



NEWS

Media Contact:

Sara Mitchell
Director of Marketing and Public Relations
707-546-7097 ext. 218
smitchell@srsymphony.org

**Santa Rosa Symphony names Francesco Lecce-Chong Next Music Director
He will conduct Oct., Nov. and Jan. 2018-2019 Classical Series concerts**



(Santa Rosa, Calif.) — The Santa Rosa Symphony proudly announces Francesco Lecce-Chong as its fifth Music Director beginning with the 2018-2019 season. His responsibilities will include conducting the orchestra, choosing repertoire for upcoming seasons (starting with 2019-2020) and shaping the artistic vision of the Santa Rosa Symphony.

Lecce-Chong, a San Francisco-born, Boulder, Colorado native, is also Music Director and Conductor of the Eugene Symphony, in Eugene, Oregon, where he currently resides. This summer he concludes his position as Associate Conductor of the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra and Principal Conductor of the Pittsburgh Youth Symphony Orchestra. The 30-year-old conductor has garnered acclaim for his dynamic performances, commitment to innovative programming and passion for community engagement. Lecce-Chong has appeared with orchestras around the world, including the National, Atlanta, Toronto, Milwaukee and St. Louis symphony orchestras and Hong Kong Philharmonic. (Full bio below)

President and CEO Alan Silow says, "Francesco represents the total package - bringing fresh energy, innovation and a tested commitment to artistic excellence, music education and community engagement."

Lecce-Chong says, "I am thrilled to join the Santa Rosa Symphony and become a part of its vibrant arts community. The passionate musicians, dedicated staff, engaged board, and enthusiastic patrons have created an enriching environment for music to thrive, so it truly is an honor to be chosen to continue the great legacy of this orchestra. After completing my commitments with the Pittsburgh Symphony this summer, I look forward to sharing my belief in the transformational and community-building power of music with both the Eugene Symphony in Oregon and the Santa Rosa Symphony."

In October 2017, Lecce-Chong made an instant impression on musicians, patrons, Board and staff with his enthusiasm, talent, drive, warmth, professionalism and good humor. Francesco is eager to focus his energies on fulfilling the Symphony's mission by providing quality orchestral music to SRS patrons and making their concert-night experience more meaningful with his insightful programming and engaging pre-concert talks. He is also dedicated to reaching the underserved communities in our county and shares the Symphony's passion for its music education programs.

SRS Board Chairman Jamei Haswell says, "The Board's vote was unanimous. He has the perfect balance of on-the-podium skills and off-the-podium passion for community outreach and music education. Francesco is an

excellent communicator. As Bernstein said, 'Technique is communication. The two words are synonymous in conductors.'"

Given his prior conducting commitments, Lecce-Chong will conduct three classical concert sets during the 2018-2019 Season: October 6-8 season opening concerts, November 3-5 and January 12-14. He will assume a fuller presence with the Symphony in 2019-2020. Now, widely recognized as a rising star in the orchestral world, he has subscription debuts with the Louisville Orchestra, the Louisiana Symphony and the Xi'An Symphony, among others, in the 2018-2019 season. Lecce-Chong is represented by IMG Artists, one of the premier global artist management firms, which represents artists such as Renée Fleming, Joshua Bell and conductor André Previn.

SRS Principal Oboe and Music Director Search Committee member Laura Reynolds says, "Francesco is an inspiring presence on the podium, with deep commitment to the craft and a musical sense, or spirit, if you will, that invites players into a collaborative space to create our sound. I very much look forward to working with him!"

The Committee, composed of five board members, four orchestra members and the President and CEO, dedicated more than two years to its task, attending rehearsals and performances, poring over references and post-concert surveys from patrons and musicians, conducting candidate interviews and reviewing input from board members and staff. Its efforts culminated in a unanimous recommendation to the SRS Board of Directors, who unanimously and enthusiastically approved its recommendation.

