



For Immediate Release:

June 5, 2019

Mt. Wilson Observatory Presents
Songs of the Spheres
The Third Presentation in its 2019
***Sunday Afternoon Concerts in the Dome* Season**
Featuring an Entire Program of World Premiere Vocal Compositions
Held Inside the Iconic Dome of the 100" Telescope
On Sunday, July 7, 2019
Performances at 3:00 PM and 5:00 PM

PASADENA, CA – **Mount Wilson Observatory**—the scientific marvel above Pasadena, atop Mount Wilson—is pleased to announce the third date in its *Sunday Afternoon Concerts in the Dome* six-month series, to take place on Sunday, July 7, 2019. The performances are presented inside the iconic vaulted dome of the 100-inch telescope. A season of musical adventures thoughtfully curated by Artistic Director **Cécilia Tsan** are offered on the first Sunday of each month through October with two shows per date. The July concert program, entitled *Songs of The Spheres*, feature all vocal compositions, each one a World Premiere, by composers **Bruce Babcock**, **Anthony Constantino**, **Todd Mason**, **Mark McEncroe** and **Danaë Vlasse**. Performers for the two vocal concert include **Hila Plitmann**, soprano, **Sangeeta Kaur**, soprano, **Marcia Dickstein**, harp, **Reina Inui**, violin, **Rachel Mellis**, flute, and **Shea Welsh**, guitar. Also performing is a special guest chamber choir, the **Sterling Ensemble**, directed by **Michelle Jensen**.

The concert's hour-long performances are at 3:00 PM and 5:00 PM (same program). There will be an artist reception with wine and cheese at 4:00 PM. Attendees are encouraged to stay for that or arrive early to enjoy the reception before the five o'clock performance begins. In addition, concert-goers will be treated to an exhibition featuring rare scientific artifacts, drawings, and illustrations from the Observatory's collection. Seating inside the historic dome is limited. Tickets cost \$50 each and are available for purchase in advance (highly recommended) or at the door. For more information on *Sunday Afternoon Concerts in the Dome*, please visit <https://www.mtwilson.edu/concerts>. From there, the July 7th tickets can be purchased for either the [3:00 PM performance](#) or the [5:00 PM show](#) (as well as tickets to future concerts).

All proceeds go to support the **Mt. Wilson Institute** in its mission to preserve, protect and promote the Observatory and the science accomplished there. Poised for rediscovery, the grounds of the legendary observatory—founded in 1904 by astrophysical pioneer **George Ellery Hale**—are open for free to the public year round. For visitor information please see <https://www.mtwilson.edu/visiting>.

The remaining 2019 *Sunday Afternoon Concerts in the Dome* are listed at the bottom of this press release.

More About the Sunday, July 7th Concert:

Songs of the Spheres features three groundbreaking experiences for audiences of the Mt. Wilson Observatory Concert series:

- 1) It's the first time that Mt. Wilson has featured a GRAMMY® winner (internationally acclaimed soprano Hila Plitmann)!

- 2) This is the first *Sunday Afternoon Concerts in the Dome* vocal recital since the series began in 2017.
- 3) This is the first time the Mt. Wilson Observatory Concert series will feature a whole concert of World premieres by living composers! All the music for this concert was written specifically for performance in the unique acoustics of this performance-space and the music was written especially to highlight the talents of these extraordinary artists!

The concert is titled “Songs of the Spheres” in homage to the Ancient Greeks who believed that the movements of celestial bodies created a form of music through vibrational energy radiating through the cosmos. The music for this concert is driven by a sense of wonder at the vastness of the unknown that surrounds us, and will explore the questions of life, death, and purpose once posed by the great philosophers who wondered about man’s place in the universe.

Of particular interest in this event is the familial connection that composer Bruce Babcock has with Mt. Wilson Observatory. Bruce's father, **H.W. Babcock**, joined the Carnegie Observatory staff in 1946 and became the Director of the observatory in 1964. Bruce's grandfather, **H.D. Babcock**, was hired by George Hale in 1909 and remained on the observatory staff until his retirement in 1949.

Todd Mason also has a more direct connection to Mt. Wilson Observatory. His compositions have been performed in previous *Concerts in the Dome*. In addition, Mason is an award-winning PBS filmmaker who produced *The Journey to Palomar*, a documentary with over 10 million views; it chronicles the life of George Ellery Hale, the founder of Mt. Wilson Observatory.

