

MODESTO SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

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CELEBRATE THE HOLIDAYS WITH THE MODESTO SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

Holiday Pops! with Ashley Brown – December 1st & 2nd, 2023

Holiday Candlelight Concert – December 19, 2023

MODESTO, CA - The Modesto Symphony Orchestra's (MSO) holiday concerts offer fun for the entire family. Complete with holiday décor and your favorite carols, the MSO's holiday concerts have become community favorites. The first of the MSO's two holiday concerts is [Holiday Pops!](#) on **Friday, December 1, 2023 at 7:30 pm and Saturday, December 2, 2023** at the Gallo Center for the Arts. Conducted by [Principal Pops Conductor Ryan Murray](#), this lively and festive concert features Broadway star [Ashley Brown](#) and the **MSO Chorus**. The [Holiday Candlelight Concert](#) will be held on **December 19, 2023 at 8 pm** in a new location, Our Lady of Fatima Church at 505 W. Granger Ave. in Modesto. MSO Chorus Director, [Daniel R. Afonso Jr.](#), will conduct this traditional holiday concert and Our Lady of Fatima Church is the perfect setting for a more intimate concert that will also feature the MSO Chorus and the Opus Handbell Ensemble.

"I'm so looking forward to Holiday Pops this year! It's always such a wonderful celebration of the holiday season and a great chance for us all to come together as a community!" says Ryan Murray, Principal Pops Conductor for the Modesto Symphony Orchestra. "I'm thrilled that Ashley Brown will be returning this year as our guest soloist. We had such great fun last time Ashley was here and she is truly an incredible performer. She has some fantastic music in store for all of you! I can't wait to share all this terrific holiday music with you and can't wait to be on stage with our incredible Modesto Symphony, Modesto Symphony Chorus, and Ashley Brown!"

Holiday Pops headliner, Ashley Brown, returns to Modesto after last performing with the MSO in 2017. Ashley is best known for originating the role of the titular character in the Broadway production of *Mary Poppins*, for which she received Outer Critics Circle, Drama League, and Drama Desk award nominations. She has performed with many top orchestras in North America, including the Boston Bops, the New York Philharmonic, and The Hollywood Bowl Orchestra at Disney Hall.

“The holiday season is always a special time for the MSO,” says Caroline Nickel, President and CEO of the Modesto Symphony Orchestra. “We hope that both our Holiday Pops! and Holiday Candlelight Concert can bring a little extra warmth and joy to our community. It’s a special feeling being able to take the time to slow down and spend time with friends and family during the holiday season and each year we look forward to extending that feeling to our audiences.”

MODESTO SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA, [HOLIDAY POPS!](#)

Friday, December 1, 2023 at 7:30 pm and Saturday, December 2, 2023 at 2:00pm

Ryan Murray, conductor

Ashley Brown, vocalist

Modesto Symphony Orchestra

Modesto Symphony Orchestra Chorus, Daniel R. Afonso Jr., director

Gallo Center for the Arts, Mary Stuart Rogers Theater
1000 I Street, Modesto

TICKETS:

Pricing: \$20 / 36 / 52 / 72 / 94

Tickets are available online through ModestoSymphony.org or through the Gallo Center for the Arts Ticket Office at (209) 338-2100.

Group Prices available: Groups of 10+ receive a 15% discount on tickets. Call (209) 338-5064 for more information.

Gallo Center Ticket Office Hours: Monday through Friday 10:00am-6:00pm / Saturday 12:00pm-6:00pm

CONCERT SPONSORED BY: Beard Land and Investment Co.

MODESTO SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA, [HOLIDAY CANDLELIGHT CONCERT](#)

Tuesday, December 19, 2023 at 8:00 pm

Daniel R. Afonso Jr., conductor

Modesto Symphony Orchestra

Modesto Symphony Orchestra Chorus, Daniel R. Afonso Jr., director

Opus Handbell Ensemble, Richard Colla, director

Our Lady of Fatima Church
505 W. Granger Avenue, Modesto

TICKETS:

Pricing:

Adult: \$39 / 59

Youth: \$10 / 20

Tickets are available online through ModestoSymphony.org or through the Gallo Center for the Arts Ticket Office at (209) 338-2100.

