

OJAI MUSIC FESTIVAL

0611-0614 2026

ESA-PEKKA **SALONEN** MUSIC DIRECTOR

2026 Music Director Esa-Pekka Salonen and Artistic and Executive Director Ara Guzelimian announce complete programming for the 80th Festival: June 11 to 14, 2026



2026 Highlights include:

- **A focus on Esa-Pekka Salonen as a composer including the U.S. premiere of his new work for violin and cello and the first complete performance of his *Six Preludes* for piano, alongside music by his teachers Franco Donatoni, Niccolò Castiglioni, and Vinko Globokar, as well as by friends and colleagues Steven Stucky, Witold Lutosławski, Magnus Lindberg, Oliver Knussen, Kaija Saariaho, and John Adams, whose quartet *Iron Jig* will receive its world premiere**

- **Additional featured works by Salonen include his *Arabesques for Olly*, *Homunculus*, *kínēma*, *Lachen verlernt*, and *Fog*; Salonen conducts the Friday, Saturday and Sunday evening concerts**
- **The Ojai Festival acknowledges defining musical figures of Ojai’s first 80 years, including Igor Stravinsky and Olivier Messiaen, giants of 20th century music Luciano Berio, George Crumb, Morton Feldman, György Ligeti, Arnold Schoenberg, Karlheinz Stockhausen, and Iannis Xenakis, featuring their music throughout the Festival alongside works by Shye Ben Tzur, Bryce Dessner, Reena Esmail, Brian Ferneyhough, Jonny Greenwood, Michael Ippolito, David Lang, Alvin Lucier, Jessie Montgomery, Radiohead, Rajasthan Express, Gabriella Smith, and Anna Thorvaldsdóttir**
- **The 2026 Ojai Festival features the Southern California new music scene and Salonen’s close associations, including LA Phil New Music Group, Colburn Orchestra, and L.A. Dance Project, and welcomes Attacca Quartet; clarinetist Anthony McGill; violinists Leila Josefowicz and Geneva Lewis; cellist Jay Campbell; conductors Aleksandra Melaniuk and Mert Yalniz; pianists Conor Hanick, John Novacek, Todd Moellenberg, and Aron Kallay; vocalists Bridget Esler and Eric Finbarr Carey; flutist Rose Lombardo; percussionist Jonathan Hepfer; and accordionist Hanzhi Wang**

“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 – March 24, 2026) – Music Director Esa-Pekka Salonen and Artistic and Executive Director Ara Guzelimian announce programming and artistic collaborators for the 80th Ojai Music Festival, June 11 to 14, 2026. The upcoming Festival focuses on many dimensions of Salonen’s artistic life.

“Esa-Pekka Salonen is one of the most vibrant and adventurous creative forces in our musical world,” said Ara Guzelimian. “It has been an absolute joy to dream up programs together that focus on numerous personal dimensions—his work as composer and conductor, his rich associations with and remarkable history in Los Angeles, the formative influence of his teachers and the giant musical figures of 20th century music, his deep friendships with many peer composers, and his championing of a new generation of composers. Our work together dates back to his earliest days at the Los Angeles Philharmonic, and it’s deeply meaningful to me that I conclude my own tenure at Ojai with such a happy reunion!”

Central to his musical life, the 2026 Ojai Music Festival will feature works by Salonen including the U.S. premiere of his new work for violin and cello with Geneva Lewis and Conor Hanick and the first complete performance of his *Six Preludes* for piano with Conor Hanick. Salonen’s works stand alongside those of his teachers Franco Donatoni, Niccolò Castiglioni, and Vinko Globokar, as well

as those by friends and colleagues Steven Stucky, Witold Lutosławski, Magnus Lindberg, Oliver Knussen, Kaija Saariaho, and John Adams, whose *Iron Jig* will receive its world premiere by the Attacca Quartet. Additional featured works by Salonen will include his *Arabesques for Olly*, *Homunculus*, *kínēma*, *Lachen verlernt*, and *Fog*. Salonen will conduct three evening weekend concerts in Libbey Bowl.

The 2026 Festival will acknowledge defining musical figures of its first 80 years, including Igor Stravinsky and Olivier Messiaen, both of whom took part memorably in the Festival (Stravinsky in 1955 and 1956, Messiaen in 1985). Giants of 20th century music are featured throughout the Festival, including Luciano Berio, George Crumb, Morton Feldman, György Ligeti, Arnold Schoenberg, Karlheinz Stockhausen, and Iannis Xenakis. Evening concerts at the Libbey Bowl will be anchored by Messiaen's *Quartet for the End of Time*, Schoenberg's *Verklärte Nacht (Transfigured Night)*, and the Festival will conclude with Stravinsky's *Pulcinella* (complete ballet). Standing alongside these seminal figures of the last century will be works by composers of today including Shye Ben Tzur, Bryce Dessner, Reena Esmail, Brian Ferneyhough, Jonny Greenwood, Michael Ippolito, David Lang, Alvin Lucier, Jessie Montgomery, Radiohead, Rajasthan Express, Gabriella Smith, and Anna Thorvaldsdóttir.

