

OJAI MUSIC FESTIVAL

**2023 Music Director Rhiannon Giddens and
Festival Artistic Director Ara Guzelimian Announce the
77th Ojai Music Festival: June 8 to 11, 2023**



"I am so excited to get to work with the Ojai Music Festival as Music Director for 2023. With Ojai, I am able to sit at the crossroads of all that I am artistically and feel fully supported by the Festival team and by Ojai's audiences. With the artists that we're bringing out next June, the future is in celebration of how we come together as humans - despite boxes, boundaries, and borders thrown up with the intent to keep us apart." - Rhiannon Giddens, 2023 Ojai Festival Music Director

Ojai welcomes new and returning artists to the 2023 Festival: Kayhan Kalhor (kamancheh/composer), Steven Schick (conductor/percussion), Wu Man (pipa), Francesco Turrisi (multi-instrumentalist), Attacca Quartet, Rodney Prada (viola da gamba), Justin Robinson (fiddle), Shawn Conley (double bass), Mario Gotoh (viola), Karen Ouzounian (cello), Mazz Swift (violin/viola), and red fish blue fish (percussion ensemble)

Highlights of the 2023 Festival programming:

- **World Premiere of *Omar's Journey*, an Ojai commissioned suite for voices and chamber ensemble drawn from the opera *Omar* by Rhiannon Giddens and Michael Abels. The new work, placed in the context of the journey of Omar ibn Said (1770-1864), is contextualized by the music of Senegal and the Carolinas**

- A reimagining of Tan Dun’s pioneering *Ghost Opera* for pipa and string quartet
- An acoustic concert with Rhiannon Giddens and Francesco Turrisi featuring music ranging from Baroque to Appalachian ballads and traditional Black American songs
- Carlos Simon’s *Between Worlds*, four string works placed directly in the visual context of the work of the self-taught artist Bill Traylor whose lived experience (1853-1949) spanned the Civil War, Emancipation, Reconstruction, Jim Crow, and the Great Migration
- “Strings Attached” concert - a festive finale of bowed and string instruments from cultures in the Americas, Asia, Europe, and the Middle East
- An “Early Music” concert curated by Francesco Turrisi with music spanning from ancient pipa music to works of Dowland and Monteverdi

Featured works by Michael Abels, Philip Glass, Lei Liang, Gabriela Ortiz, Chou Wen-Chung, Edgard Varèse, and by composers of the Iranian Female Composers Association throughout out the Festival

Ojai, California — November 10, 2022— The 77th Ojai Music Festival, June 8 to 11, 2023, welcomes as Music Director acclaimed musician and composer Rhiannon Giddens. Along with Festival Artistic Director Ara Guzelimian, Giddens shares initial programming highlights for the upcoming Festival which will include more than 18 music events in the beautiful setting of the Ojai Valley.

“Rhiannon Giddens has an extraordinarily wide embrace of music, history, and culture. She uses her art to tell essential stories, to illuminate, and to create deeper understanding, dissolving false boundaries between people and cultures,” adds Guzelimian. “Rhiannon’s programs for the 2023 Ojai Festival touch on so many of her interests across musical genres, from Baroque music to Black traditions in American roots music, from classical music from China and Persia to the influence of non-Western music on American contemporary works. I am thrilled to be working with her and bringing her range of musical interests to Ojai audiences.”

One of the 2023 Festival program anchors will be *Omar’s Journey*, an Ojai-commissioned suite for voices and small chamber ensemble drawn from the recently premiered opera *Omar* by Rhiannon Giddens and Michael Abels. For Ojai, this intimate concert version of *Omar* will be placed in the context of the journey of Omar ibn Said (1770-1864), a Muslim scholar who was captured from his native Senegal and enslaved in North and South Carolina. *Omar’s Journey* will pair the new Giddens/Abels suite with the musical traditions of Senegal and the Carolinas of his lifetime.

During this 77th edition of the Ojai Music Festival, additional music centerpieces include a reimagining of Tan Dun’s pioneering *Ghost Opera* performed by Wu Man and Attacca Quartet that evokes the spirits of Bach and Shakespeare, standing with the ancient folk traditions of traditional shamanistic Chinese

music; a complete performance of Carlos Simon's *Between Worlds*, a quartet of string works placed directly in the visual context of the art of Bill Traylor (1853-1949), whose lived experience spanned the Civil War, Emancipation, Reconstruction, Jim Crow and the Great Migration, to be performed by members of the Silk Road Ensemble; "Strings Attached" -- a musical summit and jam session featuring solos and collaborations among the bowed and plucked string instruments from cultures in the Americas, Asia, Europe, and the Middle East; works by members of the Iranian Female Composers Association; and "Early Music" concert, curated by Francesco Turrisi, with a program from ancient pipa music to works of Dowland and Monteverdi.

