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Santa Rosa Symphony's *Spanish Fiesta* Blends Spanish Classics and Brazilian Flair

Featuring Deutsche Grammophon Guitarist Raphaël Feuillâtre

November 8, 9 & 10, 2025, Weill Hall, Green Music Center

(Santa Rosa, Calif.) — Santa Rosa Symphony (SRS) presents *Spanish Fiesta*, conducted by Music Director Francesco Lecce-Chong, on November 8, 9 & 10, 2025, at Weill Hall, Green Music Center. The program features internationally acclaimed French guitarist Raphaël Feuillâtre performing Joaquín Rodrigo's beloved *Concierto de Aranjuez*. Also appearing are SRS Assistant Conductor Alexander Kahn conducting Clarice Assad's *Baião 'N' Blues* and mezzo-soprano Leah Finn featured on Manuel de Falla's *El sombrero de tres picos* (*The Three-Cornered Hat*).

First-prize winner of the 2018 Guitar Foundation of America (GFA) International Concert Artist Competition and celebrated as one of the leading new voices in classical guitar, Raphaël Feuillâtre brings dazzling virtuosity and refined sensitivity to Joaquín Rodrigo's beloved *Concierto de Aranjuez*.

Rodrigo's most famous work—and the most celebrated guitar concerto in the repertoire—this colorful score evokes the gardens of the Palacio Real del Aranjuez with elegance and vibrancy. Its iconic Adagio, intimate and lyrical, contrasts with passages of brilliant orchestral interplay, making the concerto both a timeless masterpiece and a showcase for Feuillâtre's artistry.

Manuel de Falla's *El sombrero de tres picos* (*The Three-Cornered Hat*), featuring mezzo-soprano Leah Finn, bursts with Spanish dance rhythms and colorful orchestrations. Commissioned by Sergei Diaghilev for the Ballets Russes, this lively work brims with humor, romance, and fiery folk elements that transport listeners to the heart of Andalusia.

Opening the program is Clarice Assad's *Baião 'N' Blues*, a lively fusion of Brazilian rhythms and American blues. This energetic and inventive work reflects Assad's unique voice as a composer, bridging traditions across continents and setting a spirited tone for the evening. The piece will be conducted by Alexander Kahn, the Symphony's Assistant Conductor and Director of Orchestral Activities at Sonoma State University.

"I look forward to collaborating with the exceptional guitarist, Raphaël Feuillâtre, on the most iconic work for the classical guitar, Rodrigo's *Concierto de Aranjuez*. Alongside it will be perhaps the second most beloved Spanish orchestral work, De Falla's flamenco-inspired ballet, *The Three-Cornered Hat*. I'm particularly excited to be able to share the ballet music in its entirety, full of both the virtuosic dances and comedic storytelling."

- Francesco Lecce-Chong, Music Director and Conductor

BIOGRAPHIES:

Francesco Lecce-Chong, Music Director and Conductor

American conductor Francesco Lecce-Chong has established himself as a respected leader in the orchestral world through his acclaimed performances, innovative projects, and passionate advocacy for the arts. He was appointed Music Director of two U.S. orchestras, the Eugene Symphony and the Santa Rosa

Symphony, before turning 30. With those symphonies, he successfully launched several groundbreaking projects, commissioning over a dozen major orchestral works and building innovative community partnerships. Now, in his eighth season leading the Santa Rosa Symphony, he has grown the orchestra's reputation as one of the most exciting and important regional orchestras in the US with performances at one of the most renowned concert halls in the world, Weill Hall at the Green Music Center.

Lecce-Chong regularly appears with major orchestras around the country, from the San Francisco Symphony to the New York Philharmonic, collaborating with top soloists such as Renée Fleming and Itzhak Perlman. His subscription debut with the San Francisco Symphony was described by The San Francisco Chronicle 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, Baltimore Symphony, Utah Symphony, North Carolina Symphony, Louisville Orchestra, Kansas City Symphony, Detroit Symphony, and Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra. In 2023, Lecce-Chong made his European debut at the prestigious George Enescu Festival with the Romanian National Radio Orchestra. In 2025, he will make his debut with the Janáček Philharmonic in the Czech Republic.

