalist, composer, multi-instrumentalist, dancer, and Fulbright scholar, who will perform her own work, *Solo Rites: Seven Breaths*. Saturday, June 10 features Nicole Mitchell, flutist, composer, bandleader, and educator. Ms. Mitchell’s music celebrates African American culture while reaching across genres and integrating new ideas with moments in the legacy of jazz, gospel, experimentalism, pop, and African percussion. She formerly served as the first woman president of Chicago’s Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians (AACM).

Free Community Concerts

Ojai continues to build on its commitment to reach an ever-broader audience, and the 2017 Festival offers two free Late Night concerts in the Libbey Bowl, in addition to the Sunday morning concert. Friday evening at 10:30pm features a recital by Jennifer Koh, entitled “Bach and Beyond” in which Ms. Koh will perform works by Johann Sebastian Bach, Missy Mazzoli, Luciano Berio, and Esa-Pekka Salonen. Saturday night at 10:30pm brings Vijay Iyer together with the Brentano Quartet to perform his *Time, Place, Action*. The Brentano Quartet opens the concert with selections from Bach’s *Art of the Fugue*, and the concert closes with the American premiere of a new version of *Yet Unheard* by the versatile composer and pianist Courtney Bryan. Written for chorus, orchestra, and the vocalist Helga Davis, *Yet Unheard* sets a new text by poet Sharan Strange memorializing Sandra Bland, a 28-year-old African American woman who died in police custody in Waller County, Texas, on July 13, 2015. Her death was classified as a suicide, though protests dispute the cause of death and allege racial violence. Focusing on bridging the sacred and the secular, Ms. Bryan’s recent compositions explore human emotions through sound, confronting the challenge of notating the feeling of improvisation.

Ojai Talks

The 2017 Festival begins with Ojai Talks hosted by Ara Guzelimian, former Festival Artistic Director and current Dean and Provost of The Juilliard School. On Thursday June 8 the first part session topic is “The Art of Improvisation” with Vijay Iyer. The second part of the Talks features a panel to discuss “Music as Community” with Mr. Iyer and other prominent guests. On Friday evening, June 9 the Ojai Talks will be held prior to the 8pm concert of George Lewis’ *Afterword* on the Libbey Bowl

stage. The session will feature a discussion on the Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians (AACM) with special guests. Additional details will be announced at a later date.

Ojai at Berkeley

Marking the seventh year of artistic partnership, *Ojai at Berkeley* celebrates the dynamic nature of the Ojai Music Festival and of Cal Performances. As two distinct communities, Ojai and Berkeley are both known for intrepid artistic discovery, spirited intellect, and enduring engagement in the arts. Inaugurated in 2011, *Ojai at Berkeley* is a joint force that enables co-commissions and co-productions and allows artists to achieve more than could be imagined by each organization separately. *Ojai at Berkeley* follows the 2017 Ojai Music Festival and will take place from June 15-17 in Berkeley, CA. For more information visit CalPerformances.org.

Vijay Iyer, Music Director

Composer-pianist Vijay Iyer is the Franklin D. and Florence Rosenblatt Professor of the Arts at Harvard University. He was named *Downbeat* Magazine's Jazz Artist of the Year for 2012, 2015, and 2016, and he received a 2016 US Artists Fellowship, 2013 MacArthur Fellowship, a 2012 Doris Duke Performing Artist Award, and a 2011 Grammy nomination. He has released twenty-one albums, including *A Cosmic Rhythm with Each Stroke* (ECM, 2016) in duo with legendary composer-trumpeter Wadada Leo Smith, named "Best New Music" by *Pitchfork*; *Break Stuff* (ECM, 2015) with the Vijay Iyer Trio, winner of the German Record Critics' Award for Album of the Year; the live score to the film *RADHE RADHE: Rites of Holi* (ECM, 2014) by filmmaker Prashant Bhargava; and *Holding it Down: The Veterans' Dreams Project* (Pi Recordings, 2013), his third politically searing collaboration with poet-performer Mike Ladd, named Album of the Year in the *Los Angeles Times*.

Mr. Iyer's compositions have been commissioned and premiered by Bang on a Can All-Stars, The Silk Road Ensemble, Ethel, Brentano Quartet, Brooklyn Rider, Imani Winds, American Composers Orchestra, International Contemporary Ensemble, Chamber Orchestra Leopoldinum, Matt Haimowitz, and Jennifer Koh. Mr. Iyer serves as Director of the Banff International Workshop in Jazz and Creative Music.

Thomas W. Morris, Artistic Director

Thomas W. Morris was appointed Artistic Director of the Ojai Music Festival starting with the 2004 Festival. Morris is recognized as one of the most innovative leaders in the orchestra industry and served as the long-time chief executive of both The Cleveland Orchestra and the Boston Symphony Orchestra. He is currently active nationally and internationally as a consultant, lecturer, teacher, and writer. As Artistic Director, Morris is responsible for artistic planning and each year appoints a music

director with whom he collaborates on shaping the Festival's programming. During his decade-long tenure, audiences have increased and the scope of the Festival has expanded, most recently to include a collaborative partnership, Ojai at Berkeley, with Cal Performances at UC Berkeley. Morris was a founding director of Spring for Music at New York's Carnegie Hall and served as the project's artistic director. He currently serves as a member of the Board of Directors of the Interlochen Center for the Arts. He is also an accomplished percussionist.

About the Ojai Music Festival

From its founding in 1947, the Ojai Music Festival has created a place for groundbreaking musical experiences, bringing together innovative artists and curious audiences in an intimate, idyllic setting 80 miles northwest of Los Angeles. The Festival presents broad-ranging programs in unusual ways with an eclectic mix of rarely performed music, refreshing juxtapositions of musical styles, and works by today's composers. The four-day festival is an immersive experience with concerts, free community events, symposia, and gatherings. Considered a highlight of the international music summer season, Ojai has remained a leader in the classical music landscape for seven decades.

Through its unique structure of the Artistic Director appointing an annual Music Director, Ojai has presented a "who's who" of music including Aaron Copland, Igor Stravinsky, Olivier Messiaen, Michael Tilson Thomas, Kent Nagano, Pierre Boulez, John Adams, Esa-Pekka Salonen, Robert Spano, Pierre-Laurent Aimard, David Robertson, Eighth Blackbird, George Benjamin, Dawn Upshaw, Leif Ove Andsnes, Mark Morris, Jeremy Denk, Steven Schick, and Peter Sellars.

The Festival, which enters its 71st year in 2017, is a nonprofit organization based in Ojai, California. The Board Chairman is David Nygren and President is Jamie Bennett.

Remote Access to the Ojai Music Festival

The Ojai Music Festival continues to draw thousands of curious and engaged music enthusiasts from across the country. As tickets remain in high demand, Ojai includes free access to the Festival experience through live and archived video streaming at OjaiFestival.org. Festival concert archives can also be heard on media partner Q2 Music's website at WQXR.org.

Series Passes for 2017 Ojai Music Festival

2017 Festival series passes are available and may be purchased online at OjaiFestival.org or by calling (805) 646-2053. 2017 Ojai Music Festival series passes range from \$140 to \$860 for reserved seating and lawn series passes start at \$60. Single concert tickets will be available in spring 2017.

Directions to Ojai and Libbey Bowl, as well as information about lodging, concierge services for visitors, and other Ojai activities, are available on the Festival website. Follow Festival updates at OjaiFestival.org, Facebook ([Facebook.com/ojaifestival](https://www.facebook.com/ojaifestival)), and Twitter ([@ojaifestivals](https://twitter.com/ojaifestivals)).

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