

LONG BEACH SYMPHONY

ECKART PREU, MUSIC DIRECTOR

2024-2025 Season

2/1/25

Classical series

Terrace Theater

Tessa Lark
violin

Eckart Preu
conductor

Bluegrass & Beethoven

Pops series

Long Beach Arena

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Music Director Eckart Preu

Maestro Eckart Preu (Eck-art Proy) began his tenure as Music Director of Long Beach Symphony in 2017. Critics, the orchestra, and audiences alike have celebrated his ability to combine well-loved

masterworks with rare or newer works in programs offering dimension, sophistication, and spirit.

Preu also currently serves as Music Director of the Cincinnati Chamber Orchestra (OH) and Portland Symphony Orchestra (ME). Previously, he held the positions of Music Director of the Spokane Symphony (2004-2019) and Stamford Symphony (2005-2017), Associate Conductor of the Richmond Symphony (2001-2004), Resident Conductor of the American Symphony Orchestra (1997-2004) and of the American Russian Young Artists Orchestra (1999-2004). Other former posts include Music Director of the Norwalk (CT) Youth Symphony and Principal Conductor of the New Amsterdam Symphony (NY). He was associated with the Bard Music Festival from 1997 to 2004 as both Assistant and Guest Conductor. In Europe, Maestro Preu served as Music Director of the Orchestre International de Paris (1993-1995).

As a guest conductor, he has appeared with the Jerusalem Symphony (Israel), Symphony Orchestra of Chile, Auckland Philharmonia (New Zealand), Radio Philharmonic of Slovenia, Pecs Philharmonic (Hungary), Varna Philharmonic (Bulgaria), and in Germany with the Jenaer Philharmoniker. Guest conducting engagements include the Memphis Symphony Orchestra, the Delaware Symphony, the Duluth Superior Symphony, the Fairfax Symphony Orchestra, and the Wichita Symphony. Recent international appearances also include the Philharmonie Baden-Baden in Germany.

Career highlights include performances at Carnegie Hall, the Sorbonne in Paris, a live broadcast with the Jerusalem Symphony, and his first commercial recording of the world premiere of Letters from Lincoln – a work commissioned by the Spokane Symphony from Michael Daugherty featuring baritone soloist Thomas Hampson. 2012 also saw a live CD recording featuring Paganini's Violin Concerto No. 2 with Sergey Malov and the New Zealand Philharmonia. During the 2022-23 session he recorded a CD exclusively dedicated to living Mexican composers. His concerts have been aired from coast to coast and on Jerusalem Radio.



Pola Benke assistant conductor

Pola Benke is a distinguished conductor and cellist, recognized for her dynamic approach and deep commitment to musical excellence. Currently serving as

Assistant Conductor for both Long Beach Symphony and Riverside Philharmonic, she has quickly risen in the world of conducting, combining her talent and dedication with a profound understanding of musical intricacies.

Born in Poland, Pola's early immersion in music led her to pursue a Master's degree in cello performance and later, orchestral conducting. This solid foundation, coupled with her passion for music, has shaped her unique artistic vision.

Her early career was marked by selection for a prestigious summer program with Maestro Neeme Järvi. She was also invited to the Dartington Music Festival in England as a Fellow Conductor, worked under Sian Edwards, and participated in the esteemed Cabrillo Festival of Contemporary Music, collaborating with Cristian Macelaru. Her recent participation in the Järvi Academy in Estonia, under the direction of Paavo Järvi, further solidified her reputation as a rising star in the classical music community.

Her background as a musician has given her the ability to analyze and interpret scores with a high level of detail, enabling her to lead ensembles with precision and nuance. This knowledge and experience allow her to bring a unique perspective to her work as a conductor. Her leadership results in performances that are both precise and emotionally compelling.

Pola is also a passionate advocate for contemporary music and frequently collaborates with living composers to premiere new works. She is committed to promoting female artists and often features their compositions in her programs. Her musical influences include Krzysztof Penderecki, Igor Stravinsky, Thomas Adès, Jennifer Higdon, and the renowned cellist Yo-Yo Ma. She is currently living in Redondo Beach with her husband and their dog, Bobby.