Through his leadership, Lecce-Chong has fostered an unparalleled dedication to the future of the orchestral art form through commissions, community initiatives, and arts education. One of his first large-scale endeavors was the "First Symphony Project," which consisted of major commissions from the next generation of renowned composers across four seasons, complete with multiple residencies in the communities. In less than a decade, he has introduced over a dozen major new orchestral works to the repertoire from composers such as Pulitzer Prize winner Ellen Taaffe Zwilich, Grammy winner Michael Daugherty, Conrad Tao, Clarice Assad, and Gabriella Smith. During the pandemic, the Santa Rosa Symphony reached over two million households in the Bay Area through its "Santa Rosa Symphony Presents" TV broadcasts through local PBS. The programming included over 20 works by living composers and a partnership with Ellen Taaffe Zwilich, culminating in a recording of her music conducted by Lecce-Chong released in 2022 on the Delos label, the first CD release in the orchestra's history. To mark the conclusion of his eight-year tenure with the Eugene Symphony, the Delos label has released the Eugene Symphony's first commercial recording in its history, featuring a newly commissioned piece by David Schiff commemorating the legendary Olympic runner, Steve Prefontaine.

Lecce-Chong is equally committed to the opera repertoire, having first conducted performances of Strauss' *Ariadne auf Naxos* at age 24 in New York City. He continued to build his opera credentials as staff conductor with the Santa Fe Opera and leading performances with the Florentine Opera in Milwaukee. More recently, he led the Eugene Symphony through the most ambitious project in its history: a semi-staged presentation of Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde*. In Santa Rosa, Lecce-Chong conducted and directed Mozart's *The Magic Flute*, complete with his own original dialogue, and partnered with a local arts high school to create a multidisciplinary experience of the opera.

Trained also as a pianist and composer, Lecce-Chong studied at the Curtis Institute of Music, Mannes College of Music, and Accademia Musicale Chigiana in Italy before winning positions as Associate Conductor of the Pittsburgh Symphony and Milwaukee Symphony. Lecce-Chong is the recipient of several distinctions, including the prestigious Solti Foundation Award. He has had the privilege of being mentored and supported by renowned conductors, including Bernard Haitink, David Zinman, Edo de Waart, Manfred Honeck, Donald Runnicles, and Michael Tilson Thomas.

Raphaël Feuillâtre, guitar

Hailed as the new face of classical guitar worldwide, Raphaël Feuillâtre fascinates audiences and critics alike with the depth of his interpretations, his dazzling virtuosity, and the richness of his repertoire.

Winner of the prestigious Guitar Foundation of America competition in 2018 (USA) and ADAMI's "Classical Revelation 2021", Feuillâtre was chosen as an exclusive artist by the label Deutsche Grammophon in 2022. He is, to date, one of the very few guitarists to have signed with this legendary label. This fruitful collaboration gave birth to a first single "Les Barricades Mystérieuses", soon followed by his debut album *Visages Baroques* in 2023, which displays different facets of the Baroque aesthetic.

Following his acclaimed debut at New York's Carnegie Hall in 2023, he has performed in the world's most prestigious concert halls and festivals - including Amsterdam's Concertgebouw, the "Folle Journée" in Nantes, and the Beethoven Haus in Bonn - as well as at major guitar events such as the Festival International de Guitare de Paris, the Festival Guitarras del Mundo in Argentina, and the Changsha International Guitar Festival in China.

His passion for chamber music and his desire to champion his instrument in this repertoire has led him to collaborate with musicians of the highest calibre: recorder player Lucie Horsch, trumpet player Lucienne Renaudin Vary and violinist Maria Dueñas in venues such as Deutsche Grammophon's Yellow Lounge, the Dresden Music Festival and the Società del Quartotto Di Milano – Scala G. Verdi.

