



# CULTURE MONSTER

ALL ARTS, ALL THE TIME

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## Critic's Pick: Simone and Simon



Violinist Simone Porter will appear with the Pasadena Symphony on Saturday, kicking off a flurry of prestigious SoCal dates for the 17-year-old prodigy. (Philip Pirolo)

By Mark Swed  
Los Angeles Times Music Critic  
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Pity the middle-aged. Youth and longevity conspire to steal our attention, especially when both are present. This weekend a Simone and a Simon, separated by 75 years, will perform at concerts, separated by a few miles and less than 24 hours apart.

On Saturday, Simone Porter, a 17-year-old violin prodigy studying at the Colburn School, will make her debut with the Pasadena Symphony as soloist in Bruch's Violin Concerto. Also making his Pasadena debut is conductor Andrew Grams, music director of the Elgin Symphony in Illinois.

Porter, who hails from Seattle and whose professional debut with the Seattle Symphony was seven years ago when she was 10, will then, with remarkable speed, go on to make more SoCal debuts as soloist with the Pacific Symphony next month and, this summer, with the Los Angeles Philharmonic at the Hollywood Bowl. Few soloists have appeared with all three notable Southern California orchestras. None has done so within so short a span of a few months. And none, for sure, has done so at 17.

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Then again, Porter is enough of a pro to have already appeared with the New York Philharmonic, the Nashville Symphony, Utah Symphony and, in London, the Royal Philharmonic.

The afternoon after Porter's Pasadena Symphony performance, pianist Abbey Simon will give a recital in the Los Angeles County Museum of Art Sundays Live series of free concerts. Simon's biography on his website begins with an uncredited and undated quote: "In the front rank of the younger generation of pianists." Perhaps that is meant tongue-in-cheek. Simon turned 92 in January!

Indeed, of the 17 examples in Simon's bio of "eminent" conductors with whom he has worked, only Zubin Mehta and Seiji Ozawa are still alive. Known for his effortless and unshowy virtuoso technique, Simon remains one of the two main pianist exemplars of his era still performing — 90-year-old Menahem Pressler (who will appear with the Colburn Orchestra in April) being the other.

Simon's demanding program includes Beethoven's Piano Sonata No. 10, Schumann's "Carnival" and Chopin's Sonata No. 3. The concert is free and also streamed on the LACMA [website](#).