Musical Selections include these World Premieres:

“Neptune” by Danaë Vlasse

Performed by Hila Plitmann, Sangeeta Kaur, and Marcia Dickstein.

“Stars, I Have Seen Them Fall” by Anthony Constantino

Performed by Hila Plitmann, Marcia Dickstein, and Reina Inui.

“Promethean Fire” by Bruce Babcock

Performed by Sangeeta Kaur, Marcia Dickstein, and Reina Inui.

“Where Our Innocence Once Stood” by Todd Mason

Performed by Hila Plitmann, Marcia Dickstein, Reina Inui, and special guest appearance by Rachel Mellis.

“Dark Matter” by Mark McEncroe

Performed by Marcia Dickstein and the Sterling Ensemble, directed by Michelle Jensen.

“Rainbow Nebulae” by Danaë Vlasse

Performed by Hila Plitmann & Sangeeta Kaur, Marcia Dickstein, Reina Inui, the Sterling Ensemble, and special guest appearance by Shea Welsh.

About the Artists:

Hila Plitmann, Soprano –

Grammy Award-winning singer, songwriter and actress Hila Plitmann is a glittering jewel on the international music scene, known worldwide for her astonishing musicianship, light and beautiful voice and the ability to perform challenging new work. She has worked with many leading conductors, performing with the likes of the Los Angeles Philharmonic, the New York Philharmonic and the London Symphony Orchestra.

Sangeeta Kaur, Soprano –

Sangeeta Kaur is a Vietnamese American trained opera singer, mantra singer, producer and 2016

Global Peace Song Awards winner. She earned a Bachelors of Music degree in Opera Performance from California State University of Long Beach and a Masters Degree in Vocal Performance from The Boston Conservatory of Music. Kaur performs a blend of classical and sacred music.

Marcia Dickstein, Harp –

Harpist Marcia Dickstein continues enticing new audiences to the harp in chamber music and solo with orchestra, and inspiring composers to write new works in various genres. To date, she has commissioned and premiered over 150 compositions by American composers. Credits include: solo with orchestras in Louisville, Seattle, Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Geneva, Switzerland and award winning recordings *3 Friends*, *Chamber Music of Arnold Bax*, *Look Ahead*, *Three by Three* and the latest *Angles of Angeles*. Her recordings have been releases on Klavier, Koch, Harmonia Mundi, Naxos. As Founder/Artistic Director of The Debussy Trio, now in its 29th year, she has performed worldwide. Additionally, she has played on over 400 film scores and also played with the Long Beach Symphony and Santa Barbara Chamber Orchestra. She is Professor of Harp at Westmont College in Santa Barbara, and CalPoly, San Luis Obispo. Active as a composer/editor, her music is available at www.sheetmusicbyfatrock.com

Reina Inui, Violin –

Violinist Reina Inui is a graduate of the Curtis Institute of Music. She is from Los Angeles, where she studied with Robert Lipsett and Sheryl Staples at the Colburn School. Last season she toured China with Pinchas Zukerman and the Pacific Symphony. Currently she is a finalist for Principal Second Violin at the Long Beach Symphony. She has performed with the Baltimore, Atlanta, Buffalo, Virginia Symphony Orchestras, Chamber Orchestra of Philadelphia and Philly POPS, among others. Miss Inui won Grand Prize at the Los Angeles Music Center Spotlight Awards and Second Prize at the Los Angeles Philharmonic Bronislaw Kaper Awards.

Rachel Mellis, Flute –

Flutist Rachel Mellis enjoys a multi-faceted career as an orchestral, chamber, solo, and recording artist. She performs regularly throughout the U.S. and has toured in Europe and Asia. Mellis has collaborated with esteemed artists across many genres, including John Williams, Danny Elfman, Michael Bubl , Michael Tilson Thomas, James Conlon, Seth MacFarlane, Rachel Platten and Lea Michele. Mellis is on faculty at Occidental College as an Applied Flute Instructor. Her education includes Bachelor and Masters Degrees in Flute Performance from the University of Southern California (USC) where she studied under Jim Walker and Gary Woodward.