Born in Djibouti in 1996, Feuillâtre was introduced to the guitar by his first teacher, Hacène Addadi, before joining Michel Grizard's class at the Conservatoire de Nantes in 2012. Three years later, he entered the Conservatoire National de Musique et de Danse de Paris in the classes of Roland Dyens and Tristan Manoukian. During this period, he was mentored by Judicaël Perroy, who played an essential role in his artistic development.

In addition to winning first prize at the GFA, Feuillâtre has forged a strong reputation in the classical guitar world by winning the following competitions: Jose Tomas International Guitar Competition in Villa Petrer (Spain - 2017), Kutna Hora International Guitar Festival (Czech Republic - 2017), Viseu International Spring Music Festival (Portugal - 2016), Fontenay-sous-Bois Guitar Competition & Festival (France - 2015), and Ciudad de Coria International Guitar Festival (Spain - 2014).

An ambassador for the guitar and keen to contribute to the development of its repertoire, Feuillâtre has arranged numerous works from the repertoire of instruments he loves - with a particular predilection for keyboard instruments such as the piano and harpsichord – a taste particularly reflected in his choice of programmes for his recordings.

Driven by a desire to pass on his passion for music and the guitar, Feuillâtre teaches at the Pont Supérieur - Bretagne and is co-founder of the Lille Guitar Academy, a summer academy for guitarists. Students from all over the world receive his guidance at masterclasses given at the San Francisco Conservatory, Manhattan School of Music in New York and the Haute École de Musique in Geneva. He is also involved in projects to raise awareness of the arts, particularly following a tour in the USA during which he took part in several activities in schools and prisons.

Raphaël Feuillâtre is supported by Savarez, a historic string-manufacturing company founded in 1770, and plays a guitar by Australian luthier Greg Smallman.

Leah Finn, mezzo-soprano

Leah Finn is an operatic mezzo-soprano and musical theatre artist from Virginia Beach, Virginia. Most recently, Finn appeared as a Resident Young Artist with the Ohio Light Opera Company, performing 45 performances of various musicals and operettas. In 2024, she was a Manetti Shrem Opera Fellow with Festival Napa Valley. Some favorite credits include Taller Daughter in Missy Mazzoli's *Proving Up*, Serse in Handel's *Serse*, Zanetto in Mascagni's *Zanetto*, Annio in Mozart's *La Clemenza di Tito*, The Secretary in Menotti's *The Consul*, Flavio in Handel's *Flavio*, Zweite Dame in Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte*, and Jade Boucher in Jake Heggie's *Dead Man Walking*. She is also featured in the documentary *Flickal*, which tells the story of the life and career of legendary mezzo-soprano Frederica von Stade.

When she is not performing, Finn is also passionate about directing and, most recently, was the Assistant Director for David Hanlon's *The Pigeon Keeper* with Opera Parallèle. She holds a Professional Studies Certificate and Master's in Voice from the San Francisco Conservatory of Music under the tutelage of Catherine Cook. Finn graduated with a Bachelor's in Voice and Music Theatre from James Madison University.

Alexander Kahn, assistant conductor

Alexander Kahn is Professor of Music and Director of Orchestral Activities at Sonoma State University. Kahn comes to Sonoma State from Gettysburg College, where he was Associate Professor of Music and Director of Orchestral Activities. Previous university-level orchestras with whom Kahn has worked include the UC Berkeley Chamber Orchestra and the UC Berkeley Symphony.

In addition to his work with college-level orchestras, Kahn has worked with professional orchestras across the United States and throughout Europe. Currently he serves as Assistant and Cover Conductor for both the Santa Rosa Symphony and the San Francisco Symphony, as well as Principal Guest Conductor for the Bay Philharmonic in Fremont, CA. Previous positions he has held include Music Director of the Metta Ensemble (Gettysburg, PA), Cover Conductor for the Baltimore Symphony, Staff Conductor for the Spoleto Festival in Charleston, SC, and Assistant Conductor of the Bamberg Symphony.

A champion for music education, Kahn is Music Director of the Napa Valley Youth Orchestra. He regularly works with young musicians at the Encore Coda Performing Arts Camp (Sweden, Maine) and at the Cazadero Performing Arts Camp, and is a frequent guest conductor for high school honor orchestras throughout California. He also serves on the Board of the California Orchestra Directors Association (CODA).

