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California Symphony's Composer-in-Residence



The final concert by the **California Symphony** this season, called *Something Old, Something New*, will include the first of three works that Young American Composer-in-Residence **Katherine Balch** is writing for the ensemble. This premiere is called *like a broken clock*, and has helped serve as an opportunity for Balch, the orchestra, and Music Director **Donato Cabrera** to get to know each other better musically.

She says she was inspired to write the piece by a line from singer-songwriter Joanna Newsom's song 'In California.' "The lyric that I sort of titled my piece after is 'like a little clock that trembles on the edge of an hour.' And I changed mine to 'like a broken clock,' because in my piece there is a sort of a sense of a bell toll and a clock that ticks and pulses, but it sort of falls apart and becomes off-kilter... Composing is a lot about organizing events in time, and manipulating my own sense of time passing. And by manipulating my own sense of time passing, maybe possibly enhancing that experience from the audience." Keeping all those off-kilter rhythms together is conductor Donato Cabrera: "The piece itself is – and I think is kind of a trait of Katherine's music – is that there's a sense of playfulness, a sense of whimsy, that is so attractive and so beguiling, and really fun to delve into and figure out exactly how it's working."

They had a chance to work with the orchestra in January, and Balch says the duration of the residency will allow her to spend the time well leading up to the concerts that will feature her pieces. "It's wonderful, not only because I know I get to write three pieces for this incredible ensemble, but also because I know I have time to establish an actual human connection with the people in it. Of course, Donato and the administration, but also the musicians in the group." And Cabrera says that the aim of the residency is to allow all those involved to be ambitious and free. "We hope that we can just provide a platform of dreaming, without restriction, for the composer, in terms of what to write next."