Group Prices available: Groups of 10+ receive a 15% discount on Standard Adult seating. Call (209) 338-5064 for more information.

Ticket Office Hours: Monday through Friday 10:00am-6:00pm / Saturday 12:00pm-6:00pm

ARTIST BIOS:

RYAN MURRAY

Ryan Murray is currently Principal Pops Conductor for the Modesto Symphony, Music Director of the Auburn Symphony, and Artistic Director of the Music in the Mountains Summer Festival. He is also the Director of Symphony Orchestra & Opera at California State University, Sacramento, and the Conductor for the Sacramento Youth Symphony's premier orchestra. An award-winning opera conductor, Ryan spent his early career working as an assistant conductor and répétiteur and serves as Music Director of Opera Modesto. He has served as an assistant conductor at the Sacramento Philharmonic & Opera, is the past Music Director of Fresno Grand Opera, and previously worked as a staff conductor for the Bay Area Summer Opera Theater Institute (BASOTI), and The Opera Academy of California in San Francisco. Effortlessly moving between genres, Ryan currently enjoys a wide range of performance genres & platforms, including traditional orchestral and operatic repertoire, pops performances, movies in concert, and a notable emphasis on contemporary American operatic works.

Ryan was the winner of the Vienna Philharmonic's prestigious Ansbacher Fellowship for Young Conductors, and spent the summer in residence alongside the Vienna Philharmonic at the 2014 Salzburg Festival. Ryan was also awarded second place in the 2019 American Prize for Professional Orchestral Conducting for his work with the Modesto Symphony, and has garnered national recognition for his dynamic, compelling performances of contemporary opera as the winner of the 2017 American Prize in Opera Conducting for his highly lauded production of *A Streetcar Named Desire*. He was a 2016 semi-finalist for the Ernst Bacon Memorial Award for the Performance of American Music for his production of Jake Heggie's *Dead Man Walking*.

A charismatic pops conductor, Ryan has worked with prominent artists such as Storm Large of Pink Martini, SuperDiamond and the phenomenal symphonic tribute to David Bowie. He was recently engaged to step-in at the last minute as assistant and cover conductor for Andrea Bocelli's *Believe Tour* with the Sacramento Philharmonic where he conducted rehearsals to acclaim. He has led some of the top vocalists from Broadway and beyond, including Ben Crawford (Broadway's *The Phantom of the Opera*), Ashley Brown (Broadway's *Mary Poppins*), and Alli Mauzey (Glinda from *Wicked*), as well as some of today's top young jazz vocalists including Tony DeSare, and James Tormé. With an enthusiasm for film scores, Ryan enjoys the unique challenges of conducting movies in concert and is a *Disney & ICM Approved Conductor*. Recent and upcoming performances include Disney's *Pirates of the Caribbean: The Curse of the Black Pearl*, Pixar Animation Studios' *Pixar in Concert*, *Star Wars: A New Hope* and *Star Wars: The Empire Strikes Back*.

Ryan holds degrees, *summa cum laude*, in Bassoon Performance and Voice Performance from California State University, Sacramento and also holds a master's degree, *with distinction*, in Music Business from the Berklee College of Music where he studied with industry professionals to develop tools for success in the modern music industry, including new technology, policy, law and finance. Driven by a lifelong passion for learning, Ryan has attended conducting masterclasses and seminars around the world. Ryan recently conducted the Romanian Chamber Orchestra in concert and was one of just eight conductors worldwide to be invited to the *Musiikin aika* Summer Festival Masterclass in Finland led by Musical America's 2017 Conductor of the Year & Principal Guest Conductor of the Los Angeles Philharmonic, Susanna Mälkki. He has previously attended the Cabrillo Festival of Contemporary Music's Conductors Workshop; the contemporary music symposium led by Alan

Gilbert featuring the New York Philharmonic; the Aurora Chamber Festival in Sweden, where he studied under Maestro Kurt Masur; the Lucerne Festival Academy's Conducting Masterclass in Switzerland; and the Eastman School of Music's Summer Conducting Institute. Widely praised for his tireless work ethic, natural poise, and impassioned, inspired performances, Ryan continues to connect deeply with orchestras and audiences alike and has proven to be a formidable presence on the podium.

