

presents...

## **COUNCIL:**

### **PEKKA KUUSISTO**

Violin, Electric Violin, Loops, Piano, Vocals

### **GABRIEL KAHANE**

Piano, Electric Guitar, Keyboards, Vocals

Friday, May 3, 2024 | 7:30pm

Herbst Theatre

*The program will be announced from the stage.*

**This program is made possible in part by the generous support of  
The Barbro Osher Pro Suecia Foundation.**

**Pekka Kuusisto** is represented by Harrison Parrott  
South Wing, Somerset House, The Strand, London, WC2R 1A, UK    [harrisonparrott.com](http://harrisonparrott.com)

**Gabriel Kahane** is represented by MKI Artists  
70 S Winooski Ave #318, Burlington, VT 05401    [mkiartists.com](http://mkiartists.com)

Steinway Model D, Pro Piano, San Francisco



## ARTIST PROFILE

This performance marks the San Francisco Performances debut of Pekka Kuusisto.

This is Gabriel Kahane's eighth appearance for San Francisco Performances. He made his debut with us in March 2017 and most recently appeared on all three evenings of our PIVOT Festival in January.

After nearly a decade of musical friendship, it seems only fitting that the cult American singer-songwriter **Gabriel Kahane** and iconic Finnish musician **Pekka Kuusisto** have formalized their collaboration under the moniker **Council**. Now, they present an evening of intimate and sonically varied songs and chamber music, written during several writing retreats in Northern Karelia and Portland, Oregon.

Violinist, conductor, and composer **Pekka Kuusisto** is renowned for his artistic freedom and fresh approach to repertoire. Kuusisto is Artistic Director of Norwegian Chamber Orchestra and Principal Guest Conductor & Artistic Co-Director of Helsinki Philharmonic Orchestra for the 2023-24 season. He is also a Collaborative Partner of San Francisco Symphony, and Artistic Best Friend of Die Deutsche Kammerphilharmonie Bremen.

In the 2023-24 season, Kuusisto performs with Mahler Chamber Orchestra, Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchester, Helsinki Philharmonic, San Francisco Symphony, Norwegian Chamber Orchestra, Los Angeles Philharmonic, NHK Symphony Orchestra Tokyo, and Boston Symphony Orchestra. He appears as guest conductor with Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin, Tokyo Metropolitan Symphony Orchestra, Gothenburg Symphony Orchestra, Scottish Chamber Orchestra, Swedish Chamber Orchestra, and Orchestre de chambre

de Paris. As *Council*, Kuusisto also tours North America and Australia with American singer-songwriter Gabriel Kahane.

In the 2022-23 season Kuusisto debuted with Berliner Philharmoniker and performed with Tokyo Metropolitan Symphony Orchestra. He returned to orchestras such as the Cleveland Orchestra, San Francisco, and Cincinnati Symphony Orchestras, Gürzenich-Orchester Köln, and Mahler Chamber Orchestra. Kuusisto made his debuts as a conductor with Philharmonia Orchestra and Gothenburg Symphony Orchestra. He is also Sinfonieorchester Basel's Artist-in-Residence with whom he appeared as conductor, soloist, and recitalist.

Kuusisto is an enthusiastic advocate of contemporary music and a gifted improviser and regularly engages with people across the artistic spectrum. Uninhibited by conventional genre boundaries and noted for his innovative programming, recent projects have included collaborations with Hauschka and Kosminen, Dutch neuro-

logist Erik Scherder, pioneer of electronic music Brian Crabtree, eminent jazz-trumpeter Arve Henriksen, juggler Jay Gilligan, accordionist Dermot Dunne and folk artist Sam Amidon.

In 2023, Kuusisto's releases included an album for BIS on which he features as conductor of Helsinki Philharmonic Orchestra performing the first recording of Jaakko Kuusisto's *Symphony, Op.39*, and another for Alba as violinist with Malin Broman and Ostrobothnian Chamber Orchestra performing works by Tarrodi, Byström, Larsson and Zinovjev. In 2022, Kuusisto released his first album as conductor, partnering with Vilde Frang and Die Deutsche Kammerphilharmonie Bremen, presenting the Stravinsky and Beethoven concerti for Warner (for which he is nominated in the concerto category of the 2023 Gramophone Awards) and as soloist performing the world premiere recording of Adès' *Märchentänze* for violin and orchestra with Nicholas Collon and Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra for Ondine. With Pentatone, Kuusisto and Norwegian Chamber Orchestra presented the album *First Light* in 2021 featuring the world premiere recording of Nico Muhly's violin concerto, *Shrink*. Other recent releases include Adès' Violin Concerto *Concentric Paths* recorded with Aurora and Nicolas Collon for Deutsche Grammophon, Hillborg's *Bach Materia*, and Bach's *Brandenburg Concertos No. 3 and No. 4* with Swedish Chamber Orchestra and Thomas Dausgaard for BIS and Daniel Bjarason's *Violin Concerto* with Iceland Symphony Orchestra with the composer conducting for *Sono Luminus*.