Saturday, February 1, 2025 | 7:30PM

Terrace Theater



Bluegrass & Beethoven

Eckart Preu, conductor

Tessa Lark, violin

Arturo Márquez *Danzón No. 2*

Michael Torke *Sky*
Tessa Lark, violin

***** **20 min. Intermission** *****

Beethoven *Symphony No. 1, op. 21*

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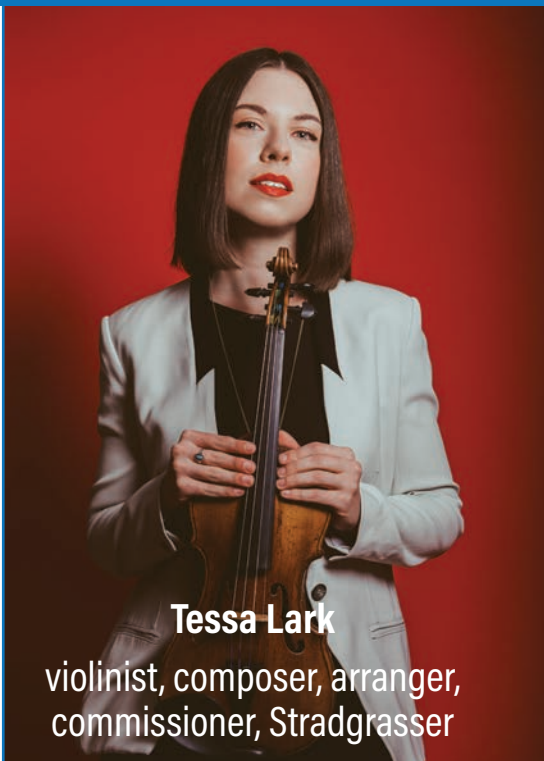
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Violinist Tessa Lark is one of the most captivating artistic voices of our time, consistently praised by critics and audiences for her astounding range of sounds, technical agility, and musical elegance. In 2020 she was nominated for a Grammy in the Best Classical Instrumental Solo category, and she is also a highly acclaimed fiddler in the tradition of her native Kentucky.

Highlights of Lark's 2023-24 season include the world premiere of Carlos Izcaray's Violin Concerto – written for her – under the composer's baton; and concerts with the Stuttgarter Philharmoniker that mark her European orchestral debut. She reprises Michael Torke's violin concerto, *Sky* – also written for her, and the 2020 recording of which earned her a Grammy nomination – with Oklahoma's Signature Symphony and the Sarasota Orchestra; returns to South Carolina's Greenville Symphony, the Virginia Symphony, the Buffalo Philharmonic and England's City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra; and performs as a chamber musician in duos with double bassist Michael Thurber and jazz guitarist Frank Vignola.

Lark's newest album, *The Stradgrass Sessions*, features a mix of original compositions by the violinist and her collaborators – double bassist Edgar Meyer, pianist Jon Batiste, mandolinist Sierra Hull and fiddler Michael Cleveland – with a sonata by Eugène Ysaÿe, Bartók violin duets arranged for violin and mandolin and the world premiere recording of John Corigliano's *STOMP*. Her debut commercial recording was the Grammy-nominated *SKY*, and her discography also includes *Fantasy* on First Hand Records; *Invention*, marking the debut album for the violin-bass duo made up of Lark and her fiancé, Michael Thurber; and a live performance recording of Astor Piazzolla's *Four Seasons of Buenos Aires* with the Buffalo Philharmonic.



The violinist has performed with orchestras, recital venues and festivals around the world. She is a recipient of the Hunt Family Award, one of Lincoln Center's prestigious Emerging Artist Awards, as well as a 2018 Borletti-Buitoni Trust Fellowship and a 2016 Avery Fisher Career Grant.

In addition to her performance schedule, Lark champions young aspiring artists and supports the next generation of musicians through her work as Co-host/Creative of NPR's *From the Top*. She also serves as Mentor and board member of the Irving M. Klein International Strings Competition.

Lark is a graduate of New England Conservatory and completed her Artist Diploma at The Juilliard School. She plays a ca. 1600 G.P. Maggini violin on loan from an anonymous donor through the Stradivari Society of Chicago.



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Danzón No. 2 premiered in Mexico City, 1994.

Composer: Arturo Márquez (Born in Mexico, 1950)

Want to know more? *Danzón No. 2* has gained renewed popularity as part of Amazon Video's series *Mozart in the Jungle* in season two, episode six.

