



MEDIA RELATIONS CONTACTS

[Jessica Kelly](#), 530-754-5428

[Camille Spaccavento](#), 530-754-5422

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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The Mondavi Center Presents the Vienna Boys Choir

Davis, Calif.—One of the world’s oldest choirs and certainly among the most famous, the **Vienna Boys Choir** performs at **Jackson Hall** of the **Robert and Margrit Mondavi Center for the Performing Arts**, UC Davis, **Sunday, March 15, at 3 p.m.** The afternoon’s program includes sacred works and spirituals, popular tunes, and folk songs.

Says **Don Roth**, Mondavi Center executive director, “The Vienna Boys Choir brings charm, talent and musicianship—we are glad to have them back.” The Choir last appeared as part of the Presenting Program in 1999.

Pricing is \$50/40/25 for regular tickets and \$25/20/12.50 for students and children. Purchase tickets online at MondaviArts.org, through the Mondavi Center box office at 530-754-2787 or 866-754-2787 (toll-free), or at the door. Accommodations for persons with disabilities are available upon request. This event is presented as part of the Mondavi Center’s **Classical Favorites Series**, which concludes with **Opera A La Carte** on **April 25 and 26**.

Boys have been singing at the court of the Holy Roman Emperor since the early 15th century. In 1498, more than half a millennium ago, Emperor Maximilian I moved his court and his court musicians to Vienna. He gave instructions that there were to be six singing boys among his musicians. Historians have settled on 1498 as the foundation date of the **Vienna Hofmusikkapelle** and, in consequence, the **Vienna Boys Choir**. Until 1918, the Choir sang exclusively for the imperial court, at mass, at private concerts and functions, and on state occasions.

Musicians like Heinrich Isaac, Paul Hofhaimer, Heinrich Ignaz Franz Biber, Johann Joseph Fux, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Antonio Caldara, Antonio Salieri and Anton Bruckner worked with the Choir. Composers Jacobus Gallus and Franz Schubert, and the conductors Hans Richter, Felix Mottl and Clemens Krauss, were themselves choristers. Brothers Joseph and Michael Haydn were members of the Choir of St. Stephen’s Cathedral and frequently sang with the imperial boys’ choir.

In 1918, after the breakdown of the Habsburg Empire, the Austrian government took over the court opera, its orchestra and the adult singers—but not the boys’ choir. The Vienna Boys Choir owes its survival to the initiative of Josef Schnitt, who became Dean of the Imperial Chapel in 1921. Schnitt established the boys’ choir as a private institution: The former court choir boys became the Wiener Sängerknaben (Vienna Boys Choir), and the imperial uniform was replaced by the sailor suit, then the height of boys’ fashion. Funding was not enough to pay for the boys’ upkeep, and in 1926 the Choir started to give concerts outside of the chapel, performing motets, secular works and—at the boys’ request—children’s operas. The impact was amazing: Within a year, the Choir performed in Berlin (where Erich Kleiber conducted them), Prague and Zurich. Athens and Riga (1928) followed, and then Spain, France, Denmark, Norway and Sweden (1929), the United States (1932), Australia (1934) and South America (1936).

Today there are approximately 100 choristers between the ages of 10 and 14, divided into four touring choirs. The four choirs give around 300 performances each year in front of almost half a million people. Each group spends nine to eleven weeks of the school year on tour. They visit virtually all European countries, and they are frequent guests in Asia, Australia and the Americas. The Choir’s repertoire ranges from the Austrian composers associated with the Choir—Mozart, Haydn, Schubert, Bruckner—to songs by Talking Heads, Prince and the Beatles.

Together with members of the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra and the Vienna State Opera Chorus, the Vienna Boys Choir maintains the tradition of the imperial musicians; as Hofmusikkapelle, they provide the music for the Sunday Mass in Vienna’s Imperial Chapel, as they have done since 1498. Gerald Wirth took over as the Choir’s artistic director in 2001. Read more at www.wsk.at.

- **Vienna Boys Choir**
- **Sun., March 15, 3 p.m.**
- **Mondavi Center, Jackson Hall**
- **9399 Old Davis Road, Davis, CA 95616 (GPS)**
- **\$50/40/25 regular; \$25/20/12.50 students, children**
- **530-754-2787**
866-754-2787 (toll-free)
530-754-5402 (TDD)
MondaviArts.org

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