Pekka Kuusisto plays the Antonio Stradivari Golden Period c.1709 'Scotta' violin, generously loaned by an anonymous patron.



**Gabriel Kahane** is a musician and storyteller whose work increasingly exists at the intersection of art and social practice. Hailed as “one of the finest songwriters of the day” by *The New Yorker*, he is known to haunt basement rock clubs and august concert halls alike, where you’ll likely find him in the green room, double-fisting coffee, and a book.

He has released five albums as a singer-songwriter including his most recent LP *Magnificent Bird* (Nonesuch Records), hailed by the *San Francisco Chronicle* as “a gorgeous, intimate collection of musical snapshots.” As a composer, he has been commissioned by many of America’s leading arts institutions, including the Brooklyn Academy of Music, Carnegie Hall, the Los Angeles Philharmonic, Orpheus Chamber Orchestra, and the Public Theater, which in 2012 presented his musical *February House*.

In 2019, Kahane was named the inaugural Creative Chair for the Oregon Symphony, following the premiere in Portland of his oratorio *emergency shelter intake form*, a work that explores inequality in America through the lens of housing issues. The piece was released as an album in March of 2020, and is scheduled for performance by

half a dozen other American orchestras in the coming years.

In his 2023–24 season, Kahane embarks on a new collaborative commissioning project with the Attacca Quartet, Pekka Kuusisto, and Roomful of Teeth as part of a two-year initiative with San Francisco Performances, with additional performances scheduled around the U.S. and Europe. Season highlights include the European premiere of *emergency shelter intake form* in London with the BBC Concert Orchestra, duo recitals with Jeffrey Kahane, a conducting appearance with the St. Paul Chamber Orchestra, and the New York premiere of his piano concerto *Heirloom* by Jeffrey Kahane and The Knights. Venues include UCLA’s Nimoy Theater, Seattle’s Meany Center, and New York’s 92NY.

Kahane’s discography also includes 2014’s *The Ambassador*, which received an acclaimed staging at BAM, directed by Tony and Olivier Award-winner John Tiffany; an album of chamber music, *The Fiction Issue*, with the string quartet Brooklyn Rider and vocalist/composer Shara Nova; a recording with The Knights of his orchestral song cycle *Crane Palimpsest*; as well as the original cast album for *February House*.

A frequent collaborator across a range of musical communities, Gabriel has worked with an array of artists including Paul Simon, Sufjan Stevens, Andrew Bird, Phoebe Bridgers, Caroline Shaw, and Chris Thile. After nearly two decades in Brooklyn, Kahane relocated with his family to Portland, Oregon, in March of 2020. Their freakishly self-possessed cat, Roscoe Greebletron Jones III, when not under investigation for securities fraud, continues his fruitless attempts to monetize his Instagram account.

## PROGRAM NOTE

This thrilling concert brings together two close friends for a wide-ranging and centuries-spanning musical evening. At its center is the world premiere of a collaboratively written song cycle exploring the joys and griefs of life in the 21st century, around which Kuusisto and Kahane have built an eclectic program ranging from Bach and Nico Muhly to Scandinavian folk music and songs from Kahane’s catalog. Forging connections between past and present, these two singular artists offer us a ravishingly beautiful path toward the bright future of chamber music.



SAN FRANCISCO  
PERFORMANCES

# PIVOT Festival

45<sup>th</sup>  
SEASON  
2024–25



**Gabriel Kahane** | Piano and Vocals  
**Carla Kihlstedt** | Violin and Vocals  
**Sandbox Percussion**

*and additional artists to be announced later*

**January 29–31, 2025 | 7:30pm**  
**Herbst Theatre**

For the tenth season of PIVOT, guest curator composer/singer-songwriter Gabriel Kahane introduces you to artists you’ll want to lean in and listen to. He will perform opening night and host all three evenings of deliciously ingenious music brimming with thought, humor—both dark and light—and substance.

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**sfperformances.org**