While ballroom dancing has mostly faded from popular culture (*Dancing with the Stars* notwithstanding), the phenomenon of *danzón* is still alive and thriving throughout Mexico. This enduring cultural tradition attracts dancers of all generations, from teenagers to octogenarians. It can be traced back more than 150 years, originating in colonial Cuba when French colonists brought social contradances to the island. *Danzón* quickly migrated west across the Gulf of Mexico to the Yucatán Peninsula and on to the port of Veracruz where its "contradanza" origins were equally beloved to Spanish expats. Both the dance itself and its bespoke musical forms then evolved to incorporate rhythmic and melodic elements from both the jazzy Caribbean African and lively Mexican mariachi traditions. From Veracruz, *danzón* spread like wildfire to Mexico City and most other regions of Mexico. Says Miguel Zamudio, director of the National Center for Research and Promotion of Danzón (yes, *danzón* has its own National Center), "Couples gather four times a week to dance *danzón*, twirling around the central square in fedoras and evening gowns that evoke a bygone era."

Composer Arturo Márquez, the son and grandson of mariachi musicians, was born in 1950 in the Sonoran Desert town of Alamos, Mexico, and grew up surrounded by music. His family moved to Los Angeles when he was 12 and he began formal music training at his high school in La Puente, studying violin and piano as he also began composing. He returned to Mexico to attend Conservatory, and was awarded a Fulbright Scholarship that allowed him to return to the U.S. to pursue a MFA at California Institute of the Arts.

Márquez's *Danzón No. 2* is widely performed by orchestras throughout the U.S. and the world. It is by far the most popular of the composer's nine *Danzónes*, the inspiration for which came after he found himself riveted by the elegant dance form when he was traveling with artist friends in Veracruz and first witnessed a crowd of engrossed people all engaged in the dancing. *Danzón No. 2* manifests all the passionate, charismatic emotions of the dance, evoking the joy, excitement, and shared celebration experienced by dancers throughout Mexico who participate in this distinctive cultural tradition.

Sky (2018)

Composer: Michael Torke (Born in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, 1961)

Note: This composition was specifically written for guest artist Tessa Lark. It was a 2020 Pulitzer Finalist and led to a Grammy Nomination for Lark.

Composer Michael Torke has been hailed as a "vitaly inventive composer" and "one of the foremost compositional talents in America today." No less than the New York Times calls Torke, "the Ravel of his generation." Born and raised in Milwaukee, Torke attended the Eastman School of Music before moving to New York City to boldly pursue a career as a professional composer, inspired he says by the career success of both Philip Glass and Steven Reich. The chutzpah paid off. Today, Torke's body of work and his successful resumé as a composer span five decades, including both Grammy and Pulitzer Prize nominations.

Musical collaborations have brought innumerable fabulous pieces into the orchestral repertoire. The work we hear tonight, Torke's composition *Sky* for orchestra and violin solo expressly written for guest artist Tessa Lark, is one of them. "I met Tessa through a Carnegie Hall commission she offered me - to write her a sonata ... when we were in the studio recording, I pulled her aside and asked, 'what if I wrote

you a concerto that was really inspired by bluegrass music, your Kentucky roots? ..." About his approach to creating the work, he says, "My goal was to infuse a fresh look at an old form – the violin concerto ... whether I have accomplished that is not for me to say, but I hope audiences will hear the joy I tried to put in the music, and the unmistakable radiance of Tessa's playing."

Fun fact: Many of Michael Torke's compositions have a color in their titles: *Bright Blue Music*, *Yellow Pages*, *Black and White*, *Ecstatic Orange...*, the list goes on. There is a fascinating reason. Torke is what is known as a synesthete and experiences chromesthesia, a rare neurological condition that causes the music he hears to simultaneously evoke an experience of color. It must be sort of like living life in a musical rainbow.

Symphony No. 1 premiered in 1800. It is not known exactly when Beethoven finished writing this work, but sketches of the finale were found to be from 1795.

Style: Classical period

Composer: Ludwig van Beethoven (Born in Bonn, Germany. Baptized 17 December 1770 – Died in Vienna, 26 March, 1827)

More: Beethoven was almost completely deaf by 1815, and he then gave up performing and appearing in public. He described his problems with health and his unfulfilled personal life in two letters, his Heiligenstadt Testament (1802) to his brothers and his unsent love letter to an unknown "Immortal Beloved" (1812).

