

© Best Version Media

HILLSBOROUGH LIVING

DECEMBER 2025



A Sublime
Season
Music at Kohl Mansion

POWERED BY
BVM
BEST VERSION MEDIA

Cover photo by Scott Wall



SF Symphony Musicians concert at Christmas.
Photo by Marie-Jose Durquet



Arti Srivastava Nath with Steven Saum, Deputy Czech Consul to the Bay Area and Rebekah Bloyd celebrating the launch of the 43rd season.
Photos by MAKM

Let the Music Play *At Kohl Mansion*

By Arti Srivastava Nath, Photos by Music at Kohl Mansion

Tucked away in the verdant hills of Burlingame, neighboring Hillsborough, sits the elegant 1914 Tudor Revival estate known as The Kohl Mansion. With its red-brick façade, lofty ceilings, and exquisite woodwork, the mansion is in itself a work of art, listed on the National Register of Historic Places by the United States Department of the Interior. For over four decades, the mansion's jewel-like interior—the Elizabethan-style Great Hall—has served as the luminous home for one of the Peninsula's most cherished cultural institutions: Music at Kohl Mansion (MAKM).

A Venue Made for Music

From the moment one steps into the Great Hall, there's a sense of rare intimacy combined with sweeping grandeur. The room's proportions, its wooden paneling, the carved beams, cathedral ceiling, and resonant surfaces—all contribute to acoustics that musicians and audiences alike frequently praise as exceptional. MAKM describes the venue as a "gracious setting for intimate music on a grand scale," and the *San Francisco Chronicle* hailed the venue as "an acoustic gem." Imagine the hush that falls over the

audience as a quartet takes its place three feet away, bows lifting in unison, as the first notes open the space. You see the soft shadows cast by the romantic lighting in the hall, you hear the blend of strings, winds, or piano—all in a setting that feels majestic yet welcoming. Over the years, performers have complimented the space's clarity, warmth, and immediacy that allow them to play with a nuance and sense of presence uncommon in larger concert halls.

The Season:

World-Class, with Local Affinity

Founded in 1983, Music at Kohl Mansion is the longest-running chamber-music-only presenter on the San Francisco Peninsula. Now in its 43rd season, MAKM presents a thoughtfully curated lineup of international chamber ensembles in eight Sunday-evening concerts each year, from October through May. What makes the series special is this balance: on one hand, deeply respected touring professionals from around the world; on the other, Kohl Mansion's accessibility, the Sunday-evening schedule, and the approachable scale of the audience. In the spring of 2026, for instance, the season closes with the Grammy-nominated Calidore String Quartet performing Mozart, Korngold, and Beethoven in this intimate hall. Prior concerts have included premieres of contemporary



works, female composers, and world-class classics—all performed at a venue that draws listeners from across the Bay Area. The roster of international artists that have performed at the Mansion include singers Frederica von Stade and Sasha Cooke; commissioned works by Musical America's "Composer of the Year," Jake Heggie for his *Intonations: Songs for the Violins of Hope*, and composer Shinji Eshima with a new work that commemorated MAKM's 40th anniversary; along with renowned

ensembles including the Bay Area treasure Alexander String Quartet, the superb French Trio Karénine, Canada's renowned Gryphon Trio, Germany's award-winning Aris Quartet, Scotland's remarkable Maxwell Quartet, the virtuosic Israeli Chamber Project, and elegant Korean-American pianist Joyce Yang in Recital, among many other distinguished musicians from North America, Europe, South America and beyond.

continued on page 10

CUSTOM ROOFING, SOLAR SYSTEMS, AND BATTERY STORAGE

Serving residential and commercial customers on the peninsula and throughout the Bay Area.



MID PENINSULA
ROOFING INC.



Lic. 501830 Custom Roofs & Solar

Call 650-375-7850
for a FREE estimate

1326 Marsten Rd, Burlingame CA
midpeninsularoofingandsolar.com



Beyond the Concerts:

A Mission of Education & Outreach

MAKM's mission is not only to present outstanding chamber music, but also to build community through the arts. Anchored on the campus of Burlingame's Mercy High School, the organization collaborates with schools, libraries, community centers, and senior residences across San Mateo County. Since 1992, MAKM's music-education programs have reached over 120,000 K-12 students. Their model is inclusive: all San Mateo County schools can participate via partially subsidized programs; schools in low-income communities may receive a full subsidy. The result is an arts-education pipeline that introduces young people of all backgrounds to the transformative power of live chamber music. "Music at Kohl Mansion fills the void for classical music in the greater San Mateo area.

