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## **Geneva Lewis Returns for Santa Rosa Symphony's Geneva Plays Brahms Concert**

**Plus! The West Coast Premiere of Jimmy López's *Aino***

December 6, 7 & 8, 2025, Weill Hall, Green Music Center

(Santa Rosa, Calif.) — Santa Rosa Symphony (SRS) presents Geneva Plays Brahms, conducted by Music Director Francesco Lecce-Chong, December 6, 7 & 8, 2025, at Weill Hall, Green Music Center. Returning to the stage is audience favorite, violinist Geneva Lewis, performing Johannes Brahms' Violin Concerto in D major. Richard Strauss' Suite from *Der Rosenkavalier* closes the program with lush orchestral colors. Also featured are Ruggero Leoncavallo's Intermezzo from *Pagliacci* and the West Coast premiere of Jimmy López's *Aino*.

Avery Fisher Career Grant winner Geneva Lewis has rapidly established herself as one of the most compelling young violinists today. Praised for her expressive interpretations and commanding stage presence, Lewis brings fresh insight to Brahms' only violin concerto. The work is renowned for its lyrical beauty and symphonic scale. Brahms' Violin Concerto stands as one of the cornerstones of the violin repertoire, blending virtuosic passages with rich orchestral textures.

The Santa Rosa Symphony's program features Richard Strauss' *Suite from Der Rosenkavalier*, a brilliant orchestral selection from the beloved opera. From virtuosic horns to sparkling percussion, the music captures the bittersweet humor, romantic intrigue, and opulent charm of the opera, making the Suite both a showcase of Strauss' orchestral brilliance and a celebration of Vienna's golden age.

Leoncavallo's poignant *Intermezzo* from *Pagliacci* opens the program with lyrical warmth. The program also sheds light on contemporary voices with the West Coast premiere of Jimmy López's *Aino*, inspired by Finnish mythology. López, celebrated for his vibrant orchestral writing, weaves sweeping themes with rhythmic vitality into this evocative score.

"I am so happy to welcome back one of my favorite collaborators, Geneva Lewis, for Brahms' beloved violin concerto. Geneva has both a remarkable warmth of sound along with a thrilling virtuosity that will bring out the best of this iconic work. I also look forward to presenting the West Coast Premiere of Jimmy López's *Aino* - a colorful tone poem that was commissioned by the Chicago Symphony and the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra in Amsterdam, Netherlands."

- **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.

### **Geneva Lewis, violin**

Kiwi/American violinist Geneva Lewis has forged a reputation as a musician of consummate artistry whose performances speak from and to the heart. Lauded for "remarkable mastery of her instrument" (*CVNC*) and hailed as "clearly one to watch" (*Musical America*), Lewis is the recipient of a 2022 Borletti-Buitoni Trust Award, 2021 Avery Fisher Career Grant, and Grand Prize winner of the 2020 Concert Artists Guild Competition. Additional accolades include Kronberg Academy's Prince of Hesse Prize, being named a Performance Today Young Artist in Residence, and *Musical America's* New Artist of the Month. Most recently, Lewis was named one of BBC Radio 3's New Generation Artists.

Since her solo debut at age 11 with the Pasadena POPS, Lewis has gone on to perform with orchestras including the Orpheus Chamber Orchestra, Pasadena Symphony, Sarasota Orchestra, Pensacola Symphony

and Duluth Superior Symphony Orchestra and with conductors including Nicholas McGegan, Edwin Outwater, Michael Feinstein, Sameer Patel, Peter Rubardt, and Dirk Meyer. The 2022-23 season includes performances with the Auckland Philharmonia, North Carolina Symphony, Augusta Symphony, Kansas City Symphony, Austin Symphony, and Arkansas Symphony. In recital, recent and upcoming highlights include performances at Wigmore Hall, Tippet Rise, Philadelphia Chamber Music Society, Washington Performing Arts, Merkin Hall, and the Dame Myra Hess Memorial Concerts.

Deeply passionate about collaboration, Lewis has had the pleasure of performing with such prominent musicians as Jonathan Biss, Glenn Dicterow, Miriam Fried, Kim Kashkashian, Gidon Kremer, Marcy Rosen, Sir András Schiff, and Mitsuko Uchida, among others. She is also a founding member of the Callisto Trio, Artist-in-Residence at the Da Camera Society in Los Angeles. Callisto received the Bronze Medal at the Fischhoff Competition as the youngest group to ever compete in the senior division finals. They were recently invited on the Masters on Tour series of the International Holland Music Sessions and performed at the celebrated Het Concertgebouw Amsterdam.

An advocate of community engagement and music education, Lewis was selected for the New England Conservatory's Community Performances and Partnerships Program's Ensemble Fellowship, through which her string quartet created interactive educational programs for audiences throughout Boston. Her quartet was also chosen for the Virginia Arts Festival Residency, during which they performed and presented masterclasses in elementary, middle, and high schools.

Lewis received her Artist Diploma and Bachelor of Music as the recipient of the Charlotte F. Rabb Presidential Scholarship at the New England Conservatory, studying with Miriam Fried. Prior to that, she studied with Aimée Kreston at the Colburn School of Performing Arts. She is currently studying at Kronberg Academy with Professor Mihaela Martin. These studies are funded by the Strauss Family Patronage. Past summers have taken her to the Marlboro Music Festival, Ravinia Steans Institute, Perlman Music Program's Chamber Workshop, International Holland Music Sessions, Taos School of Music and the Heifetz International Music Institute.

Lewis is currently performing on a composite violin by G.B. Guadagnini, c. 1766, generously on loan from a Charitable Trust.

#### **PROGRAM AT A GLANCE:**

**RUGGERO LEONCAVALLO:** Intermezzo from *Pagliacci*

**JOHANNES BRAHMS:** Concerto in D major for Violin and Orchestra, Opus 77

**JIMMY LÓPEZ:** *Aino* (West Coast Premiere)

**RICHARD STRAUSS:** Suite from *Der Rosenkavalier*, Opus 59

High-res photos and interview opportunities available: Francesco Lecce-Chong and Geneva Lewis.

#### **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**

Sponsored by **Viking**

Conductor Francesco Lecce-Chong sponsored by **David & Corinne Byrd**

Geneva Lewis sponsored by **Vic & Karen Trione, in memory of Henry Trione**

*Aino* (West Coast Premiere) by Jimmy López sponsored by **Sandra Jordan**

Discovery Rehearsal Series sponsored by **The Stare Foundation and Lee & Dave Stare of Dry Creek Vineyard**

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:** [Geneva Plays Brahms](#)

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

**WHEN:**

Saturday, December 6, 2025, at 2:00 pm – Discovery Open Rehearsal (no Pre-concert talk)  
Saturday, December 6, 2025, at 7:30 pm (Doors at 6:00 pm, Pre-concert Talk 6:30 pm - 7:00 pm)  
Sunday, December 7, 2025, at 3:00 pm (Doors at 1:30 pm, Pre-concert Talk 2:00 pm - 2:30 pm)  
Monday, December 8, 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:**

[srsymphony.org](http://srsymphony.org) or (707) 546-8742 or in person: 50 Santa Rosa Ave, 1<sup>st</sup> 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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