ASHLEY BROWN

Ashley Brown originated the title role in "Mary Poppins" on Broadway for which she received Outer Critics, Drama League and Drama Desk nominations for Best Actress. Ms. Brown also starred as Mary Poppins in the national tour of Mary Poppins where she garnered a 2010 Garland award for "Best Performance in a Musical". Ms. Brown's other Broadway credits include Belle in "The Beauty and The Beast", and she has starred in the national tour of Disney's "On The Record". Ashley recently returned to the Lyric Opera of Chicago to star in the role of Laurey in "Oklahoma". She previously played Magnolia opposite Nathan Gunn in Francesca Zembello's "Showboat" at the Lyric Opera of Chicago.

Ashley has performed with virtually all of the top orchestras in North America including the Boston Pops, the New York Philharmonic, The Hollywood Bowl Orchestra at Disney Hall, The Pittsburgh Symphony, the New York Pops at Carnegie Hall (three times), Fort Worth Symphony, the Cincinnati Pops, Philadelphia Orchestra (two times), the Milwaukee Symphony, the Indianapolis Symphony (three times), Seattle Symphony, the Houston Symphony, Vancouver Symphony, and the Philly Pops. She has also performed with the BBC orchestra opposite Josh Groban.

Ashley made her solo concert debut at The Kennedy Center as part of Barbara Cook's Spotlight Series, and has appeared in New York City at prestigious venues including Feinstein's at the Regency and Birdland. Other projects include a star turn at the La Jolla Playhouse in a production of "Limelight", "Sound of Music" at the St. Louis MUNY which garnered her a Kevin Kline award, and her own PBS special called "Ashley Brown: Call Me Irresponsible" which received a PBS Telly Award. Ms. Brown's long awaited album of Broadway and American Songbook standards is available on Ghostlight/Sony. Ashley is a graduate of the Cincinnati Conservatory of Music.

DANIEL R. AFONSO JR.

Daniel R. Afonso Jr. has served as conductor of the Modesto Symphony Orchestra Chorus since its foundation in 2001 and has prepared several choral works with the ensemble. He is also Coordinator of Vocal and Choral Studies at California State University, Stanislaus. Afonso received a B.M.E. degree from the Universidade do Rio de Janeiro (UNI-Rio), a M.M. degree in Choral Conducting from the University of Missouri-Kansas City, and a D.M.A. degree in Choral Conducting and Pedagogy from the University of Iowa. Dr. Afonso is originally from Rio de Janeiro, Brazil and has studied conducting with Carlos Alberto Figueiredo, Cees Rotteveel, Eph Ehly, and William Hatcher.

Dr. Afonso has performed with choral groups in Brazil, U.S., and Europe, and has previously taught music at the Conservatório Brasileiro de Música, Universidade do Rio de Janeiro (UNI-Rio), and Doane College, Nebraska. In 1988, he won the first prize and the best performance of Villa-Lobos work award at the Concurso Villa-Lobos de Canto Coral, a national choral competition sponsored by the Museu de Arte Moderna do Rio de Janeiro. Dr. Afonso is strongly committed to the performance of new music and has commissioned and premiered many new choral works in the last few years, including several of his own works as well as works by young composition students. He had his New York debut in 2012, conducting Mozart's Requiem with members of the MSO Chorus and students from CSU Stanislaus at the Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts.

He is also a composer, arranger, and editor of choral music and has choral works published by earthsongs, Colla Voce, and Alliance Music Publications. He served as composer-in-residence with the San Francisco Choral Artists

during their 2014-2015 season and has also written works for the Los Angeles Children's Choir, the Gay Men's Chorus of Los Angeles, and other ensembles in the US and abroad. He has written innumerable arrangements for the Modesto Symphony Orchestra, including a new version of The Star-Spangled Banner for chorus and orchestra, recently premiered at the opening concert for the 2015-16 concert season. Dr. Afonso is widely recognized for his research and performance of Brazilian choral music and continues to frequently present workshops and lectures about the Latin American choral repertoire.

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*The Modesto Symphony Orchestra is a resident company of the Gallo Center for the Arts.
The DoubleTree Hotel is the official hotel of the MSO.*