Music Director Search Committee chairperson Jim Hinton says, "We chose Francesco because we found excellence, passion and dynamic style in his conducting, a background of superior training and broad musical knowledge, genuine sincerity and humility in his personality, and a respectful and collaborative interaction with our professional musicians."

"As we welcome Francesco Lecce-Chong, it signals a new era in our organization's 90-year history. Francesco's talent and engaging exuberance, combined with his rising international stature, are sure to take our orchestra to new heights and strengthen our position as one of the nation's leading regional symphony orchestras," adds Silow.

FRANCESCO LECCE-CHONG

A captivating presence on the podium, American conductor Francesco Lecce-Chong has garnered acclaim for his dynamic performances, commitment to innovative programming and passion for community engagement. Lecce-Chong began his post as Music Director and Conductor of the Eugene Symphony in the 2017-2018 season, following in the path of renowned predecessors including Marin Alsop and Giancarlo Guerrero. In addition, he holds the position of Associate Conductor of the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra. Active as a guest conductor, he has appeared with orchestras around the world including the National Symphony Orchestra, Atlanta Symphony Orchestra, Toronto Symphony Orchestra, Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra, St. Louis Symphony, and Hong Kong Philharmonic and collaborated with renowned soloists including Renée Fleming and Itzhak Perlman.

Lecce-Chong is equally at home in opera, having built his credentials as a staff conductor with Santa Fe Opera. At the Florentine Opera, he conducted *Madama Butterfly* with the Milwaukee Symphony, where he has been invited to close its 2018-2019 season with *Carmina Burana*. Additional highlights of the 2018-2019 season include subscription debuts with the Louisville Orchestra and the Louisiana Symphony. In Europe, he has taken part in master classes at the Lucerne Festival under Bernard Haitink, as well as with the Tonhalle Orchestra in Zurich.

Also trained as a pianist and composer, Lecce-Chong champions the work of new composers and the need for arts education. As Associate Conductor of the Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra (MSO) from 2011-2015, he curated and presented the works of both active and lesser-known composers, including two works commissioned by the orchestra, as well as two U.S. premieres. He also helped create the first MSO Composer Institute, providing performance opportunities for young American composers. Demonstrating his commitment to arts education for all ages, Lecce-Chong provided artistic leadership for the Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra's nationally lauded Arts in Community Education program – one of the largest arts integration programs in the country. His dedication to connecting orchestras and communities continues in Pittsburgh where he gives preconcert talks, conducts concerts for school audiences, and leads specially designed sensory-friendly performances.

Born in San Francisco, Lecce-Chong is a native of Boulder, Colorado, where he began conducting at the age of sixteen. He is a graduate of the Mannes College of Music and Curtis Institute of Music, where he studied with Otto-Werner Mueller. He has worked with many internationally celebrated conductors, including Bernard Haitink, David Zinman, Edo de Waart and Manfred Honeck.

Lecce-Chong is represented by IMG Artists, one of the premier global artist management firms, which represents artists such as vocalist Renée Fleming, violinist Joshua Bell and conductor André Previn.

ABOUT THE SANTA ROSA SYMPHONY

Santa Rosa Symphony, the Resident Orchestra of the Green Music Center, is the third-oldest professional orchestra in California, and the largest regional symphony north of Los Angeles. The Santa Rosa Symphony (SRS) is committed to core values of artistic excellence, innovative programming and community service. This year the SRS infused the local economy with more than \$4 million.

Currently in its 90th season, the Symphony's performance schedule includes 21 Classical Series concerts (7 sets), 7 Discovery Dress Rehearsal concerts, a 3-concert Family Series and a 4-concert Pops Series, as well as special concerts. The Symphony is also recognized for having one of the most comprehensive music education programs in California, serving nearly 30,000 youths annually.

Collaborations with schools and organizations across Sonoma County have gained SRS national attention and support. Awards include an American Symphony Orchestra League MetLife Award for Community Engagement and a first place award for adventurous programming in the 2012-2013 season from the American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers (ASCAP).

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