

OJAI MUSIC FESTIVAL

**2026 Music Director Esa-Pekka Salonen and Artistic and Executive Director Ara Guzelimian announce guest artists and ensembles for the 80th Festival:
June 11-14, 2026**

2026 Festival artists to include clarinetist Anthony McGill, Attacca Quartet, Colburn Orchestra, and LA Phil New Music Group

**Ara Guzelimian to conclude his tenure as
Artistic and Executive Director following the 80th Festival**



“The tradition of the Ojai Music Festival is that there is no tradition other than that people can do things that they wouldn't be able to do elsewhere. Ojai invites us to dream, and it's a place where dreams can become reality.” - Esa-Pekka Salonen

(Ojai CA – May 29, 2025) – As the Ojai Music Festival anticipates the upcoming 79th Festival (June 5 to 8, 2025) with Music Director Claire Chase, the Festival's 2026 Music Director Esa-Pekka Salonen and Artistic and Executive Director Ara Guzelimian make an initial announcement of guest artists and ensembles for the 80th Festival, June 11 to 14, 2026.

The resident ensembles celebrate Esa-Pekka Salonen's longstanding ties to Los Angeles, including his transformative tenure as Music Director of the Los Angeles Philharmonic. At Ojai, he will be joined by members of the LA Phil New Music Group in a unique program tailored specifically for the Festival. The ensemble last played in Ojai in September 2021, where the program curated by that year's Music Director John Adams included Salonen's *objet trouvés*. Salonen has long had a strong creative relationship with the Colburn School,

where he serves as Head of Conducting and leads the Negaunee Conducting Program. The 2026 Ojai Music Festival will see Salonen lead the Colburn Orchestra in two concerts, marking the ensemble's Ojai Festival debut.

Anthony McGill is Principal Clarinet of the New York Philharmonic, where he was soloist in that orchestra's 2023 performance of Salonen's concerto *kinema* with the composer conducting, a partnership that will be renewed at Ojai. McGill enjoys a dynamic international solo and chamber music career. Recipient of the 2020 Avery Fisher Prize, he has a multifaceted career that includes serving as faculty of The Juilliard School and the Curtis Institute of Music. The Attacca Quartet will be returning to Ojai after acclaimed visits in 2021 at the invitation of John Adams and in 2023, collaborating with that year's Music Director Rhiannon Giddens. The two-time GRAMMY award-winning Attacca Quartet is recognized as one of the most versatile ensembles of the moment — a true quartet for modern times. Passionate advocates of contemporary repertoire, the quartet comprises violinists Amy Schroeder and Domenic Salerni, violist Nathan Schram, and cellist Andrew Yee, who are dedicated to presenting and recording new works.

Programming details and additional guest artists for Ojai 2026 will be announced in the fall of 2025.

"It gives me great joy to be working once again with Esa-Pekka Salonen, a friendship and collaboration that began in his first years at the Los Angeles Philharmonic," said Guzelimian. "Esa-Pekka Salonen is one of the most inventive, adventurous thinkers of 21st-century musical life. The unique format of the Ojai Music Festival gives him an unusually free creative hand as both composer and conductor. I'm thrilled at the prospect of all that he will dream up.

"Working with Esa-Pekka is the most deeply satisfying culmination of my work at the Ojai Festival and a fitting moment for me to conclude my tenure as Artistic and Executive Director," continued Guzelimian. "This is a very personal decision, informed entirely by the passage of time. I hugely look forward to all our work in the coming year leading to the 2026 Festival. My commitment to the Ojai Festival remains in full force and I will continue to be a devoted supporter of this wonderful musical adventure for many years to come."

Guzelimian's current tenure began with the virtual 74th Festival in June 2020 with Music Director Matthias Pintscher and continued in person in September 2021 with that year's Music Director John Adams. That was followed by Music Directors AMOC* (American Modern Opera Company), Rhiannon Giddens, Mitsuko Uchida, and Claire Chase. Guzelimian also served as Ojai's Artistic Director from 1992 to 1997, working closely with Festival Music Directors Pierre Boulez, John Adams, Kent Nagano, Michael Tilson Thomas, and Emanuel Ax. Additionally, he has served as the Ojai Talks Director since 2004.

