



# NOWRUZ: IRANIAN NEW YEAR

Saturday, March 26, 2022 @ 8 p.m.

Carl St. Clair, conductor  
 Shardad Rohani, conductor  
 Alireza Ghorbani, vocalist  
 Lily Afshar, guitar  
 Mojgan Shajarian, vocalist  
 Pacific Symphony

The Saturday performance is  
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Performance at the Segerstrom Center for the Arts  
 Renée and Henry Segerstrom Concert Hall

## PROGRAM

- |                                    |  |
|------------------------------------|--|
| Shardad Rohani                     | <b>Dance of Spring Overture</b>  |
| Vivaldi                            | <b>Concerto in D Major for Guitar, RV 93</b><br>Lily Afshar, guitar              |
| Mussorgsky/arr.<br>Rimsky-Korsakov | <b>Night on Bald Mountain</b><br>Shardad Rohani, conductor                       |
| Steven Mahpar                      | <b>Darius the Great</b>  |
| Mohammadreza<br>Shajarian          | <b>Bouye Baran</b><br>Mojgan Shajarian, vocalist                                 |
| Shahin Yousefzamani                | <b>Spring of Love</b><br>Mojgan Shajarian, vocalist                              |
| — Intermission —                   |  |
|                                    | <b>The Music of Alireza Ghorbani</b><br>Arranged for orchestra by Shardad Rohani |

## ABOUT THE ARTISTS



Alireza Ghorbani was trained to recite the Qur'an while growing up and began vocal lessons at 12. He developed his vocal abilities at a young age, going on to master the numerous scales of Middle Eastern music. By his 20s, he was a solo vocalist with the National Orchestra of Iran.

Ghorbani is widely regarded as a major influential singer of the Persian song. He is a great artist deeply rooted in the tradition, but also has an insatiable curiosity and open-mindedness with respect to the other cultures. Born in the midst of the turbulence of 1970s and 80s Iran, Ghorbani has laid claims to being a worthy successor of the man regarded as the undisputed master of Persian classical song, Mohammed Reza Shajarian. Ghorbani has released 19 albums in Iran and Europe.

Ghorbani has participated in several international projects, some multi-cultural projects in Iran, France, India, Mali like: *Le Rhythm de la Parole*, *SOUFFLES DU MONDE* and some other collaboration with the Tunisian singer Dorsaf Hamdani in concert with the Düsseldorf Symphony Orchestra, the Orchestra Vienna, Cologne Philharmonic and the Vancouver Opera Orchestra. Ghorbani has collaborated with film and television artists and has sung some of the popular themes in Iran's serials. The most important of these are the *Sheb-e Dahom*, *Madar-e Sefr Darajeh*, *Kimia* and *Aghigh*.

Ghorbani is invited every year to major international music festivals and is recognized as the most active traditional

singer outside of Iran. He has performed at major venues such as Cadogan Hall and Barbican in London, Philharmonic Hall of Cologne, the Théâtre du Louvre and the Alhambra in Paris, the Tonhalle in Düsseldorf and the Opera House in Vancouver, Théâtre de la Ville in Paris, Rose Hall in Los Angeles, Gulbenkian Hall in Lisbon, Odeon Concert Hall in Vienna, Bozar Concert Hall in Brussels and Uppsala Concert Hall in Sweden. 🎻



**Guitarist Lily Afshar is a virtuosa who brings passion to her performances.** Acclaimed as “one of the world’s foremost classical guitarists” according to Public Radio International. Her unique life story finds expression in her art. *The Washington Post* has described

her onstage performance as “remarkable, impeccable.” She is the only classical guitarist in the world who blends excellent formal training in the United States and Europe with the rich cultural heritage of Persia to present to audiences an extraordinary musical experience.

What brings excitement to a performance by Lily Afshar is her remarkable technical precision plus a passionate musicality that is the product of her personality and life story. Appearing onstage in the United States and around the world, she has delighted audiences not only with a fresh approach to the standard classical guitar repertoire, but also with music that is new and different. Afshar introduced quarter tones on her 2006 CD *Hemispheres* by adding fretlets to her guitar to reproduce accurately the tones required by an eclectic repertoire of new compositions and arrangements. Performing as a soloist at Wigmore Hall in London, she included the quarter-tone pieces as part of the program.

England’s *Musical Opinion Magazine* praised Afshar for her “fresh sense of programming” and “her ability to draw listeners onto the edge of their seats....” Embracing her Persian heritage, Afshar has not only performed her arrangements of Persian and Azerbaijani pieces; she has also fascinated concertgoers with occasional live performances on the *seh-tar*, a traditional Persian instrument which evolved over many centuries into the guitar. Afshar taps the ancient root of the instrument which predates its arrival in Spain from Persia via the Arab conquest of Andalusia in the eighth century A.D. Her performances always include music that is as rich and beautiful as a Persian miniature or tapestry. 🎻



**Vocalist Mojgan Shajarian is an Iranian-American musician, painter, graphic designer and sculptress.** She studied under distinguished Iranian musicians such as Mohammad Reza Shajarian, Mohammad Reza Lotfi,