In honor of what would have been his 100th birthday, the Festival will also feature works of Chinese-American composer Chou Wen-Chung coupled with music of Edgard Varèse who was Chou Wen-Chung's mentor, friend, and collaborator. The Festival will also present music by Michael Abels, Philip Glass, Gabriela Ortiz, and Lei Liang throughout the weekend.

Rhiannon Giddens' 2023 collaborators will include a mix of Festival debuts and returning artists. Audiences will be introduced to Kayhan Kalhor (kamancheh/composer), Rodney Prada (viola da gamba), Justin Robinson (fiddle), along with members of the Silkroad Ensemble including Mazz Swift (violin/viola), Mario Gotoh (viola), Karen Ouzounian (cello), and Shawn Conley (double bass).

Making welcome returns to Ojai will be conductor/percussionist Steven Schick, who was Music Director for the 2015 Festival and pipa player Wu Man who last appeared with Schick. From the 2021 Festival will be multi-instrumentalist Francesco Turrisi, and the Attacca Quartet (violinists Amy Schroeder and Domenic Salerni, violist Nathan Schram, and cellist Andrew Yee).

Additional programming will be announced in spring 2023.

Community Offerings

An integral part of the immersive Ojai Festival experience are the free community activities that occur in the Libbey Park and throughout Ojai. This will include Morning Meditations, Music Pop-Ups, and a Family Concert.

Beyond Ojai: Online Offerings

The Ojai Music Festival lives beyond the flagship four-day festival in June, allowing further engagement with audiences worldwide. These include the Festival's state-of-the-art live streaming and archived library of concerts; Virtual Ojai Talks with featured Festival artists and alum leading up to the Festival; and OjaiCast, the podcast series that provides insights on upcoming programming. The Festival's digital projects are available at OjaiFestival.org.

New this year is Ojai on the Air with WQXR/New Sounds with host John Schaefer. The series of programs connects audiences and artists who engage deeply with adventurous new music. The first program, which debuted in October and is archived and available on WQXR, featured discipline colliding collective AMOC, Ojai's 2022 Music Director. Ojai on the Air will announce additional ongoing programs leading up to and during the 2023 Festival with Music Director Rhiannon Giddens.

Series Passes for 2023 Ojai Music Festival

2023 series passes are available and may be purchased online at OjaiFestival.org or by calling (805) 646-2053. Festival series passes range from \$205 to \$965 for reserved seating. Lawn seating series passes start at \$80. Single tickets will go on sale in the spring.

RHIANNON GIDDENS, MUSIC DIRECTOR OF THE 2023 OJAI MUSIC FESTIVAL

The acclaimed musician Rhiannon Giddens uses her art to excavate the past and reveal bold truths about our present. A MacArthur "Genius Grant" recipient, Giddens co-founded the Grammy Award-winning Carolina Chocolate Drops. She most recently won a Grammy Award for Best Folk Album for *They're Calling Me Home* and was also nominated for Best American Roots Song for "Avalon" from *They're Calling Me Home*, which she made with multi-instrumentalist Francesco Turrisi. Giddens is now a two-time winner and eight-time Grammy nominee for her work as a soloist and collaborator.

They're Calling Me Home was released by Nonesuch last April and has been widely celebrated by the *NY Times*, *NPR Music*, *NPR*, *Rolling Stone*, *People*, *Associated Press* and far beyond, with *No Depression* deeming it "a near perfect album...her finest work to date." Recorded over six days in the early phase of the pandemic in a small studio outside of Dublin, Ireland - where both Giddens and Turrisi live - *They're Calling Me Home* manages to effortlessly blend the music of their native and adoptive countries: America, Italy, and Ireland. The album speaks of the longing for the comfort of home as well as the metaphorical "call home" of death.

Giddens's lifelong mission is to lift people whose contributions to American musical history have previously been erased, and to work toward a more accurate understanding of the country's musical origins. *Pitchfork* has said of her work, "few artists are so fearless and so ravenous in their exploration," and *Smithsonian Magazine* calls her "an electrifying artist who brings alive the memories of forgotten predecessors, white and black."

Among her many diverse career highlights, Giddens has performed for the Obamas at the White House and received an inaugural Legacy of Americana Award from Nashville's National Museum of African American History in partnership with the Americana Music Association. Her critical acclaim includes in-depth profiles by *CBS Sunday Morning*, the *New York Times*, the *New Yorker*, and *NPR's Fresh Air*, among many others.

