



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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# **Santa Rosa Symphony Presents Rossini & Schubert and World Premiere of Shuying Li's *Coping Cadences***

March 21, 22 & 23, 2026, Weill Hall, Green Music Center

(Santa Rosa, Calif.) – The Santa Rosa Symphony presents Rossini & Schubert, March 21, 22 & 23, 2026 at Weill Hall, Green Music Center. Conducted by Francesco Lecce-Chong, the program features Gioachino Rossini's overtures to *The Barber of Seville* and *William Tell* juxtaposed with Franz Schubert's celebrated *Unfinished* Symphony. It also spotlights the world premiere of Shuying Li's *Coping Cadences*, a bold new concerto grosso that features six of the Symphony's principal musicians. Tickets starting at \$34 at [srsymphony.org](http://srsymphony.org).

The program opens and closes with the operatic brilliance of Gioachino Rossini. The Overture to *The Barber of Seville* offers a witty, mischievous start to the evening, while the legendary Overture to *William Tell* provides a thrilling, high-speed finale that remains one of the most recognizable works in the classical canon.

Contrasting this energy is Franz Schubert's Symphony No. 8, *Unfinished*. Despite consisting of only two movements, it is a pinnacle of Romantic music—fusing lyrical beauty with a profound, mysterious depth that has captivated audiences for nearly two centuries.

The program's world premiere, *Coping Cadences*, is a groundbreaking work by acclaimed composer Shuying Li. Inspired by the dark comedy series *Beef*, the piece explores universal themes of conflict and resolution. As a concerto grosso, it features a "concertino" group of six soloists drawn from across the orchestra's sections, merging traditional forms with a sharp, contemporary perspective.

The featured Santa Rosa Symphony soloists include:

- Elizabeth Prior, Principal viola, is a veteran of the San Francisco Ballet and Opera.
- Adelle-Akiko Kearns, Principal cello, is a Juilliard graduate who has debuted at Carnegie Hall.
- Roy Zajac, Principal Clarinet, who is known for his soulful interpretations and extensive international experience.
- Robert Giambruno, Principal trumpet, who has performed with the San Francisco Symphony and Opera.
- Bruce Chrisp, Principal trombone, is a founding member of the San Francisco Brass Company.
- Allen Biggs, Principal percussion and marimba soloist, is a Grammy-winning recording artist.

"It has been a longtime dream of mine to bring together the music of Rossini and Schubert - two beloved contemporaries who both lived in Vienna in the 1820s but ran in very different circles. While on the surface their music could not be more different, I hope this program will show where these two geniuses found common ground and, while they would never have admitted it, perhaps they even influenced each other! Also on the program, six of my incredible colleagues from within the orchestra are featured soloists in the world premiere of a brilliant new concerto by California composer, Shuying Li."

- **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.

### **Elizabeth Prior, viola**

An active Bay Area violist, Elizabeth Prior is the principal violist with the Santa Rosa Symphony and is also a season substitute with the San Francisco Ballet and San Francisco Opera. She is a member of the New

Century Chamber Orchestra, associate principal with the Marin Symphony, and performs regularly with the Pittsburgh Symphony, Sun Valley Music Festival and the Strobe Oboe Quartet.

Other orchestral positions include the Freiburg Philharmonic (Associate Principal) and the Cape Town Philharmonic Orchestra. She has toured and worked with Südwestrundfunk Baden-Baden, Stuttgart Radio Symphony Orchestra, Basel Symphony Orchestra, and the Mannheim National Theatre Orchestra.

A native of South Africa, she was a prizewinner in the International String Competition in Pretoria and made her debut at Carnegie Hall with the Russian Chamber Orchestra. Other engagements include Amelia Island Chamber Music Festival, Sun Valley Music Festival, Grand Teton Music Festival, Chamber Ensemble Cologne, Grass Valley and Mendocino Summer Festivals, Midsummer Mozart Festival, and "Chamber Music San Francisco." She performed regular viola recitals for 13 years with Maestro Donald Runnicles on piano. Prior has released a CD, *Viola Romance*, with pianist Miles Graber.

**Adelle-Akiko Kearns, cello**

Hailed by critics as an "impressive" cellist exhibiting "beautifully sensuous cello playing," Adelle-Akiko Kearns is a highly in demand solo, chamber and orchestral performer based in the San Francisco Bay Area.