Kahn earned a PhD in Music History from UC Berkeley and remains active as a scholar. His book on mindfulness and music, *Caring for the Whole Musician*, was published by Routledge Press in 2023. He regularly lectures and offers workshops on the subject of mindfulness for musicians.

Kahn's primary conducting studies were at UC Berkeley with David Milnes and at the Peabody Institute with Marin Alsop, Gustav Meier and Markand Thakar.

PROGRAM AT A GLANCE:

CLARICE ASSAD: *Baião 'N' Blues*

JOAQUÍN RODRIGO: *Concierto de Aranjuez* for Guitar and Orchestra

MANUEL DE FALLA: *El sombrero de tres picos* [*The Three-Cornered Hat*] for Mezzo-Soprano and Orchestra

High-res photos and interview opportunities available: Francesco Lecce-Chong, Raphaël Feuillâtre, and Leah Finn.

CONCERT ENHANCEMENTS:

Concert Program books: Available at all Classical Series concerts.

Concert Program notes: These can be read on the [Digital Program Books & Notes](#) page.

Pre-concert talk: Conductor Francesco Lecce-Chong and guest provide a 30-minute pre-concert talk one hour prior to the performances.

SPONSORS:

Classical Concert Series underwritten by **Anderman Family Foundation**

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Raphaël Feuillâtre sponsored by **The Stare Foundation and Lee & Dave Stare of Dry Creek Vineyard**

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Pre-concert talk sponsored by **Jamei Haswell & Mack Schwing**

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AT A GLANCE / CALENDAR LISTINGS:

WHO: [Santa Rosa Symphony](#), [Francesco Lecce-Chong, conductor](#)

WHAT: [Spanish Fiesta](#)

WHERE: Weill Hall, Green Music Center, Sonoma State University

WHEN:

Saturday, November 8, 2025, at 2:00 pm – Discovery Open Rehearsal (no Pre-concert talk)

Saturday, November 8, 2025, at 7:30 pm (Doors at 6:00 pm, Pre-concert Talk 6:30 pm - 7:00 pm)

Sunday, November 9, 2025, at 3:00 pm (Doors at 1:30 pm, Pre-concert Talk 2:00 pm - 2:30 pm)

Monday, November 10, 2025, at 7:30 pm (Doors at 6:00 pm, Pre-concert Talk 6:30 pm - 7:00 pm)

TICKET PRICES:

\$20 / adult; \$10 / youth (7-17) for Discovery Open Rehearsal

\$34-\$110 for Classical Series performances

Youths 7-17 may receive one complimentary ticket with every paid adult. Request tickets through Patron Services at (707) 546-8742. Classical Series concerts only

\$10 student rush tickets for students with a valid student ID. Available at the door only

HOW TO PURCHASE TICKETS:

rsymphony.org or (707) 546-8742 or in person: 50 Santa Rosa Ave, 1st Floor, Santa Rosa CA. (Weekdays 9:00 am – 5:00 pm; 10:30 am – 5:00 pm on Wednesday; closed Saturday & Sunday.)

ABOUT SANTA ROSA SYMPHONY

Santa Rosa Symphony (SRS), the Resident Orchestra at Green Music Center, is the third-oldest professional orchestra in California and the largest regional symphony north of Los Angeles. Francesco Lecce-Chong began his tenure in 2018 as the Symphony's fifth Music Director in its 98 years. J. Andrew Bradford joined SRS as President and CEO in 2023.

SRS performances include 21 Classical Series concerts presented over seven concert weekends, six Discovery Rehearsals, a three-concert Family Series, a four-concert Symphony Pops Series, and special events.

The Symphony is recognized as 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.

Awards include a League of American Orchestras' 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). In 2022, SRS, in conjunction with Delos Productions, released its first commercial label recording, Cello Concerto & Other Works, featuring works by composer Ellen Taaffe Zwilich.

The Santa Rosa Symphony is committed to the core values of artistic excellence, innovative programming, comprehensive music education, and community service.

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