While providing an amazing experience, it also brings the joy of classical music and instruments into area schools, which are sorely lacking in exposure to these world-class musicians," says Paul Friedman, board treasurer.

In one example, the organization collects donated instruments — from violins to congas — and redistributes them to schools, amplifying music-making rather than simply presenting performances. All main stage concerts are enriched by pre-concert talks by eminent educators and free public master classes with advanced students from the multiple award-winning Young Chamber Musicians program.

Season 43: A New Chapter

The 2025-26 season marks the organization's 43rd year and features an inspired program: eight Sunday concerts beginning in October and continuing through May. Among the highlights: the debut of the Prague-based Bennewitz Quartet, a return to baroque programming for the Christmas holidays, and the introduction of a woodwind quintet for the first time in more than 25 years. The programming reflects both tradition and exploration: pairing beloved classics with contemporary works; highlighting Czech musical heritage; and bringing chamber ensembles with diverse instrumentation rarely heard in the region's small-hall circuit. "The acoustics are extraordinary. One can hear every nuance—the rise and fall of dynamics, the delicate phrasing, the blend of voices, and even the silence between notes. Sometimes I felt enveloped by sound; other times, it was as if I were in serene dialogue with the music itself," recalls Arti Srivastava Nath of the opening night performance of Leoš Janáček's *Intimate Letters* by the Bennewitz Quartet.

Adding to the experience, Christopher Costanza - Artist in Residence at Stanford University, distinguished cellist, and member of the St. Lawrence String Quartet - brings decades of insight to his pre-concert talks, often revealing fascinating and tumultuous back stories such as Janáček's unrequited love, on opening night. Through Costanza's lens, the music's emotional architecture mirrors the intensity of human longing, magnifying the drama of works like *Intimate Letters* where story becomes sound.

COFFEE & TEA CO

Tallio's

EXPLORE OUR BOLD FLAVORS

SHOP ONLINE
<https://tallioscoffee.com>





*Hillsborough residents
David and Judy Preves Anderson.
Photo by Rick Gydesen*

A Pleasure to Attend

A ticket for a Sunday evening concert at Kohl Mansion prepares you for an experience that begins long before the first note. On arrival, you park easily on the campus of Mercy High School and walk up the drive toward the mansion's historic façade. Inside, you may take a moment in the elegant foyer, wander into the library, or sit in the Great Hall's audience, which often has fewer than 200 seats. The talk at 6 pm offers context and insight; the concert begins at 7 pm. After the final note, an informal reception in the mansion's stately sage-green dining room gives you the chance to linger, enjoy conversation with fellow patrons, and meet the musicians in person over a complimentary glass of wine. Reviewers have called this "the Music at Kohl experience," where world-class artistry resonates with heartfelt connection.

"As a member of the MAKM Artistic Advisory Committee, I love going to all the wonderful chamber music concerts every season. The internationally known ensembles play lovely repertoire. My husband David and I love not



*Renowned violinist Ida Kavafian coaching Young Chamber Musicians at Kohl Mansion.
Photo by Rick Gydesen*

having to drive to San Francisco for such high-caliber concerts," says Judy Preves Anderson of Hillsborough.

A Cultural Gem - Building Community

Over the years, Music at Kohl Mansion has done more than survive—it has thrived by focusing on excellence and community. Being a chamber-music-only presenter gives the organization clarity of purpose, and being anchored on the Peninsula gives it a unique sense of place: the local schoolchildren coached today might be the audience members of tomorrow; the local music teacher supported might one day conduct a youth ensemble. MAKM's outreach binds itself to its concert stage: thousands of students visit the mansion or experience in-school performances by the visiting guest artists; hundreds of instruments are donated; pre-concert lectures and master classes invite engagement; and

the house itself—Kohl Mansion—becomes a shared cultural landmark. One might argue that the true art is not only the performance but the ecosystem that surrounds it: the way the building, the musicians, the audience, the children, the teachers, and the community all converge.