ESA-PEKKA SALONEN, 2026 MUSIC DIRECTOR

Esa-Pekka Salonen, who previously collaborated with the Ojai Music Festival as Music Director for the 1999 and 2001 Festivals, is renowned as both a composer and conductor. He is the Music Director of the San Francisco Symphony and the Conductor Laureate for the Philharmonia Orchestra, Los Angeles Philharmonic, and Swedish Radio Symphony Orchestra. As a member of the faculty of the Colburn School, he directs the pre-professional Negaunee Conducting Program. Salonen co-founded, and until 2018 served as the Artistic Director of the annual

Baltic Sea Festival.

This past season, Salonen led the San Francisco Symphony in world premieres of works by Nico Muhly, Xavier Muzik, and Gabriella Smith, among many other programs. He also returned to the Philharmonia Orchestra—both in London and on tour in Italy—and the Los Angeles Philharmonic, where he led wide-ranging programs including Bryce Dessner's Violin Concerto with Pekka Kuusisto and Boulez's *Notations* with Pierre-Laurent Aimard. With the Orchestre de Paris, Salonen conducted a reprise of his and Romeo Castellucci's staged production of Mahler's Symphony No. 2, "Resurrection," and a Boulez Centennial celebration with choreography by Benjamin Millepied, while a Salzburg Easter Festival residency with the Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra centered on a new Simon McBurney production of Mussorgsky's *Khovanshchina*.

Salonen's compositions were programmed with thirteen different orchestras this season. He conducted his own *Tiu, kīnēma*, and cello concerto with the Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra; he also conducted the cello concerto with The Cleveland Orchestra and San Francisco Symphony. With the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, he led his Sinfonia concertante for organ and orchestra. His works, led by other conductors, also appeared on programs at the Montreal and Aarhus symphony orchestras (Sinfonia concertante), Munich Philharmonic (*Insomnia*), Lahti Symphony Orchestra (*kīnēma*), Netherlands Radio and Magdeburg philharmonic orchestras (*Gemini*), Slaithwaite Philharmonic Orchestra (*Nyx*), Lithuanian National Symphony Orchestra (Cello Concerto), and Ensemble intercontemporain (*Meeting*).

Salonen has an extensive and varied recording career. Releases with the San Francisco Symphony include recordings of Bartók's piano concertos, spatial audio recordings of several Ligeti compositions, and the GRAMMY® Award-winning (Best Opera Recording) world premiere recording of Saariaho's *Adriana Mater*. Other recent recordings include Strauss's Four Last Songs, Bartók's *Miraculous Mandarin* and Dance Suite, and a 2018 box set of his complete Sony recordings. His compositions appear on releases from Sony and Deutsche Grammophon, among others; his Piano Concerto, Violin Concerto, and Cello Concerto all appear on recordings he conducted himself.

ARA GUZELIMIAN, ARTISTIC AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Ara Guzelimian is the 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. He continues at Juilliard as Special Advisor.

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. Prior to the Juilliard appointment, he was Senior Director and Artistic Advisor of Carnegie Hall from 1998 to 2006 and earlier held positions at the Aspen Music Festival and School and at the Los Angeles Philharmonic. 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. He is the dedicatee of works by John Adams and Kaija Saariaho.

OJAI MUSIC FESTIVAL

The Ojai Music Festival represents an ideal of adventurous, open-minded, and openhearted programming in the most beautiful and welcoming settings, with audiences and artists to match its aspirations. Now in its 79th 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 programming as well as robust educational offerings that serve thousands of public-school students and seniors. The organization's apex is the world-renowned Festival, which takes place over four days 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. The intimate Festival weekend, considered a highlight of the international summer music season, welcomes up to 5,000 patrons and reaches exponentially more audiences worldwide through streaming and broadcasts of concerts and discussions throughout the year.

Since its founding in 1947, the Ojai Music Festival has presented expansive programming 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 Mitsuko Uchida, Rhiannon Giddens, American Modern Opera Company (AMOC*), 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.

79th OJAI MUSIC FESTIVAL, JUNE 5 TO 8, 2025, WITH MUSIC DIRECTOR CLAIRE CHASE

Single tickets and day passes are available and may be purchased at OjaiFestival.org or by calling (805) 646-2053. Single tickets range from \$55 to \$165 for reserved seating in the Libbey Bowl. General admission for the Lawn in Libbey Bowl is \$25, and add-on event prices are \$55. Ojai Films can be purchased directly at OjaiPlayhouse.com. Student discounts and group sales are available by inquiring with the Festival Box Office at boxoffice@ojaifestival.org.

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