The recipient of the prestigious Artists International Award, Adelle made her New York recital debut at Carnegie Hall's Weill Hall in November of 2008. Since then, she has appeared on the world's most important stages, including Carnegie Hall, Lincoln Center, The Kennedy Center, Suntory Hall, Davies Symphony Hall, and many others.

In 2006, Kearns gave the Japanese premiere of the Korngold Cello Concerto with the Tokyo Philharmonic Orchestra and was immediately engaged to return the following season to perform the Dvorak Concerto. Other previous solo appearances include concerto collaborations with the Santa Rosa Symphony, Monterey Symphony, Symphony of the Redwoods, Cambrian Symphony, Auburn Symphony, Juilliard Conductors' Orchestra, West Valley Symphony (Arizona), the San Francisco Conservatory of Music Orchestra, Contra Costa Chamber Orchestra, and the Pacific Chamber Symphony.

As a chamber musician, Kearns has performed at the world's leading music festivals including the Saito Kinen, Aspen, Tanglewood, Yellow Barn, and Spoleto Festivals. She has collaborated with members of the legendary Juilliard String Quartet as well as renowned chamber musicians Zuill Bailey, Jorja Fleezanis, Axel Strauss, Ian Swensen, Paul Hersh, Jodi Levitz, Daisuke Suzuki, and the Da Capo Chamber Players.

In 2003, Kearns was the only cellist from the San Francisco Conservatory of Music chosen to play for the late Mstislav Rostropovich, and she has undertaken masterclasses with some of the most revered cellists such as Bernard Greenhouse, Raphael Wallfisch, Paul Katz, David Finckel, Norman Fischer, and Mark Kosower.

Kearns is currently the Principal Cellist of the Santa Rosa Symphony, Assistant Principal Cellist of Symphony San Jose, the Monterey Symphony and the Music in the Mountains Festival Orchestra and is also a regular substitute cellist with the San Francisco Symphony. Before returning to the Bay Area in 2011, Kearns served as the Assistant Principal Cello of the Louisiana Philharmonic and as a member of the Tokyo Symphony Orchestra.

An avid educator, Kearns is currently a Professor of Cello at San Jose State University and also teaches privately throughout the South Bay. She is also the coach of the San Jose Youth Symphony and Golden State Youth Orchestra's cello sections.

Kearns holds degrees from the San Francisco Conservatory of Music and The Juilliard School. Her principal teachers include Bonnie Hampton, Joel Krosnick, Sadao Harada, and Irene Sharp.

A native of San Francisco, Kearns grew up with many Sonoma County relatives and as a child, enjoyed monthly trips up to Santa Rosa to visit her grandmother at Oakmont. She is thrilled that her work with the Santa Rosa Symphony allows her to get to spend time in this beautiful area.

**Roy Zajac**, clarinet

Principal Clarinet Roy Zajac has played the clarinet since he was 10 years old, when he started on an instrument purchased from a neighbor. The music of his family and their friends, who played guitar and sang, permeated his young life in rural Mexico.

Though neither he nor his brother took to the guitar, they both found the instruments they loved. Zajac auditioned and won the position of Principal Clarinet for the Santa Rosa Symphony in 1998, while he was still in the Air Force Band of the Golden West. He also began playing as a substitute for other orchestras, a role he describes as the most challenging—often requiring him to step in on short notice and quickly adapt to new ensembles.

Zajac, who likes to share his passion with young musicians, teaches and mentors them, and has had the honor of seeing his students achieve positions in the California All-State Orchestras (first chair), the San Francisco Youth Orchestra, and the SRS Youth Orchestra. Many have won scholarships based on their musical ability.

For three years, before the Green Music Center was built, he played for donor recitals to help raise funds for its construction. “Throughout that time, I played for many lovely people. Most memorable was Ray Manzarek of The Doors.”

In addition to his winning audition for the Air Force Band of the Golden West, Zajac says he’s also very proud of winning positions with the Naval Academy in Annapolis, the Filharmonica Del Bajio in Guanajuato, Mexico, and the Grand Teton Music Seminar.

Zajac is particularly drawn to the harmonies, folk sounds, instrumentation and rhythms of Russian composers, such as Prokofiev, Tchaikovsky, Rimsky-Korsakov, Stravinsky and Shostakovich. One of his career highlights was performing as the guest artist for the Mozart Clarinet Concerto with the Santa Rosa Symphony in 2013.