The resident ensembles will 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 Ojai 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 Festival will see Salonen lead the Colburn Orchestra in two concerts, marking the ensemble's Ojai debut. Also making their first Ojai appearance is the L.A. Dance Project (Artistic Director Benjamin Millepied) in a premiere program of dances set to Luciano Berio's *Sequenzas*. 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. Passionate advocates of contemporary repertoire, the quartet comprises violinists Amy Schroeder, Domenic Salerni, violist Nathan Schram, and cellist Andrew Yee.

Celebrated 2026 Festival artists will include Anthony McGill, principal clarinet of the New York Philharmonic, where he was soloist in that orchestra's 2023 performance of Salonen's concerto *kínēma* with the composer conducting, a partnership that will be renewed at Ojai. Violinists Leila Josefowicz and Geneva Lewis (both former Colburn School students); cellist Jay Campbell; conductors Aleksandra Melaniuk and Mert Yalniz; pianists Conor Hanick, John Novacek, Todd Moellenberg, and Aron Kallay; soprano Bridget Esler; tenor Eric Finbarr Carey; flutist Rose

Lombardo; percussionist Jonathan Hepfer; and accordionist Hanzhi Wang comprise the 2026 Festival's family of artists.

The 2026 Festival also marks the conclusion of Artistic and Executive Director Ara Guzelimian's defining tenure. His 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 had 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. Conductor/composer/pianist Teddy Abrams was named Ojai's next Artistic and Executive Director effective September 1, 2026, with his first Festival to be the 81st Festival in June 2027. He will join the ranks of such distinguished predecessors as Guzelimian, Thomas W. Morris, Ernest Fleischmann, and Lawrence Morton.

COMMUNITY OFFERINGS

An integral part of the immersive Ojai Festival experience are the free community events in Libbey Park and throughout Ojai. The 2026 schedule will include two "Morning Meditations." On Saturday, June 13 at the Ojai Meadows Preserve, in a collaboration with the Ojai Valley Land Conservancy, the free event will feature bird-inspired music by Franco Donatoni and Olivier Messiaen for solo winds featuring 2026 artists. On Sunday, June 14 at Chaparral Auditorium, the Morning Meditation with Geneva Lewis (violin) and Jay Campbell (cello) will feature music of Kajia Saariaho, Ravel, and others. The annual free family concert will be led by the Ojai Festival's BRAVO music education program and will take place on Sunday following the Libbey Bowl morning concert.

OJAI FILMS

The Ojai Music Festival will welcome the return of showcasing films during the weekend at the recently remodeled state-of-the-art Ojai Playhouse. The 2026 film series will feature three films curated by Esa-Pekka Salonen.

OJAI TALKS

The 2026 Festival will begin with Ojai Talks on Thursday, June 11. The talks will be in two parts: first, a panel with featured artists moderated by *Ojai on the Air* with WQXR/New Sounds host John Schaefer followed by a conversation between Ara Guzelimian and Esa-Pekka Salonen. Additional on-site dialogue during the Festival will include Ojai Chats, the post-concert discussions at the Libbey Park Gazebo with Festival artists.

BEYOND OJAI: DIGITAL OFFERINGS

The Ojai Music Festival lives beyond the flagship four-day festival in June, allowing further engagement with audiences worldwide. Free offerings include the Festival's state-of-the-art live streaming and archived library of concerts, Virtual Ojai Talks with featured 2026 Festival artists,

and OjaiCast, the podcast series that provides insights on upcoming programming. The Festival's digital projects are available at OjaiFestival.org.

Ojai on the Air with WQXR/New Sounds host John Schaefer continues this year. The series of programs connects audiences and artists who engage deeply with adventurous new music. Sign up for the New Sounds newsletter to stay informed about *Ojai on the Air* dates at NewSounds.org.

For the full and up to date 2026 Festival schedule and artist/composer biographies, visit OjaiFestival.org.