Shea Welsh, Guitar –

Shea Welsh is a guitarist, songwriter and producer. His ability to move freely through any genre keeps him at the top of many music makers' lists. Welsh has logged countless hours as a session player with the industry's top producers such as Trickey Stewart on Raven Symon 's recordings, and Daniel Lanois with The Jane Carrey Band. Welsh is a Blujazz Recording Artist and released his debut recording, *Arrival*, in 2017. He runs The Shea Welsh Institute of Jazz at The Conservatory of Performing Arts. He is a USC Thornton School of Music Studio/Jazz Guitar faculty member, and has written two instructional books for The Alfred Publishing Company: *Blues Guitar Lessons Volume I and II*.

Michelle Jensen, Sterling Ensemble –

Dr. Michelle Jensen is the founder and conductor of the *Sterling Ensemble*. Currently conducting the Chamber Singers and teaching Music Education at Azusa Pacific University, she has also served as an adjunct instructor at the University of Southern California (USC) where she earned her BM, MME in Music Education and DMA (ABD) in Choral Music. Under the direction of Jensen, the APU Chamber Singers has won significant international awards at top choral competitions and were selected to represent the United States at the 50th International Competition of Choirs in Spittal an der Drau, Austria, where they were awarded first place in every category. Dr. Jensen continues to serve as a clinician, adjudicator, honor choir conductor, choreographer, and guest artist throughout the United States and abroad.

About **Cécilia Tsan**, Artistic Director –

Praised by the *Los Angeles Times* for “her virtuosity and the charisma of her musical personality,” French cellist Cécilia Tsan is a graduate of the Paris Conservatory and multiple prizewinner at notable international competitions. In addition to concertizing extensively in the U.S. and abroad, she is an active recording artist; she has recorded several albums and hundreds of films scores. Recent performances include the Elgar and Brahms Double Concertos, the world premiere of Eric Tanguy’s *piano Trio*, written for her, as well as *Tanguy’s Concerto No.2*. Tsan is Principal Cello for Long Beach Symphony and LA Master Chorale and has also served as Principal Cello for the Oscars and the Emmys. In April 2019, she was the narrator in Stravinsky’s *Perséphone* with the LA Philharmonic, Esa-Pekka Salonen and Peter Sellars. She is the Artistic Director for the Mount Wilson Observatory music series.

THE VENUE:

The 100-inch telescope is the instrument with which astronomer **Edwin Hubble** discovered our place in an expanding universe and so expanded our comprehension. The dome for the telescope—designed by Chicago architect **D.H. Burnham**—is a 20th century temple to science whose acoustics rival the great cathedrals of Europe and provides a unique setting for this ambitious music series.

Albert Einstein wrote that, “There exists a passion for comprehension, just as there exists a passion for music.” This extraordinary venue, a monument to the pursuit of comprehension, energizes that passion for music.

Upcoming 2019 Sunday Afternoon Concerts in the Dome include:

Sunday, August 4

Schubert’s *String Quintet in C major* performed by the **Lyrus Quartet** featuring **Alyssa Park**, **Shalini Vijayan**, violins, **Luke Maurer**, viola, **Timothy Loo**, cello and Cécilia Tsan, cello.

Sunday, September 1

Mozart Sonata for bassoon and cello (arrangement for 2 cellos)/ **Bach Chaconne** (arrangement for 2 cellos) /**Barrière Sonata** for two cellos/**Offenbach Duet**

Sunday, October 6

The concert series wraps up the summer season with **Mozart** and **Brahms** Quintets for clarinet and strings. The artists include **Pierre Génisson**, clarinet, **Ambroise Aubrun** and **Henry Gronnier**, violins, **Virginie d’Avezac**, viola and Cécilia Tsan, cello.

Please be advised that access to the dome performances is via a 53-step staircase. There is no ADA-compliant access.

LINKS:

- Mt. Wilson Observatory - <https://www.mtwilson.edu>
- *Sunday Afternoon Concerts in the Dome* - <https://www.mtwilson.edu/concerts>
- MWO Facebook - <https://www.facebook.com/WilsonObs>
- MWO Twitter - <https://twitter.com/mtwilsonobs>
- MWO Instagram - <https://www.instagram.com/mtwilsonobservatory>
- MWO Images including *Concert* photos & flyers - <http://tinyurl.com/ImagesMWO>

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For more information, photos, to schedule an interview or request press passes, please contact Green Galactic’s Lynn Tejada at 213-840-1201 or lynn@greengalactic.com.