To modern 21st century symphony audiences, Ludwig van Beethoven is such an undeniable and commanding musical icon, we tend to overlook that he was at one time learning his trade. Beethoven personally knew and looked up to both Mozart and Haydn. He traveled to Vienna when he was just 16 to become Mozart's pupil. He met and was impressed by Mozart but was forced to return home shortly after arriving when his mother fell fatally ill. Mozart had died of illness himself before Beethoven could return to Vienna, but he is known to have credited his study of Mozart's musical style and technique as being seminal to his own artistic development. Later, when he was 22, he returned to Vienna and studied with Haydn for more than a year, although their differences in age and temperament resulted in a respectful but personally fraught relationship.

Beethoven was 29 when his Symphony No. 1 premiered on April 2, 1800. Up to that point in his professional life he had previously been composing only solo and chamber works, but his musical catalog was already notable at more than 50 items. In addition, his fame and notoriety as a pianist were very prominent. He was in a class by himself in piano improvisation, to the extent that he was no longer permitted to enter competitions due to his overwhelming mastery.

Beethoven himself organized the premiere of Symphony No. 1 as part of a public concert he produced that included works by both of his classical mentors, Mozart and Haydn. These program choices were a tribute and a clear indication that he fully intended to carry on in their musical footsteps. However, Symphony No.1 also incorporates myriad harmonic, structural, voicing, and other innovations that decidedly mark Beethoven's work as new and different. While he followed the established four-movement format of symphonic structure, he chose to infuse each with his own musical personality and some then-outlandish creative ideas.

The audience responded with enthusiasm to Beethoven's cheeky departure from convention, as evidenced by one respected reviewer's pronouncement that it "was the most interesting public concert for a long time."

Susan Swinburne has been a lover and student of music since demanding piano lessons at age six. Her work in orchestra management has enriched her life personally and professionally for the past three decades. A habitu e of concert halls throughout southern California, she lives, listens, writes, and researches in the South Bay.

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Featured Artists



Susie Seiter
conductor

Susie Benchasil Seiter is a prolific composer, conductor and orchestrator for film, television, video games, and live concerts. She recently completed co-composing the Netflix limited series drama *Thai Cave Rescue* due out this fall.

Seiter is best known for orchestrating and conducting remarkably successful orchestral concert world tours *Evanescence: Synthesis*, *Lindsey Stirling's Orchestra* tours. *The Legend of Zelda: Symphony of the Goddesses* and *Pokémon: Symphonic Evolutions*. Combined, these tours have been performed more than 400 times by some of the world's most respected orchestras. In 2017-2018 alone, she

conducted over 80 orchestras, including the Royal Philharmonic at London's Apollo Hammersmith, The Orchestra of St. Luke's at Madison Square Garden, the National Symphony Orchestra at Wolf Trap, and the Sydney Symphony at the iconic Sydney Opera House. Seiter excels in leading popular symphonic film concerts such as *Frozen Live*, *The Muppet Christmas Carol*, *Pixar in Concert* and *Toy Story Live* and the Paramount blockbuster hit *Snake Eyes: A GI Joe Origin Story*, Netflix's holiday favorite *8-Bit Christmas*, the Disney+ *Zootopia* series, and *Toy Story Live*, *Muppets Christmas Carol*, *Coco* and *Nightmare Before Christmas* live in various cities.

Susie Seiter has also worked alongside her husband, composer Chad Seiter, conducting and orchestrating his music to many AAA video

game titles, including *Star Trek: The Video Game* and *LEGO Jurassic World* and Microsoft Studios' major game release, *ReCore*. Also a frequent collaborator with Grammy-nominated composer Austin Wintory, Seiter orchestrated *The Banner Saga* series as well as his BAFTA nominated score, *Assassin's Creed: Syndicate*, recorded at Abbey Road Studios. Her orchestrations for the Journey Traveler's Symphony debuted at Royal Albert Hall. Susie was on the orchestration team for Disney's *Encanto*, Universal Pictures' film *Minions* and Guillermo Del Toro's *Crimson Peak* and *The Book of Life* and *Star Trek Picard*.