Hossein Alizadeh and Parviz Meshkatiyan. She has performed extensively as singer and Setar player in major international festivals and prestigious concert halls in Europe, North America and Australia with the acclaimed Iranian master musician (her father), Maestro Mohammad Reza Shajarian. She immigrated to the U.S. in 2012 and currently lives in Southern California where she performs and teaches Persian classical singing (Awaz) and Setar. 🎻

## ABOUT THE CONDUCTOR



**Conductor and composer Shardad Rohani was born in Tehran and educated at the Music Academy and Conservatory of Music in Vienna, Austria.** Currently, Rohani is the musical director and principal conductor of the Tehran Symphony, having served

in this position since 2015. The resurrection of the symphony in the early 2000s has been instrumental in connecting Tehran to the international arts community, including recent collaborations with noted conductors such as Riccardo Muti. In addition to his role as director of the Tehran Symphony (2016–2020), Rohani wrote and performed the anthem for the Iran National Soccer team’s appearance during the World Cup in 2018. He was also commissioned to compose the music for the opening and closing ceremonies of the 13th Asian Olympic Games held in Thailand.

An acclaimed composer and conductor, Rohani has worked with some of the top ensembles in the world including the London Symphony Orchestra, the Prague Symphony Orchestra, the Vancouver Opera Orchestra, the Austrian Chamber Orchestra and the London Royal Philharmonic Concert Orchestra. He captured the attention of audiences around the world as the conductor, arranger and performer for the open-air concert *Yanni Live at the Acropolis*, the second-best selling music concert video of all time. The show was simultaneously televised all around the world; more than 500 million people watched the live concert in 65 countries. His most recent project is the *Sinus Persicus Suite*, originally recorded with the London Symphony Orchestra and the London Voices at Abbey Road Studios. Over the past year, the *Sinus Persicus Suite* has been performed throughout Europe and the United States. Rohani has been the recipient of several important scholarships and awards both in Europe and the United States, including the A.K.M Scholarship (Vienna, Austria), the ASCAP Scholarship (Los Angeles, Calif.) and the Jerry Fielding Award for film composers. His recording of classical masterpieces, including all of Tchaikovsky’s ballets, have received rave reviews by Japan’s *In Tune* magazine. 🎻

# NOWRUZ: THE NEW YEAR CELEBRATION IN IRAN

An excerpt by Professor Ehsan Yarsharter

Of all the Persian national festivals, the New Year celebrations are at once the most important and the most colorful. This festival embodies a wealth of ancient rites and customs, and it is about the only one in Persia that is not confined to the traditions of only one religious group. It symbolizes the continuity of ancient Persian culture, which has survived so many adversities and vicissitudes. The Nowruz celebration stretches over a period of 13 days, the last being a special occasion calling for particular ceremonies. The period begins with the first day of spring, when the sun enters the zodiacal sign of the Ram.

At Nowruz, people join nature in making a fresh start, full of joy and hope for the coming year. The origin of Nowruz is traditionally attributed to Jamshid, the mightiest and the most glorious of the legendary kings of Persia. Nowruz is reckoned by a solar calendar. This was adopted in ancient times by the Zoroastrians, and it is used today as the national calendar of Persia. However, one must bear in mind that the Zoroastrian year did not always begin on the 21st of March (1st of Farvardin). There are reasons to believe that at one time it began with the commencement of autumn. Nowruz and Mehregan, another ancient festival, continue to be the main national Persian festivals. Today, while many of the ancient festivals have faded away in most parts of the country, Nowruz remains a national Persian festival, and its advent brings joy to the hearts of the people. Although many of the old customs and ceremonies, as recorded in histories and travel books, have vanished with the passing of time, what remains makes Nowruz the most fascinating of the Persian festivals, rich in folkloric details and symbolic reminiscences.



## CULTURAL SPONSORS



### THANK YOU TO OUR SPONSOR: FARHANG FOUNDATION

Established in 2008 in Los Angeles, Farhang Foundation is a non-religious, non-political and not-for-profit foundation with a mission to celebrate and promote Iranian art and culture for the benefit of the community at large.

### THANK YOU TO OUR SPONSOR: ANOOSHEH AND ALAN OSKOUIAN



The Symphony extends special thanks to dedicated friends of the Symphony Anoosheh and Alan Oskouian. As one of the executive committee Board members at the Symphony and one of the trustees of the Farhang Foundation,

Anoosheh has been tireless in her efforts to bridge Eastern and Western communities through classical music. She was the key player in the creation of the Cyrus Society as the Symphony's vehicle to bring business, community and cultural leaders together through music.

### THANK YOU TO OUR SPONSOR: CYRUS SOCIETY



Pacific Symphony gratefully acknowledges the support of The Cyrus Society, a group of business, community and cultural leaders with a passion for classical music, who may open avenues of engagement to the Iranian communities of

Orange County. Cyrus Society members are generously supportive of Pacific Symphony's efforts to build long-term partnerships with the growing number of Iranian and Iranian-American leaders and residents in our region in order to support cultural celebrations and deepen understanding.