Giddens was featured in Ken Burns's Country Music series, which aired on *PBS*, where she spoke about the African-American origins of country music. She is also a member of the band Our Native Daughters with three other black female banjo players, Leyla McCalla, Allison Russell, and Amythyst Kiah, and co-produced their debut album *Songs of Our Native Daughters* (2019), which tells stories of historic black womanhood and survival.

Giddens is in the midst of a tremendous 2022. She recently announced the publication of her first book, *Build a House* (October 2022). *Lucy Negro Redux*, the ballet Giddens wrote the music for, had its premiere at the Nashville Ballet (premiered in 2019 and toured in 2022), and the libretto and music for Giddens' original opera, *Omar*, in collaboration with Michael Abels, based on the autobiography of the enslaved man Omar Ibn Said, premiered at the Spoleto USA Festival in May. Giddens is also curating a four-concert Perspectives series as part of Carnegie Hall's 2022–2023 season. Named Artistic Director of Silkroad Ensemble in 2020, Giddens is developing new programs for that ensemble, including one inspired by the history of the American transcontinental railroad and the cultures and music of its builders. As an actor, Giddens had a featured role on the television series *Nashville*.

Rhiannon Giddens last appeared at the Ojai Music Festival in September 2021 with Music Director John Adams.

ARA GUZELIMIAN, ARTISTIC AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Ara Guzelimian is Artistic and Executive Director of the Ojai Music Festival, having begun in that position in July 2020. The appointment culminates many years of association with the Festival including tenures as director of the Ojai Talks and as Artistic Director from 1992–97. Guzelimian stepped down as Provost and Dean of the Juilliard School in New York City in June 2020, having served in that position since 2007. At Juilliard, he worked closely with the president in overseeing the faculty, curriculum, and artistic planning of the distinguished performing arts conservatory in all three of its divisions: dance, drama, and music. He continues at Juilliard as Special Advisor, office of the president.

Prior to the Juilliard appointment, he was Senior Director and Artistic Advisor of Carnegie Hall from 1998 to 2006. Guzelimian serves as artistic consultant for the Marlboro Music Festival and School in Vermont. He is a member of the steering committee of the Aga Khan Music Awards, the artistic committee of the Borletti-Buitoni Trust in London, and a board member of the Amphion and Pacific Harmony Foundations. He is also a member of the music visiting committee of the Morgan Library and Museum in New York City. In 2020, Guzelimian was appointed to the advisory panel of the Birgit Nilsson Foundation in Sweden.

Previously, Guzelimian held the position of Artistic Administrator of the Aspen Music Festival and School in Colorado, and he was long associated with the Los Angeles Philharmonic at the beginning of his career, first as producer for the orchestra's national radio broadcasts and, subsequently, as Artistic Administrator. Guzelimian is editor of *Parallels and Paradoxes: Explorations in Music and Society* (Pantheon Books, 2002), a collection of dialogues between Daniel Barenboim and Edward Said. In September 2003, he was awarded the title Chevalier des Arts et des Lettres by the French government for his contributions to French music and culture.

OJAI MUSIC FESTIVAL

The Ojai Music Festival represents an ideal of adventurous, openminded, and openhearted programming in the most beautiful and welcoming of settings, with audiences and artists to match its aspirations. Marking its 75th anniversary season last year, the Festival remains a creative laboratory for thought-provoking musical experiences, bringing together innovative artists and curious audiences in an intimate, idyllic outdoor setting. Each Festival's narrative is guided by a different Music Director, whose distinctive perspectives shape programming — ensuring energized festivals year after year.

Throughout each year, the Ojai Music Festival contributes to Southern California's cultural landscape with in-person and online Festival-related programming as well as robust educational offerings that serve thousands of public-school students and seniors. The organization's apex is the world-renowned four-day Festival, which takes place in Ojai, a breathtaking valley 75 miles from Los Angeles, which is a perennial platform for the fresh and unexpected. During the immersive experience, a mingling of the most curious take part in concerts, symposia, free community events, and social gatherings. During the intimate Festival weekend, considered a highlight of the international music summer season, Ojai welcomes up to 5,000 patrons and reaches 35 times more audiences worldwide through live and on-demand streaming of concerts and discussions throughout the year.

Since its founding in 1947, the Ojai Music Festival has presented broad-ranging programs in unusual ways with an eclectic mix of new and rarely performed music, as well as refreshing juxtapositions of musical styles. Through its signature structure of the Artistic Director appointing a different Music Director each year, Ojai has presented a "who's who" of music including the multi-disciplinary colliding collective AMOC* (American Modern Opera Company) Vijay Iyer, Patricia Kopatchinskaja, and Barbara Hannigan in recent years; throughout its history, featured artists have included Aaron Copland, Igor Stravinsky, 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, Matthias Pintscher, and Peter Sellars.

