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## **California Symphony announces \$1 million endowment gift**



Photo: Sharon Simpson receiving the East Bay Philanthropy Award for Most Outstanding Philanthropist in 2016, with California Symphony Executive Director Aubrey Bergauer

## **California Symphony gets \$1,000,000 boost for its endowment, its largest gift ever, and raises a further \$500,000 to meet fall fundraising goal**

- California Symphony announces \$1,000,000 donation from local philanthropist and long-time supporter Sharon Simpson

- The gift more than doubles the organization's endowment, now approximately \$1,800,000 with this addition, which promotes financial security for the organization's future
- The gift is intended to inspire others also to give beyond their annual contribution in support of the endowment
- The endowment gift announcement comes in tandem with the successful conclusion of the fall campaign, which raised half a million dollars in general operating support for the 2018-19 season, approximately one third of the orchestra's annual budget

**WALNUT CREEK, CA (November 8, 2018)**—The California Symphony today announces that the organization has received a significant boost from long-time California Symphony supporter Sharon Simpson. The news of Ms. Simpson's endowment gift of \$1,000,000—the largest ever single gift in the organization's history—comes in tandem with the successful conclusion of the fall annual fundraising campaign, which met the goal of raising \$500,000 for the 2018-19 season. Ms. Simpson also provided \$250,000 in matching funds for the fall campaign, and California Symphony supporters donated a total of \$251,903 to meet the match and raise the rest. Altogether, these milestones total \$1.5 Million in support to the organization.

The Simpson family has supported the California Symphony annual fund campaigns for 30 years. The significance of this new gift to the endowment is that it goes beyond helping with immediate running costs and allows the organization to look to the future, with the Symphony able to rely on interest from the newly increased endowment in the years ahead.

Board President Bill Armstrong said: "Sharon Simpson has demonstrated her confidence in the California Symphony's progress and future by her most generous gift of \$1,000,000 to the Symphony Endowment. She and her late husband Barclay helped stabilize the Symphony when it was struggling financially some years ago, and this gift to our endowment will dramatically assist in keeping the Symphony financially stable in the future. We are so grateful for her continuing support."

Executive Director Aubrey Bergauer said: "With this significant contribution to the Symphony Endowment, Sharon continues to show her leadership and vision that promotes the long-term health and stability of an orchestra that has been a flagship professional orchestra in Walnut Creek and the Bay Area for over 30 years."

In making the donation, Ms. Simpson said, "I am so proud of the job that the California Symphony has done and continues to do – all of the stats have been most impressive! I have thought carefully about how I want to participate and that is with a gift to the endowment of \$1,000,000. I hope my gift stimulates others to give generously."

Ms. Simpson, along with late husband Barclay Simpson, has supported causes in the San Francisco Bay Area for decades. Their PSB (“Put Something Back”) fund supports local art and education causes including the Leshner Center for the Arts in Walnut Creek, the University of Berkeley, the Oakland Museum and the California Symphony, among others. Ms. Simpson is also a passionate supporter of education for young children. The Girls Inc Simpson Center for Girls in downtown Oakland was opened in 2014.

Music Director Donato Cabrera said: “Sharon’s generous endowment gift allows us to continue building a future for our incredible orchestra. As we continue to grow and garner national acclaim for our educational initiatives and audience growth, this gift is also an acknowledgment of the enormous artistic strides our orchestra has made and helps ensure engaging and entertaining concerts for years to come.”

For information about supporting the California Symphony, please visit [www.californiasymphony.org](http://www.californiasymphony.org) or call the office at 925.280.2490.

## **ABOUT CALIFORNIA SYMPHONY**

The California Symphony, now in its sixth season under the leadership of Music Director Donato Cabrera, is distinguished by its vibrant concert programs that combine classics alongside American repertoire and works by living composers, and for bringing music to people in new and unconventional settings. The orchestra includes musicians who perform with the San Francisco Symphony, San Francisco Opera, San Francisco Ballet, and others, and is based in Walnut Creek at the Leshner Center for the Arts with additional recent performances around the region in Napa Valley, Concord, Oakland, and Berkeley.

Outside the concert hall, the Symphony actively supports music education as a driver for social change through its El Sistema-inspired [Sound Minds program](#) at Downer Elementary School in San Pablo, CA, which brings intensive music instruction and academic enrichment to schoolchildren in an area where 94% of students qualify for the federal free or reduced price lunch program, at no cost to the students who participate. The Orchestra also hosts the highly competitive [Young American Composer-in-Residence program](#) and its current composer, Katherine Balch. California Symphony has launched the careers of some of today’s most well-known artists, including violinist [Anne Akiko Meyers](#), cellists [Alisa Weilerstein](#) and [Joshua Roman](#), pianist [Kirill Gerstein](#) and composers such as [Mason Bates](#), [Christopher Theofanidis](#), and [Kevin Puts](#).

For more information, please visit [californiasymphony.org](http://californiasymphony.org).

## **MEDIA CONTACTS**

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