



Karen Hutchinson/Beth Bhatnagar, Co-Presidents

December 14, 2020

## ARTIST PROGRAM

**Ben Simon**, conductor

### **Members of the Palo Alto Chamber Orchestra**

BMC's dear friend, **Ben Simon**, the San Francisco Chamber Orchestra's Conductor, will be sharing performances from his Palo Alto Chamber Orchestra Summer Music Workshop

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qNaC5H9J5hY&list=PL9AZDU5DrmwikgVhezv\\_xzHf\\_BknCkJRd&index=1](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qNaC5H9J5hY&list=PL9AZDU5DrmwikgVhezv_xzHf_BknCkJRd&index=1)

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7GAdbsXFm6Y&list=PL9AZDU5DrmwikgVhezv\\_xzHf\\_BknCkJRd&index=8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7GAdbsXFm6Y&list=PL9AZDU5DrmwikgVhezv_xzHf_BknCkJRd&index=8)

<https://pacomusic.org/paco-camp/>

## ARTIST BIOS

**Ben Simon**, conductor, Palo Alto Chamber Orchestra, has successfully made the transition to conductor following twenty-five years as a violist performing in several of the United States' most elite ensembles, including the New York Philharmonic, the Los Angeles Philharmonic, the Naumburg Award-winning New World String Quartet, and the Orpheus Chamber Orchestra. In 2002 he was appointed Music Director of the San Francisco Chamber Orchestra and has transformed that organization into one of the premiere professional ensembles in northern California. The same year, he was appointed Music Director of the award-winning youth orchestra, Palo Alto Chamber Orchestra.

A native of San Francisco, Mr. Simon began his musical studies on the violin at the age of 6. His first violin teacher was Manfred Karasik, a violist in the San Francisco Symphony Orchestra. Simon moved to New York City when he was 8 years old, continuing his studies at the Mannes College of Music, the Juilliard School Preparatory Division, and the High School of Music and Art. Returning to the Bay Area in 1970, he was the concertmaster of the Oakland Symphony Youth Orchestra under Denis DeCouteau and studied violin with Daniel Kobialka. He began his conducting studies with Dr. DeCouteau at the time. After graduating Berkeley High School in 1972, Simon delayed matriculation at Yale College and took his first professional work as last-stand second violinist with the Oakland Symphony, under Harold Farberman. He made the switch from violin to viola while an undergraduate at Yale, studying viola and chamber music with Raphael Hillyer. Simon continued his conducting studies with Otto-Werner Mueller at Yale and Dennis Russell Davies at the Aspen Music Festival. After graduating Yale College magna cum laude in 1977, Simon was a scholarship student of Lillian Fuchs at the Juilliard School, where he was awarded the Machlis Prize for "an outstanding instrumentalist on the graduate level."

Following his graduation from Juilliard, Simon played with the New York Philharmonic Orchestra for one year, and also participated in three successive international tours. Simon became Principal Violist of the Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra in 1980, a position he held for eight years. He was a frequent soloist with the orchestra, conducted small ensembles on occasion, and spent three summers at the Marlboro Music Festival. Simon was also featured in the 25th Anniversary Music from Marlboro concert in New York City, which included Murray Perahia and Felix Galimir. In 1988 he joined the Naumburg-Award winning New World String Quartet, performing over eighty concerts a year in major venues and summer festivals in the United States, Europe, and Asia. The quartet recorded extensively for MCA Classics; they won a 1991 Grand Prix du Disque for their recording of the string quartets of Debussy, Ravel, and Henri Dutilleux. The New World SQ was quartet-in-residence at Harvard University and performed with artists David Soyer, Raphael Hillyer, Ursula Oppens, Gilbert Kalish, Donald McInnes, Joel Krosnick, Harold Wright, David Shifrin, Carol Wincenc, Christopher O'Riley, John Perry, and James Tocco. Following four seasons with the New World SQ, Simon joined the Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra in 1992 and was an active studio musician in LA as well. He has performed on the sound tracks of over eighty major motion pictures. In 1993, Simon joined the Stanford String Quartet, the ensemble-in-residence at Stanford University, replacing Bernard Zaslav. For the next five years he taught viola and chamber

music at Stanford, lectured on music in the Department of Continuing Studies, and concertized with the quartet. Simon was also Principal Violist of the New Century Chamber Orchestra for three seasons, 1994-'97.

In 1999 Simon joined the Crowden School in Berkeley as Associate Director, and succeeded Anne Crowden as the school's Director the following year. He led the orchestra on two European tours, and was the founder of their popular "Sundays at Four" chamber music series. Simon spent four summers in Los Angeles as Principal Violist of the Hollywood Bowl Orchestra. In 2002, he was appointed Music Director of the San Francisco Chamber Orchestra, and has reorganized the revitalized this professional ensemble. The same year, he became the second Music Director of the award-winning youth ensemble Palo Alto Chamber Orchestra, succeeding founder William Whitson.

A frequent guest lecturer at Stanford University, Simon has been on the music faculty of UC Berkeley since 1998, where he teaches chamber music and viola. Although conducting takes the lion's share of Ben's time and energy, he can still be heard performing onstage at the SFCO's Classical at the Freight and around the Bay Area with various friends and colleagues.



#### **CONTACT PERSONS**

**Awards Co-Chair:** Steven Cady, [cadylac@gmail.com](mailto:cadylac@gmail.com)    **Program:** Karen Hutchinson, [pianokaren@gmail.com](mailto:pianokaren@gmail.com)

**Awards Co-Chair:** Edna Steele, [steeledna@gmail.com](mailto:steeledna@gmail.com)

**Membership Co-Chairs:** Loretta Baines, [lbaines01@comcast.net](mailto:lbaines01@comcast.net) and Melinda King, [dougking@sbglobal.net](mailto:dougking@sbglobal.net)

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