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0608-06112023
RHIANNON GIDDENS MUSIC DIRECTOR

THU JUNE 8, 2022

2:30PM

OJAI TALKS

Ojai Presbyterian Church

Two-part session with Music Director Rhiannon Giddens and featured collaborators, hosted by Ara Guzelimian and John Schaefer of WQXR New Sounds.

8:00PM

OPENING NIGHT: LIQUID BORDERS

Libbey Bowl

Rhiannon Giddens, *vocals*

Steven Schick, *conductor/percussion*

Attacca Quartet

red fish blue fish

The Festival opens with Gabriela Ortiz's *Liquid Borders* performed by red fish blue fish conducted by Steven Schick.

The second half welcomes back the Attacca Quartet performing a curated playlist made especially for Ojai audiences.

FRI JUNE 9, 2022

8:00AM

OJAI DAWNS

Zalk Theater, Besant Hill School

red fish blue fish

CHOU WEN-CHUNG *Echoes from the Gorge*

Works by composers of the Iranian Female Composers Association

10:00AM

MORNING CONCERT: VIS-À-VIS

Libbey Bowl

Kayhan Kalhor, *kamancheh*

Wu Man, *pipa*

Steven Schick, *percussion*

LEI LIANG *Vis-À-Vis*

Works by Michael Abels and others

3:30PM

GHOST OPERA

Greenberg Center, Ojai Valley School lower campus

Wu Man, *pipa*

Attacca Quartet

A new staging of Tan Dun's *Ghost Opera* for pipa and string quartet evokes the spirits of Bach and Shakespeare, standing with the ancient folk traditions of traditional shamanistic Chinese music.

8:00PM

AN EVENING WITH RHIANNON GIDDENS AND FRANCESCO TURRISI

Libbey Bowl

An intimate acoustic concert with Rhiannon Giddens and Francesco Turrisi with music ranging from the Baroque to Appalachian ballads and traditional Black American songs.

SAT JUNE 10, 2022

8:00AM

MORNING MEDITATION FREE

Chaparral Auditorium

Artists to be announced

10:00AM

MORNING CONCERT

Libbey Bowl

Kayhan Kalhor and friends

Program to be announced

2:30PM

GHOST OPERA [Repeat Performance]

Greenberg Center, Ojai Valley School lower campus

Wu Man, *pipa*

Attacca Quartet

A new staging of Tan Dun's *Ghost Opera* for pipa and string quartet evokes the spirits of Bach and Shakespeare, standing with the ancient folk traditions of traditional shamanistic Chinese music.

8:00PM

OMAR'S JOURNEY World Premiere

Libbey Bowl

Rhiannon Giddens, *singer/instrumentalist*
Justin Robinson, *fiddle*
Francesco Turrisi, *instrumentalist*
Ojai Festival Ensemble

An Ojai-commissioned work for voices and chamber ensemble drawn from the opera *Omar*, by Rhiannon Giddens and Michael Abels, paired with the musical traditions of Senegal and the Carolinas.

SUN JUNE 11, 2022

8:30AM

MORNING MEDITATION FREE

Chaparral Auditorium

Artists to be announced

10:00AM

EARLY MUSIC

Libbey Bowl

Kayhan Kalhor, *kamancheh*
Rodney Prada, *viola da gamba*
Francesco Turrisi, *multi-instrumentalist*
Wu Man, *pipa*
Attacca Quartet

Curated by Francesco Turrisi, a program of morning music spanning from ancient pipa music to works of Dowland and Monteverdi.

2:30PM

BETWEEN WORLDS

Greenberg Center, Ojai Valley School lower campus

Members of the Silkroad Ensemble:

Mazz Swift, *violin/viola*

Mario Gotoh, *viola*

Karen Ouzonian, *cello*

Shawn Conley, *double bass*

A complete performance of Carlos Simon's cycle *Between Worlds*, four solo string works placed in visual context by the remarkable paintings of Bill Traylor (ca. 1853-1949), chronicling nearly a century of Black American life.

4:00PM

COMMUNITY CONCERT: FREE

Libbey Park Gazebo

The tradition continues! A community concert fun for all ages and families. Program to be announced.

5:30PM

FINALE: STRINGS ATTACHED

Libbey Bowl

Rhiannon Giddens, *singer/instrumentalist*

Kayhan Kalhor, *kamancheh*

Rodney Prada, *viola da gamba*

Justin Robinson, *fiddle*

Francesco Turrisi, *multi-instrumentalist*

Wu Man, *pipa*

Attacca Quartet

A musical summit and jam session featuring solos and collaborations among the bowed and plucked string instruments from cultures in the Americas, Asia, Europe, and the Middle East.

Programs and artists are subject to change. Please check the website at OjaiFestival.org.