

MODERN LUXURY

Silicon Valley

STAR WARS

MICHAEL AND MEICHIH KIM'S MAUM NABS A MICHELIN STAR

BLUE ROMANCE

50 YEARS OF FASHION LUNCHES KEEP LAKE TAHOE BEAUTIFUL

TO LIVE & DINE

EXCITING NEW RESTAURANTS, CHEFS TO KNOW, DECADENT DINING EXPERIENCES & MORE



HOT EATERIES FROM COAST TO COAST

«“This is a very selfish thing we’re doing. And the reason it’s selfish is because we love music, and I want to help support the next generation of music.” —TIMOTHY BLACKBURN, FESTIVAL

NAPA VALLEY BOARD CHAIRMAN »



From left: A dinner on the lawn at Far Niente; cellist Sheku Kanneh-Mason, who will perform at this year’s festival.



A Giant Leap FOR THE ARTS

In celebration of the 50th anniversary of the first lunar moon landing, Festival Napa Valley gathers the stars to salute the moon.

By Suzanne Ennis

Each summer, connoisseurs of fine wine, food and entertainment descend on Festival Napa Valley for exclusive vintner’s luncheons, gala dinners and world-class performances. Given the already established bar, the 14th season of the festival, which runs from July 12 to 21, is a real shot for the moon. Celebrating the 50th anniversary of the Apollo 11 lunar landing, with 60-plus concerts and events inspired by what the organization calls the spirit of “innovation, exploration, and discovery,” the festival is also fulfilling its own mission: to enrich communities by making art accessible to all.

According to co-founder and CEO Rick Wilson, “the challenge every year is to make sure

it keeps getting better.” To this end, a star-studded lineup: Bowling July 12, Opening Night: Opera Under the Stars at Meadowood features Francesco Demuro, Lucas Meachem and Joyce El-Khoury. The following evening at Far Niente winery, emerging cellist Sheku Kanneh-Mason, accompanied by the Havana Chamber Orchestra, reprises pieces he performed at the wedding of Prince Harry and Meghan Markle. At Hall Napa Valley winery on July 14, Grammy Award-winner Seal performs jazz and swing hits at the *Wine Spectator*-endorsed annual Arts for All Gala and live auction, which has raised more than \$10.5 million to date. July 15 brings Broadway legend Patti LuPone to a donor-exclusive, invitation-only concert at Calistoga Ranch, while Festival Orchestra Napa (an all-star group from major international orchestras) will follow its July 18 performance of the score to *Star Wars: A New Hope* (alongside a projection of the iconic 1977 film) with a closing-night concert Song to the Moon July 20—some 50 years to the date of the lunar landing.

Complementing the performances are intimate, vintner-hosted luncheons and dinners at resorts such



TOP PHOTOS BY CLIFF LEDE. BOTTOM PHOTO COURTESY OF FESTIVAL NAPA VALLEY

Clockwise from top left: An outdoor lunch at Stag's Leap Winery; cellist Sophia Bacelar plays at a Stag's Leap lunch; Joshua Bell performs at Castello di Amorosa during a previous Festival Napa Valley.

as Solage in Calistoga and esteemed wineries Stags' Leap and Castello di Amorosa. Taste of Napa—a midday culinary event showcasing 70 participating local wineries, restaurants and top artisans, plus a private Reserve Tasting Salon—returns July 13 at Vista Collina Resort. These exclusive culinary and wine-tasting events, where artists, patrons and vintners mingle over the region's finest vintages, are all part of patron packages.

Patron packages aren't just extravagant—proceeds from their sale make possible free, all-ages performances throughout the event, as well as reduced-cost tickets for veterans, seniors and families: two ways the festival (through nonprofit presenter the Napa Valley Festival Association) contributes to the community year-round. The nonprofit has also invested more than \$1 million in Napa County public school arts education programs and enables more than 1,600 kids to attend its Arts for All summer camps. Why

focus dollars on arts programs specifically? "A community that has a vibrant arts scene," says Walker, "has a higher quality of life."

Many of the festival's signature programs—the Dede Wilsey Dance Series, Shrem Vocal Arts Series, Bouchaine Young Artists Series, Blackburn Music Academy—reflect the largesse and commitment of the board members and major supporters who, along with Walker, help make the festival what it is today. Among them is current board chair Timothy Blackburn and his wife, Athena, whose support enables 90 college and conservatory students to study and perform at Festival Napa Valley's tuition-free music academy each summer. Their motivations aren't entirely altruistic, though. "This is a very selfish thing we're doing," he says. "And the reason it's selfish is because we love music, and I want to help support the next generation of music."

Reflecting on the festival's continued ability to attract premier artists, powerful supporters and 12,000 guests to the wine country each year, Walker commends his team's own spirit of innovation, but admits it's not a hard sell. "Napa Valley is such a special place," says Walker. "Put that together [with] world class music, great food and wine, wonderful people all supporting a good cause... what's not to like?" *Day pass \$1,250, 10-day festival passport \$10,000, festivalnapavalley.org* ■