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 was recently named Creative Director of the Los Angeles Philharmonic, effective 2026–27, and Creativity and Innovation Chair of the Philharmonie de Paris and Principal Conductor of the Orchestre de Paris, effective 2027–28. He is the Conductor Laureate of the Philharmonia Orchestra, Los Angeles Philharmonic, and the Swedish Radio Symphony Orchestra, and formerly served as Music Director of the San Francisco Symphony. He is a faculty member at Los Angeles's Colburn School, where he founded and directs the Negaunee Conducting Program. Salonen co-founded, and until 2018 served as the Artistic Director of, the annual Baltic Sea Festival.

Salonen began the current season on a tour with the Orchestre de Paris centered on the premiere of his new Horn Concerto. He later brings the piece to the Boston Symphony Orchestra, Filarmonica della Scala, and Hong Kong Philharmonic Orchestra. Other conducting highlights include a pair of Pierre Boulez centennial programs at the New York Philharmonic, residencies with the Swedish Radio Symphony Orchestra and Bergen International Festival, and dates with the LA Phil, Philadelphia Orchestra, Chicago Symphony Orchestra, and Orchestre de Paris. He concludes the season at the Ojai Music Festival, which he curates as the 2026 Music Director.

Salonen conducts several of his compositions this season, including *Tiu* and *Dona Nobis Pacem* with the Swedish Radio Symphony Orchestra, and his Sinfonia concertante with Olivier Latry and the Gothenburg Symphony Orchestra. His music is also programmed, with other conductors, at orchestras and ensembles around the world.

Salonen has an extensive and varied recording career, both as a conductor and composer. Recent releases include the GRAMMY® Award-winning (Best Opera Recording) world premiere recording of Kaija Saariaho's *Adriana Mater* on Deutsche Grammophon, recordings of Bartók's three piano concertos with Pierre-Laurent Aimard on Pentatone, as well as spatial audio recordings of Ligeti's *Clocks and Clouds*, *Lux Aeterna*, and *Ramifications* on Apple Music Classical. His concertos for piano (composed for Yefim Bronfman), violin (for Leila Josefowicz, featured in an ad campaign for the Apple iPad), and cello (for Yo-Yo Ma) all appear on recordings conducted by Salonen himself.

ARA GUZELIMIAN, ARTISTIC AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Ara Guzelimian is Artistic and Executive Director of the Ojai Music Festival, having been appointed to that position in July 2020. The appointment culminates many years of association with the Festival, including tenures as director of the Ojai Talks at the Festival and as Artistic Director 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 in the role of Special Advisor.

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.

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, 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, open-minded, and open-hearted programming in the most beautiful and welcoming settings, with audiences and artists to match its aspirations. Now in its 80th 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.

80th OJAI MUSIC FESTIVAL, JUNE 11 to 14, 2026

Single tickets and day passes are available and may be purchased at OjaiFestival.org or by calling (805) 646-2053. Libbey Bowl single tickets start from \$60 in the reserved section. Libbey Bowl general admission for the lawn area is \$25. Add-on event prices are \$65. Tickets for the 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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Photo credit of Esa-Pekka Salonen: © Benjamin Suomela

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OJAI MUSIC FESTIVAL

0611-0614 2026

ESA-PEKKA SALONEN MUSIC DIRECTOR

THURSDAY 06.11

3:00PM OJAI TALKS

Ojai Presbyterian Church

PART I: Festival artists with John Schaefer

PART II: Music Director Esa-Pekka Salonen with Ara Guzelimian

8:00PM QUARTET FOR THE END OF TIME

Libbey Bowl

Geneva Lewis, violin | Jay Campbell, cello | Anthony McGill, clarinet | Conor Hanick, piano | Attacca Quartet

Reena ESMAIL *Darshan, III. Charukeshi*

Esa-Pekka SALONEN New work for violin and cello (U.S. premiere)

John ADAMS *China Gates*

John ADAMS *American Berserk*

Esa-Pekka SALONEN *Homunculus*

Olivier MESSIAEN *Quartet for the End of Time*

FRIDAY 06.12

8:00AM OJAI DAWNS

Zalk Theater, Besant Hill School

Attacca Quartet

David LANG *Daisy*

George CRUMB *Black Angels*

10:30AM REFLECTION

Libbey Bowl

Geneva Lewis, violin | Conor Hanick, piano | Jay Campbell, cello | Rose Lombardo, flute | Vicki Ray, piano | Jonathan Hepfer, percussion | Hanzhi Wang, accordion | Todd Moellenberg, harpsichord

Oliver KNUSSSEN *Reflection*

Esa-Pekka SALONEN *Arabesques for Olly*

Franco DONATONI *Ave*

Luciano BERIO *Sequenza XIII*

Iannis XENAKIS *Komboi*

1:00PM OJAI FILMS

Ojai Playhouse

A series of films curated by Esa-Pekka Salonen.