**Robert Giambruno**, trumpet

Robert Lau Giambruno was born and raised in San Francisco and is thrilled to perform regularly in the Bay Area. Appointed as principal trumpet of the Santa Rosa Symphony in October of 2022, he also holds the position of principal trumpet with Symphony San Jose, and previously, the Rogue Valley Symphony. In addition, Robert can be found regularly performing with other Bay Area ensembles, including the San Francisco Symphony, San Francisco Opera, Berkeley Symphony, and Oakland Symphony, amongst others. Mr. Giambruno attended Arizona State University and the San Francisco Conservatory of Music, studying with David Hickman and Mark Inouye.

**Bruce Chrisp**, trombone

Santa Rosa Symphony Principal trombonist Bruce Chrisp joined the orchestra in 1992. He has previously appeared as soloist with the Santa Rosa Symphonietta, Santa Rosa Symphony, Sonoma County Philharmonic, Santa Cruz Symphony and the Vallejo Symphony. Chrisp is also principal trombonist with the Sacramento Philharmonic and Opera, Fresno Philharmonic, Oakland, Marin, Carmel Bach Festival, and Vallejo Symphony Orchestras and is second trombone with Opera San Jose. He has performed with the San Francisco Symphony, the San Francisco Opera Orchestra, the San Francisco Ballet Orchestra, the Virginia Symphony, the Oregon Symphony, and the San Diego Symphony. He is a founding member of the San Francisco Brass Company, a Bay Area brass quintet, and enjoys performing Renaissance music on a replica of a 450-year-old trombone.

He received his bachelor's in music education from the University of Michigan and his master's in music from the San Francisco Conservatory of Music. His major teachers have been Mark Lawrence, Dennis Smith, and Edward Zadrosny.

Chrisp is currently the Professor of Trombone, Euphonium, and Tuba at the University of the Pacific Conservatory of Music. Originally from Davis, CA, Chrisp currently resides in Vallejo with his wife Gabrielle Wunsch, a professional violinist.

**Allen Biggs**, marimba

Allen Biggs is Principal Percussionist with the Santa Rosa Symphony and timpanist with the Philharmonia Baroque Orchestra. He is a founding member of the California Symphony, performs regularly with the Marin and Oakland Symphonies, and was a member of the Bay Area Jazz Composer's Orchestra for many years. He plays drums with the jam band Jamalicious and was a member of Escola Nova de Samba for many years.

The list of touring Broadway productions he has worked on for the past 25 years includes everything from *Amelie* to *Wicked*. Biggs has done several national tours with Western Opera Theater; he can be heard on soundtracks including the feature film *Renfield*; a recording he made with the group Chanticleer won two Grammy awards, and he performs on the Grammy-nominated cast album of *A Chorus Line*.

Biggs is an active educator. He leads a popular percussion trio, which performs in schools throughout Sonoma County. Biggs runs the Moke Hill Music Festival, which takes place in the gold country town of Mokelumne Hill and celebrates contemporary music. A volunteer teacher with the global humanitarian organization Art of Living, Biggs is dedicated to creating a stress-free, violence-free society one breath at a time.

**PROGRAM AT A GLANCE:**

**GIOACHINO ROSSINI:** Overture to *Il barbiere di Siviglia* [*The Barber of Seville*]

**SHUYING LI:** *Coping Cadences* (World Premiere)

**FRANZ SCHUBERT:** Symphony No. 8 in B minor, D.759, *Unfinished*

**GIOACHINO ROSSINI:** Overture to *Guillaume Tell* [*William Tell*]

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

**CONCERT ENHANCEMENTS:**

**Concert Program books:** Available at all Classical Series concerts.

**Concert Program notes:** Available on the [Digital Program Books & Notes](#) page.

**Pre-concert talk:** Conductor Francesco Lecce-Chong, composer Shuying Li, and two Santa Rosa Symphony principal musicians provide a 30-minute pre-concert talk one hour prior to the performances.

**SPONSORS:**

Classical Series underwritten by **Anderman Family Foundation**

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**AT A GLANCE / CALENDAR LISTINGS:**

**WHO:** [Santa Rosa Symphony](#)

**WHAT:** [Rossini & Mendelssohn](#)

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

**WHEN:**

Saturday, March 21, 2026, at 2:00 pm – Discovery Open Rehearsal (no Pre-concert talk)  
Saturday, March 21, 2026, at 7:30 pm (Doors at 6:00 pm, Pre-concert Talk 6:30 pm - 7:00 pm)  
Sunday, March 22, 2026, at 3:00 pm (Doors at 1:30 pm, Pre-concert Talk 2:00 pm - 2:30 pm)  
Monday, March 23, 2026, 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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