Originally from Baltimore, Seiter now calls Los Angeles home, where she lives with Chad and their sons Samuel and William.

With a voice that the London Jazz News says "unleashes enough voltage to light up the West End," **Shayna Steele** is an in-demand vocalist in the studio and on the stage.

At the age of 15, Shayna Steele appeared on Ed McMahon's *Star Search*, her first experience performing in front of a nationally televised audience, losing by a 1/2 star. An unexpected call in 2005 would change things: Moby "needed a screamer," resulting in the disc's second single "Raining Again." Two years later, she would lay down vocals for "Extreme Ways (2007)" - Moby's theme song to *The Bourne Ultimatum*, *The Bourne Legacy* and *Jason Bourne*, and in early 2008, "Disco Lies," the first single off of Moby's 2008 release *Last Night*. The song reached #1 on the US Billboard Dance charts and was featured in J.J. Abram's summer blockbuster *Cloverfield* and the movie *The Backup Plan* with Jennifer Lopez. Vocal contributions include *Hairspray* (movie soundtrack), *Sex and the City 2*, NBC's *Smash*, 2008 Summer Olympic highlights on BBC and the 2021 release of *In the Heights* (Motion



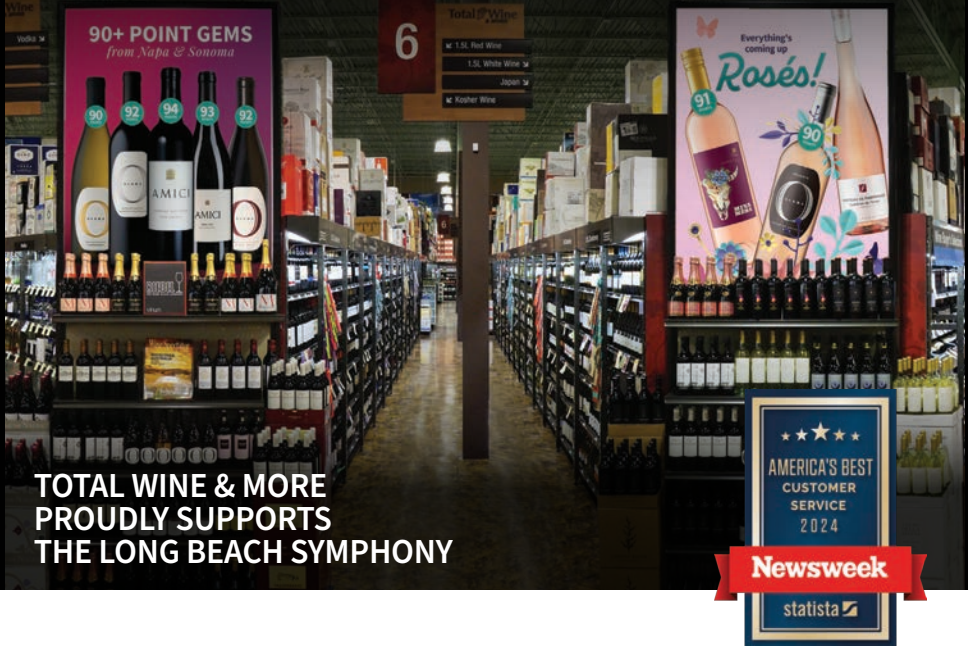
Picture Soundtrack), and guest appearances on HBO's *The Sopranos* and reprising her Broadway role in NBC's *Hairspray Live*.

After spending 8 years as a Broadway ensemble member in shows such as *Rent* and *Hairspray* and 6 years in the background supporting artists like Bette Midler, Rihanna, and Kelly Clarkson, Shayna released her 3rd studio album *Watch Me Fly* following

the huge success of her album *Rise* (Ropeadope Records) in 2015 which reached #3 on the U.S. iTunes jazz charts. Her self-penned song "Gone Under" was selected by Michael League of *Snarky Puppy* for their *Family Dinner*, Volume 1 (Ropeadope Records) and released on the Grammy Award-winning band's album which has now reached over 1.8 million views on YouTube.

