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**YMF DEBUT ORCHESTRA PERFORMS SALONEN,  
LIGETI, AND STRAVINSKY**

**Friday, February 19<sup>th</sup>, 2016 at 7:30 PM**  
**Free Admission**

**(Los Angeles, CA)** - The Young Musicians Foundation (YMF) Debut Orchestra performs *Modernity Now*, a program of contemporary orchestral masterworks. The evening will feature 2015 Debut Concerto Competition First Prize Winner Kirsten Ashley Wiest, soprano, performing György Ligeti's dramatic *Mysteries of the Macabre*. To round out the program, the orchestra will perform Stravinsky's iconic 1947 version of *Petrushka*, and Esa-Pekka Salonen's virtuosic *Foreign Bodies*. Recently appointed YMF Music Director Yuga Cohler will conduct the concert, and notes:

"No one is more representative of modernity in classical music than Esa-Pekka Salonen. As a former music director of the Los Angeles Philharmonic and one of the most accomplished living composers, he is an artistic entrepreneur unique to our times. The cool ethos he has cultivated by engaging with technology and popular culture are exactly what YMF is about, and his music is all the more vital for it. To perform his colossally difficult *Foreign Bodies* is a reflection of both the Debut Orchestra's virtuosity and its forward-thinking artistic mission.

The middle piece in this program is no less shocking. Employing elements of spoken word and theater, *The Mysteries of the Macabre* is hilarious, offensive, and deeply fascinating all at the same time. Featuring YMF Concerto Competition Winner Kirsten Ashley Wiest, this performance will feature singer, conductor, and orchestra participating in ways unthinkable to those who view classical music as an artifact of the past.

From this perspective, the first half of the program is ancient. Initially written 100 years ago, *Petrushka* is one of the first examples of modern classical music, with Stravinsky's characteristic rhythmic drive and harmonic complexity. Performing this work first allows us the opportunity to examine where we have been, where we are, and most importantly, where we are going. The time for modernity is now."

PROGRAM:

Young Musicians Foundation Debut Orchestra  
Yuga Cohler, *conductor*  
Kirsten Ashley Wiest, *soprano*

Igor STRAVINSKY: *Petrushka* (1947)  
György LIGETI: *Mysteries of the Macabre*  
Esa-Pekka SALONEN: *Foreign Bodies*

Friday, February 19<sup>th</sup>, 2016 at 7:30PM  
Aratani Theatre - Japanese American Cultural & Community Center  
244 S. San Pedro St.  
Los Angeles, CA 90012  
[www.YMF.org](http://www.YMF.org)  
(213) 617-7707

Free admission. No tickets required.

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**Yuga Cohler, Music Director and Conductor**

As the youngest graduate of the Juilliard School's course in orchestral conducting, 26-year-old Yuga Cohler is revolutionizing classical music through his incorporation of technology, popular culture, and other creative media into the concert going experience. He was recently appointed music director and conductor of the Young Musicians Foundation (YMF) Debut Orchestra, one of the foremost professional training orchestras in the country. For his first season with YMF, Cohler has instituted *The Great Music Series*, a concert series which explores the elements common to massively popular music and works from the classical canon. The 2015/16 season sees the inaugural installation of this series: Yeethoven, a comparison of the works of Kanye West and Beethoven, conceived in collaboration with composer Stephen Feigenbaum.

A recipient of the Bruno Walter Memorial Scholarship, Cohler studied with New York Philharmonic Music Director Alan Gilbert at the Juilliard School. There, he worked extensively with the Juilliard Orchestra and served as its assistant conductor under Itzhak Perlman. He continues to enjoy a close relationship with the group, having made his professional debut with them in 2013. Other orchestras which Cohler has conducted include the Dallas, Baltimore, Fort Worth, and New Amsterdam Symphony Orchestras, and the New World and Danish National Symphonies.