3:30PM OJAI AFTERNOONS

Greenberg Center, Ojai Valley School

L.A. Dance Project | Benjamin Millepied, Artistic Director

Rose Lombardo, flute | Jay Campbell, cello | Nathan Schram, viola | Hanzhi Wang, accordion

The premiere of a program of dances with the brilliant artists of L.A. Dance Project, set to a group of Luciano Berio's dizzyingly virtuosic *Sequenzas*.

8:00PM TRANSFIGURED NIGHT

Libbey Bowl

Anthony McGill, clarinet | Jay Campbell, cello | Colburn Orchestra | Esa-Pekka Salonen, conductor

Steven STUCKY *Colburn Variations*

Esa-Pekka SALONEN *kínēma*

Witold LUTOSŁAWSKI *Grave, metamorphoses* for cello and strings

Arnold SCHOENBERG *Verklärte Nacht (Transfigured Night)*

SATURDAY 06.13

8:00AM MORNING MEDITATION Free

Ojai Meadows Preserve

Bird-inspired music by Franco Donatoni and Olivier Messiaen featuring Festival artists. In partnership with the Ojai Valley Land Conservancy.

10:30AM SYRINX

Libbey Bowl

Rose Lombardo, flute | Jay Campbell, cello | Conor Hanick, piano | Leila Josefowicz, violin | John Novacek, piano

Claude DEBUSSY *Syrinx*

Kaija SAARIAHO *Sept Papillons*

Esa-Pekka SALONEN *Six Preludes*

John ADAMS *Road Movies*

1:00 PM OJAI FILMS

Ojai Playhouse

A series of films curated by Esa-Pekka Salonen.

3:30PM OJAI AFTERNOONS (repeat performance)

Greenberg Center, Ojai Valley School

L.A. Dance Project | Benjamin Millepied, Artistic Director

Rose Lombardo, flute | Jay Campbell, cello | Nathan Schram, viola | Hanzhi Wang, accordion

The premiere of a program of dances with the brilliant artists of LA Dance Project, set to a group of Luciano Berio's dizzyingly virtuosic *Sequenzas*.

8:00PM RELATED ROCKS

Libbey Bowl

LA Phil New Music Group | Geneva Lewis, violin | Mert Yalniz, conductor | Aleksandra Melaniuk, conductor | Esa-Pekka Salonen, conductor

Gabriella SMITH *Anthozoa*
Esa-Pekka SALONEN *Lachen verlernt*
Magnus LINDBERG *Related Rocks*
Anna THORVALDSDÓTTIR *Ró*
John ADAMS *Chamber Symphony*

SUNDAY 06.14

8:00AM MORNING MEDITATION Free Chaparral Auditorium

Geneva Lewis, violin | Jay Campbell, cello

Music of Saariaho, Ravel, and more

10:30AM IRON JIG

Libbey Bowl

Anthony McGill, clarinet | Conor Hanick, piano | Hanzhi Wang, accordion | Attacca Quartet

Olivier MESSIAEN *Abyss of the Birds* (from *Quartet for the End of Time*)
Jesse MONTGOMERY *Peace*
Niccolò CASTIGLIONI *Dulce refrigerium*
An Attacca Quartet playlist:

Bryce DESSNER *Circles*
Michael IPPOLITO *Smoke Rings*
RADIOHEAD *Pyramid Song* (arr. Amy Schroeder)
Shye BEN TZUR | Jonny GREENWOOD | RAJASTHAN EXPRESS *Junun* (arr. by Nathan Schram)

John ADAMS *Iron Jig* (world premiere)

12:00PM FAMILY CONCERT Free Ojai Art Center

A family-friendly concert for the young and young at heart.

1:00PM OJAI FILMS

Ojai Playhouse

A series of films curated by Esa-Pekka Salonen.

2:30PM OJAI AFTERNOONS

Greenberg Center, Ojai Valley School

Jonathan Hepfer, percussion | Aron Kallay, celesta | Todd Moellenberg, piano

Alvin LUCIER *Nothing is Real*
Vinko GLOBOKAR *Toucher*
Karlheinz STOCKHAUSEN *Refrain*
Brian FERNEYHOUGH *Bone Alphabet*
Morton FELDMAN *King of Denmark*

5:30PM FINALE

Libbey Bowl

Leila Josefowicz, violin | Bridget Esler, soprano | Eric Finbarr Carey, tenor
Colburn Orchestra | Esa-Pekka Salonen, conductor

Esa-Pekka SALONEN *Fog*
György LIGETI Violin Concerto
Igor STRAVINSKY *Pulcinella* (complete ballet)

Schedule as of 03.19.26. Programs and artists are subject to change. For updates visit OjaiFestival.org.