She appeared as a soloist and guest artist with over 40 symphony orchestras, and a Portland Press review of Shayna's performance with the Portland Symphony Orchestra (Portland, ME) said her "... blues program ranked among the PSO's best." - Steve Feeney (May 24, 2021) Shayna is currently working on her Bachelor's degree in Interdisci-

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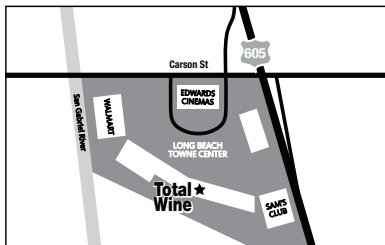
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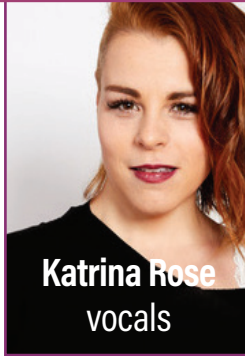


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plinary Music Studies at Berklee College of Music (and on the Dean's List)! She continues to tour

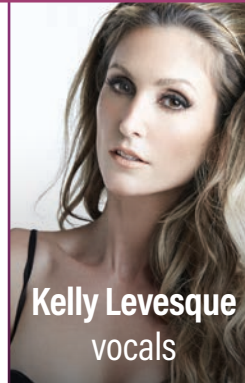
playing her original music, is a regular guest artist with Grammy-award winning trumpeter Chris Botti.

Originally from Bluegrass country, **Katrina Rose** moved to the Big Apple to pursue her dreams. Most recently, she chased those dreams right into the top 30 of Season 13 of *The Voice* on NBC (Team Miley Cyrus & Jennifer Hudson). Her performances of *W.O.M.A.N* (ft. Janice Freeman) & *Kozmic Blues* are available for download on iTunes and Amazon. Other credits include: Broadway/Off-Broadway: "Hairspray" (Tracy Turnblad); "A Night with Janis Joplin" (alt Janis Joplin); "RENT" (female ensemble- Seasons of Love Soloist performed); "Jerry Springer: The Opera at Carnegie Hall" (Shawntel,Eve); "BloodSong of Love" (Whore in Boots, etc.); "Things To Ruin- The Songs of Joe Iconis" (lead player). Regional/



Tour: "A Night With Janis Joplin" (Janis Alt.); "RENT" (Mimi Márquez/ Surflight); "GREASE!" (Rizzo/ Surflight); "Legally Blonde" (Erid Hoops/Ogunquit). NY Workshops/ Concerts: "FOUND!!" (Denise); "Rock & Roll Refugee" (Genya Ravan); "Monster Songs" (Medusa); "Sleeping Beauty Wakes" (Cheryl). Recordings: T2R: "The Songs of Joe Iconis" (Sh-K-Boom & Ghostlight Records); "Rock & Roll Jamboree" (Sh-k-Boom & Ghostlight Records); "Kerrigan & Lowdermilk LIVE" (Yellow Sound Label). All recordings available on iTunes and Amazon. She is currently working on the release of her first EP. Follow Katrina @KatrinaRoseRock #NOBox. AEA/SAG. "For J. FLY."

Kelly Levesque is a singer-song-writer from New York who began her career in the studio at the age of 3 with her musician-father recording her first notes. Kelly has performed as a soloist on leading international stages such as Royal Albert Hall, The Sydney Opera House, The Kennedy Center, Budokan, Staples Center, The White House, and Madison Square Garden. She has also shared the stage with such esteemed artists as Sting, Jamie Foxx, Andrea Bocelli, David Foster, Josh Groban, Michael Bolton, Smokey Robinson, John Legend, Patti LaBelle, and many more.



Her soaring vocal range, beautiful tone, and stunning stage presence have provided her with an international recording and performing career since she signed her first major recording deal with Reprise/Warner Brothers Records. Kelly has had 2

top 5 Billboard Classical Crossover Albums, one with her group Three Graces and the second with Diane Warren's duet group Due Voci.

Kelly has been honored to perform for International Royalty, four US Presidents and His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI. She believes in creating "Music With Meaning" as she wrote a song called "Never Forever" for Domestic Violence victims- it was released with the support of the Miss America Organization and Safe Horizon with their #PuttheNailinit campaign. Her "I Won't Let You Down" for the KNOWAutism Foundation.

Kelly is featured on several film and television soundtracks, including *America's Sweethearts* starring Julia Roberts, and the title song on the new *Inspector Gadget* series.

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