



Sunday November 19, 2023, 7:30 PM  
Presented at The Robert Frost Auditorium in Culver City  
**Clyde Mitchell** – Music Director

## PROGRAM

**Craig Safan (b. 1948):** Circle Overture (2023, World Premiere)

**Florence Price (1887-1953):** Adoration (1951)

**Gabriella Yorke (b. 1999):** Absent-Minded Waltz (2022)

**Brooke deRosa (b. 1986):** Valzer di Carnevale (2019)  
*from The Picture of Dorian Gray*

**Johann Strauss II (1825-1899):** Emperor Waltz (1889)

## INTERMISSION

**Johannes Brahms (1833-1897):** Symphony #1 in C minor, Op. 68 (1876)

- I. Un poco sostenuto, Allegro
- II. Andante sostenuto
- III. Un poco Allegretto e grazioso
- IV. Adagio, Più andante, Allegro non troppo, ma con brio

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This concert marks the final day of the **California Festival**, a statewide music initiative showcasing the most compelling and forward-looking voices in performances of works written in the past five years. During the two-week Festival, more than 100 musical groups have performed over 180 compelling new works.



This performance is supported, in part, by the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors through the Los Angeles County Department of Arts and Culture's Organizational Grant Program and Creative Recovery LA.

For more information about the Orchestra and our upcoming events, and to become a member or donate, visit

[www.culvercitysymphony.org](http://www.culvercitysymphony.org)

## Maestro's Musings:

Welcome to the opening concert of YOUR Culver City Symphony Orchestra's 2023-24 season! I'm Clyde Mitchell, the new Music Director and Conductor of the CCSO, and I couldn't be more thrilled to work with this marvelous group of professional musicians. We have greatly enjoyed working on this program of Inspirational, Ground-Breaking, Innovative music, and I am confident you will be delighted by each selection. Thank you for joining us on what promises to be a roller-coaster journey of amazing sounds.

Tonight you will hear traditional music that is familiar and beloved, as well as NEW music that is exciting, strange, and at times really quite beautiful, then bold, fun, haunting, and downright silly. After all, music is a form of communication, and you will see and hear and FEEL your players as we recreate the wishes of each composer with lots of emotions and experiences.

This is the final day of a state-wide initiative simply called California Festival, where performing groups across the state are presenting compelling and forward-looking music composed in the last 5 years. I decided to take it a step (or several!) further and present several pieces that have been created in the last 5 months! Listen tonight for:

**Craig Safan: Circle Overture.** Because Craig and I hit it off last summer when we presented his new score to Buster Keaton's brilliant silent film, *The General*, I wanted the first notes I conducted as your new Music Director to be by him. He presented us with a rousing tribute to the late Helene Mirich-Spear, who was Craig's first piano teacher and CCSO violinist and Personnel Manager. The title refers to the musical system of keys, which rotate around a circle of 5 ascending notes from C-G-D-A-E, etc. Because Helene required Craig to practice his scales around this "circle of fifths" he created this new commission in such a manner. The piece begins and ends with a melancholy clarinet solo, interrupted by swirling and running fast passages and some bold brass fanfares.

**Florence Price: Adoration.** Ms. Price was the first African-American woman to be recognized as a symphonic composer, and the first to have a work performed by a major orchestra. She experienced all the racial issues of the late 1800's, first in her hometown of Little Rock, AR, then at the New England Conservatory - so much so that she attempted to pass as Mexican and listed her birthplace as Pueblo, Mexico! She ended up being true to her roots as a southerner, and as a committed Christian and church musician. Rather than presenting one of her major works (four symphonies, and many concertos, choral works, and songs) we will perform a piece she composed for organ, that we have arranged for orchestra.

**Gabriella Yorke: Absent-Minded Waltz.** Gabriella is a dear friend and colleague and allows me to practice my rusty Spanish with her. Originally from Guatemala, she has lived and studied in L.A., Washington, and Canada. Gabriella actually makes a living composing and arranging for Video Games but prefers hearing REAL orchestras playing her music LIVE. Her fun little waltz is full of instructions to the players to exaggerate all the special effects, such as glissandos (sliding smoothly between notes) and pizzicatos in the strings (when they pluck instead of using the bow.) She tells us to be very animated, then to act distracted, or to run out of breath, and seemingly forget we are in a concert! Great title, eh?!?

**Brooke deRosa: Valzer di Carnevale.** This is one of many pieces of Brooke's I have heard and want to perform, and I chose her waltz because of the haunting melody that occurs throughout. Brooke makes a living as a busy film composer, but this piece was written for a play that has yet to be staged. She says, "... at least, NOT YET!" She was inspired by the Armenian composer Aram Khachaturian, famous for the ballets *Spartacus* and *Gayane* (we all know the Russian Sailor's Dance!), and incidental music to the play *Masquerade*, including Brooke's favorite waltz!

**Johann Strauss II: Emperor Waltz.** This is more than just a piece for dancing, which the entire Strauss family was famous for. Works such as *The Blue Danube*, *Voices of Spring*, *Wiener Blue* (*Vienna Blood*) are truly tone poems that describe life in Vienna during the 1800's. The *Kaiser-Walzer* was composed as a tribute and toast of friendship to both the Austrian Emperor Joseph I on the occasion of his visit to the German Emperor Wilhelm II. This famous music begins with a stately march, followed by a series of 4 waltz tunes. We all catch our breath (waltzing can be hard work!) during a sweet CODA before rushing head-long to the end.

**Johannes Brahms: Symphony #1 in C minor.** This must be one of the most anticipated compositions in music history. Brahms felt the weight and responsibility of being known as Beethoven's successor. He was a very successful pianist and composer of songs, chamber music, and lighter orchestral works, and took over 20 years of sketches and trying out shorter orchestral works before finally finishing a symphony! Sure enough, at its premiere, critics said this stunning romantic work sounded like "Beethoven's 10th!" In the traditional four movement setting, the work is innovative in its vast, lush orchestration, searing and soaring melodic lines, and yes, a final theme that sounds like Beethoven could have written it as a companion to his "Ode to Joy." Listen for the full-throated passion from the full orchestra juxtaposed with gorgeous and intimate solos, especially from Violin, Oboe, and French Horn.

Whew! Welcome to my world! I promise you that every concert we produce at your CCSO will be as carefully curated and perfectly planned as this one. We will bring you the great symphonic masterworks as well as brilliant but unfamiliar pieces. We will play music by MY all-time favorites as well as YOURS. We will feature women and men composers and soloists from all ethnic backgrounds, religions, and countries. Your new Music Director loves to hear suggestions from audiences. Who is YOUR favorite composer and what is YOUR favorite piece? Is there a particular soloist or instrument you would like to see featured? Tell me!

We've only just begun. Welcome to the family of the Culver City Symphony Orchestra.