Among the accolades granted to Cohler are the Career Assistance Award from the Solti Foundation U.S., the Ansbacher Fellowship from the American Austrian

Foundation, the Charles Schiff Conducting Award from the Juilliard School, and the David McCord Prize for Artistic Excellence from Harvard University. He has been granted fellowships to some of the most prestigious musical institutions in the country, including the Aspen Music Festival and the Cabrillo Festival of Contemporary Music, and has additionally studied at the Tanglewood Music Center.

A skilled interpreter of modern music, Cohler was selected by composer John Adams to perform a program of modern American orchestral music at Carnegie Hall, where the New York Times lauded his “strong rendition” of Elliott Carter’s Double Concerto. He currently serves as a Director of the Asia / America New Music Initiative, with whom he was a featured performer at the 2015 Beijing Modern Music Festival.

Cohler is a *summa cum laude* graduate of Harvard College, where he studied computer science. He first became a music director at the age of 20 when he assumed the helm of the Harvard Bach Society Orchestra. As an advocate for the integration of art music into mainstream American culture, Cohler has collaborated as both performer and lecturer with such forward-thinking institutions as Google, Groupmuse, and the Danbury Music Centre. He is the founder of the blog State of Art ([yugacohler.com/stateofart](http://yugacohler.com/stateofart)), which examines American musical culture without preconceptions of genre or quality.

### **Kirsten Ashley Wiest, soprano**

Soprano Kirsten Ashley Wiest is “a new music natural” committed to the continuous evolution of classical vocal music. Her “wonted skill and poise” have captured the attention of many composers, resulting in several world premiere performances and close collaborations. Kirsten has worked with composers Ben Johnston, Jeffrey Holmes, Annie Hsieh, and Denis Kolokol, along with conductors Steven Schick and Christopher Rountree, among many others.

Kirsten has sung as a soloist with the Grammy award-winning Partch ensemble, La Jolla Symphony and Chorus, *wild Up* new music collective, UCLA John Cage Symposium, *kallisti* chamber opera, UCSD's *Palimpsest*, CalArts New Century Players Ensemble, and Chapman University’s New Music Ensemble. She has also performed with Bang on a Can All-Stars, red fish blue fish, The Industry - LA’s home for experimental opera, San Diego Pro Arte Voices, the Metroplex Opera Company in Dallas, and the Texas 'Lone Star' Ambassadors of Music. Operatic roles include La Princesse in Ravel's *L'enfant et les sortilèges* (Perigueux, France), Polly Peachum in Weill's *Threepenny Opera* (San Diego, CA), and Mabel in Gilbert and Sullivan's *Pirates of Penzance* (Fort Worth, TX).

Currently a DMA student at UCSD under the instruction of Grammy award-winning soprano Susan Narucki, Kirsten holds an MFA from California Institute of the Arts and a BM *cum laude* from Chapman University’s Conservatory of Music, where she

was awarded the New Music Award for her outstanding commitment to the performance of contemporary works.

## **Young Musicians Foundation (YMF)**

Young Musicians Foundation exists to unify communities through exceptional classical music experiences. We provide opportunities for youth of all socio-economic and ethnic backgrounds to cultivate their abilities and passion for music during the pivotal formative years of their development. By expanding access to quality musical education and performances, we nurture creativity and emotional expression, enriching quality of life and fostering current and future audiences. Our eight interconnected music programs provide an introduction to musical instruments and technique, in addition to scholarships and performance opportunities for advanced students embarking on professional careers.

## **Debut Orchestra**

Now celebrating its 61<sup>st</sup> season, the Debut Orchestra is one of the oldest pre-professional training orchestras in the country. Comprised of approximately 70 talented musicians ages 15-25 from across the Los Angeles area, the orchestra hones the skills of students who are on the cusp of professional careers. Musicians are selected each year through blind auditions adjudicated by eminent Los Angeles-based musicians, and alumni of the orchestra perform today in virtually every major symphony orchestra in the country. Currently led by Music Director and Conductor Yuga Cohler, the orchestra also remains one of few programs giving talented young conductors the opportunity to plan, rehearse, and conduct a full orchestra season.

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### **FOR MORE INFORMATION:**

(213) 617-7707

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