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# Bay Sights and Sounds Inspires Composer



Composer Rob Kapilow (left) listens as local historian Phil Cassou tells him about the building of the Golden Gate Bridge. Kapilow was at the Railroad & Ferry Depot Museum in Tiburon to gather ideas for a composition to celebrate the 75th anniversary of the iconic span and for the filming of a documentary. Photo: Jocelyn Knight

BY MELINDA DARLINGTON-BACH

A very wise person is credited with saying, "Find something you love, and you will never have to work a day in your life." A meeting with the award-winning composer and conductor Rob Kapilow made it clearly evident that he has taken this famous advice to heart.

The Marin Symphony, now in its 58th year of providing classical music excellence, has enlisted the incredible talents of the effusive Kapilow to create a compositional symphony for the 75th anniversary of the majestic Golden Gate Bridge.

Kapilow has brought classical music to a much wider audience for more than 20 years by breaking down works in a more listener-friendly way. After a comment by his young son, who had just been to a symphony performance and remarked that he thought all the musicians looked "mad," Kapilow decided to create a new way to introduce music to the masses by cleverly pulling themes apart and encouraging audience participation.

Two of his most successful trademarked presentations are FamilyMusik® and Citypieces. Through the popular FamilyMusik® series, Kapilow has garnered the reputation as "the pied piper of classical music." He has delighted many new fans through his family compositions. "Time Out Kids New York" said, "Kapilow is kind of a Bill Nye the Science Guy for classical music."

One of the most recent and overwhelmingly successful Citypieces reflects the historic impact of the Lewis and Clark expedition set to an experiential symphony composed by Kapilow. Originally commissioned by the St. Louis Symphony and the Louisiana Philharmonic, this large choral/orchestral work was just not taking form the way he wanted by using the

Lewis and Clark story as the genesis. So, halfway through the creative process, Kapilow instinctively decided to completely change the trajectory by hiring Darrell Kipp, a writer and educator from the Blackfeet tribe of Montana. Using Kipp as the collaborating librettist, the production and the documentary film "Summer Sun Winter Moon," from conception to premiere emerged beautifully.

Noralee Monestere, executive director of the Marin Symphony, heard the lively keynote address that Kapilow gave at an Association of California Symphony Orchestra conference and knew immediately that he was the one to move the symphony into a new phase of reinvention and ever-important interaction with the community.

So, how to begin? We all see the Golden Gate Bridge frequently, but what does it sound like? In order to create his interactive compositional formatted work, Kapilow paid a visit to Phil Cassou at the historic Railroad & Ferry Depot Museum in Tiburon. The museum is chock-a-block full of artifacts and models. Watching the informative Cassou conducting a lively tour around the exhibits, one can see how the lightening fast brain of Kapilow works, taking in all the sounds and noises made by all the bells, cash registers, model trains and even railroad ties, as he bangs them together in a distinctive rhythm. Rob is completely engaged, creating in the moment, and we can see how the ideas are flowing to be used in his future symphony.

## Bridge Tells a Tale

Another part of his unusual composition will be specific feedback about the Golden Gate Bridge.

Gathering personal stories from bridge and toll workers, schoolchildren and the community about their relationship with our golden lady. Kapilow is convinced that a great symphony is there if you only listen to it, referring to the foghorns, bells, tires on pavement, whistling wind and so much more.

This one-of-a-kind project will culminate in two simultaneous concerts, one on each side of the bridge, premiering a new composition that will commemorate the Marin Symphony's anniversary in May 2012 in conjunction with the symphony's offerings for the season.

Kapilow's career has been marked by a variety of awards including the Exxon "Meet-the Composer" grant and numerous ASCAP awards. He comes off as a motivational speaker, educator and master of ceremonies all at once. His love of music and deep appreciation for its exhilarating details are apparent from the moment you meet him, as he invites audiences to more actively listen. He explodes with dynamism and such zest for his upcoming projects that one cannot wait to see what the outcomes will be.

If you want to participate in giving your stories and thoughts to Kapilow, visit the Facebook page Golden Gate Opus or send an e-mail to [greatmusic@marin-symphony.org](mailto:greatmusic@marin-symphony.org).

In closing, as we walked away from the experience at the Railroad & Ferry Depot Museum, Kapilow remarked, "Through art, a voice can be heard that may not happen otherwise." Be assured Rob Kapilow, through all your stellar works, we do hear your voice, loud and clear.

For more information, go to [www.robkapilow.com](http://www.robkapilow.com) or [www.marinsymphony.org](http://www.marinsymphony.org).