"Music at Kohl Mansion is truly a jewel of the Peninsula, offering world-class chamber music performances in the stunning yet intimate Great Hall. As a longtime Hillsborough resident, I am deeply grateful for the opportunity to hear such exceptional ensembles throughout the season right here in my own community. In the past, I have served on the Education Committee and currently chair the Artistic Advisory Committee. I am honored to be a volunteer and a supporter," says Katherine Bukstein.

continued on page 12

No time or patience to tend to your landscaping?



**Schedule your
FREE
ESTIMATE**

Thankfully, GLScapes Inc. is here to help. Whether you want to spruce up your yard for that upcoming barbecue or create a professional, manicured look for your office building, put our experienced team of landscape professionals to work for you.

Fencing, Pavers, Turf, Sod, and so much more!

CL# 980793
GLscapes Inc.

**San Francisco Bay Area
CALL NOW! (415) 419-1937
glscapesinc.com**



forward the mission: to make chamber music accessible, meaningful, and unforgettable.

An Invitation

"If you've not yet attended, consider this your invitation," says Patricia Kristof Moy, executive director." Find one of those Sunday evenings, arrive early, sit in the Great Hall, and let the music swirl around you. Feel how the lines between performer and listener blur. Notice how the building itself—its history, architecture, and acoustics—becomes part of the experience. After the concert, pause at that reception: sip, chat with others, including the musicians, and reflect. Because what you'll remember isn't just the notes, but the place, the context, the moment when music and community became one," says Patricia.

Nestled in the heart of a house built for elegance, MAKM invites you to something more—an evening of shared wonder, human connection, and the lasting resonance of live chamber music. A California not-for-profit 501(c)(3) organization, Music at Kohl Mansion is supported by the generosity of over 100 Bay Area individuals, in addition to support from the Mervyn L. Brenner Foundation, Sam Mazza Foundation, Dragonfly Community Arts, Atkinson Foundation, Carlstrom Productions, the City of Burlingame, Broadway Grill, and more.

Looking Ahead

Season 43 looks to deepen the journey: new ensembles, fresh repertoire, renewed outreach. But the heart remains unchanged: chamber music presented in a space alive with purpose, resonant with heritage, open to all. For anyone on the Peninsula or across the Bay Area who believes that music has the power to connect, uplift, and transform, a Sunday evening at Kohl Mansion promises to deliver.

In the current 2025-26 season, Music at Kohl Mansion will offer no fewer than 134 performances - community engagement events at libraries in San Mateo, Palo Alto, the Peninsula JCC, San Francisco's famed Mechanics Institute Library, and education programs and performances at more than 25 area schools. Each performance, whether in the Great Hall or out in the community, carries



The Bay Area's Largest Hardwood Flooring Selection!



Discover the widest range of hardwood flooring options & brands — with over a million sq ft in stock and ready to go. Contractors trust us and you can too!

Business and Referrals always appreciated!

Visit our showroom where the pro's shop.

1100 Industrial Road, Unit #17
San Carlos, CA 94070

Call today for the best quote!

TEL 650-654-8880 / 650-654-8870
www.wholewood.com



Music at Kohl Mansion is governed by an 18-member board of directors, led by President Phillip Trujillo and Executive Director Patricia Kristof Moy. A celebrated diction coach for the San Francisco Opera and the driving force behind MAKM's programming, Patricia is the consummate presenter, and producer. She helped bring the renowned *Violins of Hope* project, a moving initiative that restores Holocaust-era instruments to honor resilience through music, to the Bay Area. As Patricia says, "Music is an important channel for keeping the human spirit alive, as well as the spirit of resistance." This spirit of resilience and community is echoed in the many hands that help sustain the organization. Music at Kohl Mansion thrives thanks to a dedicated corps of volunteers and the generosity of its supporters.

In this season of profound renewal, Music at Kohl Mansion is more than a concert series—it is a gift of peace and joy to the community. Offered with grace, received with gratitude, and remembered long after the final note, it invites us to pause, to connect, and to reflect.

Music at Kohl Mansion is located at 2750 Adeline Drive, Burlingame.
For more information, visit www.musicatkohl.org.



HILLSBOROUGH RACQUET CLUB



A Private Historic Venue for Your Special Event
RESERVE YOUR 2026 DATE NOW

252 El Cerrito Ave. Hillsborough | 650-343-2062
hrcusage@gmail.com | hillsboroughracquetclub.org





**STUDIO
SHOP | GALLERY**

244 Primrose Road
Burlingame, CA 94010
650-344-1378
studioshopgallery.com