

Santa Rosa Symphony

2023
2024
SEASON

NEWS

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Kern Plays Grieg

Santa Rosa Symphony Season Opens with Esteemed Pianist Olga Kern

Featuring exquisite masterpieces from Tchaikovsky, Grieg & Sibelius

October 7, 8 & 9, 2023 at Weill Hall, Green Music Center

(Santa Rosa, Calif.) — The Santa Rosa Symphony (SRS), in its 12th season as the Resident Orchestra of the Green Music Center, begins its 96th season this October. Opening the season, Kern Plays Grieg on October 7, 8, & 9 at Weill Hall, with Francesco Lecce-Chong conducting. This season's first performance will include four outstanding works on the program. Tchaikovsky's Polonaise from *Eugene Onegin*, *From the Northern Wilds* by Michael Djupstrom, Grieg's exhilarating Piano Concerto in A minor performed by Olga Kern, and Sibelius's uplifting Symphony No. 2, which brings a rousing conclusion to this powerful program.

Kern last performed with SRS in January 2022. Sonoma County was starting to have an Omicron breakout, significantly affecting the musicians. The orchestra played the Saturday performance in its entirety. On Sunday, some orchestra members tested positive, and the decision was made to release all musicians except for the string section for the Sunday performance. On Monday, the Strings were also released. Kern went above and beyond to perform Sunday and Monday with what turned into almost a private recital, along with SRS conductor Lecce-Chong. His wife, Chloe Tula, a professional harp player, joined them for the Monday evening performance.

Lecce-Chong said, "I am thrilled to welcome back a dear friend of the symphony to open our season, Olga Kern. When Covid-19 impacted portions of our orchestra in January 2022, Olga heroically performed three different programs for each of the three concerts at last-minute notice, showcasing her versatility as a soloist, chamber musician, and recitalist. Since then, we have become good friends, and I cannot wait to continue collaborating with Grieg's magnificent piano concerto."

PROGRAM AT A GLANCE:

PIOTR ILYICH TCHAIKOVSKY: Polonaise from *Eugene Onegin*

MICHAEL DJUPSTROM: *From the Northern Wilds*

EDVARD GRIEG: Concerto in A minor for Piano and Orchestra, Opus 16

JEAN SIBELIUS: Symphony No. 2 in D major, Opus 43

BIOGRAPHIES:

Francesco Lecce-Chong, conductor

Francesco Lecce-Chong is a fast-rising conductor with an international presence. He was appointed Music Director of two U.S. orchestras, the Eugene and the Santa Rosa Symphony (SRS), before he reached 30. He has successfully launched several groundbreaking projects, commissioned dozens of orchestral pieces, and fostered community engagement. Lecce-Chong has appeared with orchestras worldwide, including the San Francisco Symphony,

New York Philharmonic, Seattle Symphony, National Symphony, Atlanta Symphony, Pittsburgh Symphony, Toronto Symphony, St. Louis Symphony, Hong Kong Philharmonic, and collaborated with top soloists such as Renée Fleming and Itzhak Perlman.

The San Francisco Chronicle described Lecce-Chong's subscription debut with the San Francisco Symphony as "first-rate" and pointed out the "vitality and brilliance of the music-making he drew from members of the San Francisco Symphony." Other recent subscription debuts include the Seattle Symphony, Utah Symphony, North Carolina Symphony, Louisville Orchestra, Kansas City Symphony, and Detroit Symphony, as well as a return to the Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra, where he conducted the US premiere of Brett Dean's Piano Concerto. In September 2023, Lecce-Chong debuts in Europe at the prestigious George Enescu Festival, with the Romanian Radio Orchestra leading a program of Hindemith and Bernstein. During his 2023/24 season with the Santa Rosa Symphony, he continues a cycle of the significant orchestral works of Rachmaninoff paired with film composers entitled "Rachmaninoff & the Hollywood Sound." He leads the world premieres of new orchestral works by Conrad Tao, Clarice Assad, and Michael Djupstrom.

During Lecce-Chong's tenure, both Eugene and SRS have achieved significant milestones. One of his first large-scale endeavors was the "First Symphony Project," which consisted of full-length commissions from four of America's emerging composers over the course of four seasons, complete with residencies in the communities.

Only last season, Lecce-Chong led the world premieres of five major orchestral works and led the Santa Rosa Symphony in Mozart's *Magic Flute*, for which he wrote his own original dialogue and created the staging and sets. He continues to build partnerships with local art institutions, schools, and businesses to create original, multi-disciplinary experiences for audiences.

Olga Kern, piano

With a vivid onstage presence, dazzling technique, and keen musicianship, pianist Olga Kern is widely recognized as one of the great artists of her generation, captivating audiences and critics alike. She was born into a family of musicians and began studying piano at the age of five. She was awarded first prize at the Rachmaninoff International Piano Competition at seventeen. In 2001, she launched her U.S. career, winning a historic Gold Medal at the Van Cliburn International Piano Competition—the only woman in the last 50 years to do so.

A Steinway Artist, Kern is a laureate of several international competitions. In 2016, she was Jury Chairman of both the Cliburn International Amateur Piano Competition and the first Olga Kern International Piano Competition, where she also holds the title of Artistic Director. In December 2021, Kern was Jury Chairman of the 1st Chopin Animato International Piano competition in Paris, France. In the coming seasons, she will continue to serve on the juries of several high-level competitions.

Highlights of the 2021–2022 season included performances with the Austin Symphony, Palm Beach Symphony, Milwaukee Symphony, Santa Rosa Symphony, Greensboro Symphony, Madison Symphony, New Mexico Philharmonic, Concerto Budapest Symphony Orchestra, and Academia Teatro alla Scala. In the 2022–2023 season, she appeared with the Dallas Symphony, Minnesota Orchestra, Baltimore Symphony, Orquesta Filarmónica de Gran Canaria, Ireland's National Symphony Orchestra, Colorado Symphony, and in recitals in and around San Francisco. In the 2023–2024 season, she performs Rachmaninoff's four piano concertos and Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini with the Austin Symphony, appears with the Czech Philharmonic on a nationwide telecast, and tours South Africa and Asia.

ENHANCEMENTS:

- New season Program Books available for all patrons
- Program notes are available on the website concert event page
- Lecce-Chong provides a 30-minute pre-concert talk one hour prior to each performance, accompanied by Olga Kern

SPONSORS:

Classical Concert Series Underwritten by **Anderman Family Foundation**
Sponsored by **Marcia Wagner, in memory of Hap Wagner**
Conductor Francesco Lecce-Chong, sponsored by **David and Corinne Byrd**

Guest Artist Olga Kern, sponsored by **Sam Guerrero, in memory of Ava Guerrero**
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AT A GLANCE / CALENDAR LISTING:

WHAT:

[SantaRosaSymphonyconcertkernplaysgrieg](#)

WHO:

[Santa Rosa Symphony](#)

[Francesco Lecce-Chong, conductor](#)

[Olga Kern, piano](#)

High-res photos available:

- [Lecce-Chong](#)
- [Kern](#)
- [SRS Orchestra](#)

Interview Opportunities: Francesco Lecce-Chong & Olga Kern

WHEN:

Discovery Open Rehearsal, Saturday, October 7, 2023 at 2:00 PM – no concert talk

Saturday, October 7, 2023 at 7:30 PM (Doors at 6:00 PM, Pre-concert talk 6:30 PM-7:00 PM)

Sunday, October 8, 2023 at 3:00 PM (Doors at 1:30 PM, Pre-concert talk 2:00 PM-2:30 PM)

Monday, October 9, 2023 at 7:30 PM (Doors at 6:00 PM, Pre-concert talk 6:30 PM-7:00 PM)

WHERE:

Weill Hall, Green Music Center, Sonoma State University

TICKET PRICES:

\$32-\$105 for Classical Series performances

\$18 / adult; \$10 / youth (7-17 years of age) for Discovery Open Rehearsal

Receive ONE FREE TICKET for a youth 7-17 with each paid adult ticket! Call Patron Services to redeem this offer.

Student Rush tickets are available 1-1/2 hours before the performance, \$10/ticket with a valid student ID.

TICKETS: srsymphony.org or (707) 546-8742 (Weekdays 9:00 AM – 5:00 PM, opening at 10:30 AM

Wednesdays, closed Saturday & Sunday)

ABOUT 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. Francesco Lecce-Chong, the Symphony's fifth music director in its 96 years, began his tenure in 2018. The Symphony is committed to the core values of artistic excellence, innovative programming, comprehensive music education, and community service.

The Symphony's performance schedule includes 21 Classical Series concerts (seven sets), six Discovery Rehearsal concerts, a three-concert Family Series, a four-concert Pops Series, and special concerts.

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).

The Symphony is recognized for having one of California's most comprehensive music education programs, serving nearly 20,000 youth annually. Collaborations with schools and organizations across Sonoma County have gained the Santa Rosa Symphony national attention and support.