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March 31, 2026

## **Santa Rosa Symphony Presents Shakespeare in Music** **A Flavorful Pairing of Tchaikovsky and Shakespeare**

May 2, 3 & 4, 2026, Weill Hall, Green Music Center

(Santa Rosa, Calif.) — The Santa Rosa Symphony presents *Shakespeare in Music*, a program pairing Shakespeare's texts with orchestral works. Curated by Music Director Francesco Lecce-Chong, the program features orchestral masterworks by Samuel Coleridge-Taylor and Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky alongside Shakespearean monologues. Pianist Claire Huangci performs Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's Piano Concerto No. 20 in D minor as a nuanced counterpoint to Tchaikovsky's *Hamlet and Romeo and Juliet*. Performances take place May 2, 3, and 4, 2026, at Weill Hall, Green Music Center. Tickets start at \$34 and are available at [srsymphony.org](http://srsymphony.org).

Coleridge-Taylor's Incidental Music from *Othello* adds evocative Romantic lyricism, providing a compelling lens through which to experience Shakespeare's tragedy. Tchaikovsky's *Romeo and Juliet* Fantasy Overture delivers one of the most recognizable love themes ever composed, while his rarely performed *Hamlet* Fantasy Overture offers a brooding, dramatic counterpoint. Actor Nicola Vann performs monologues from *Hamlet* and *Romeo and Juliet*, bridging theater and orchestra to showcase the richness and passion of the stories.

Pianist Claire Huangci makes her Santa Rosa Symphony debut performing Mozart's Piano Concerto No. 20 in D minor, K. 466, one of his most dramatic and distinctive works. Celebrated for her technical brilliance and expressive depth, Huangci brings clarity and insight to this powerful concerto, composed in 1785 at the height of Mozart's success in Vienna. Set in the dark key also associated with *Don Giovanni* and the *Requiem*, the piece moves from stormy intensity to moments of lyricism and light, culminating in a vibrant, hard-won resolution.

"Tchaikovsky's fascination with Shakespeare led to some of his greatest works, and this program puts together his famous *Romeo and Juliet* with his nearly forgotten masterpiece: music inspired by *Hamlet*. Alongside Shakespeare's own words, I hope this program will build a deeper appreciation and a unique viewpoint on both Tchaikovsky and Shakespeare. There's plenty of drama elsewhere on the program with Mozart's stormy and virtuosic D minor piano concerto featuring the sensational Claire Huangci."

- **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.

### **Claire Huangci, piano**

The American pianist Claire Huangci continuously captivates audiences with her “radiant virtuosity, artistic sensitivity, keen interactive sense and subtle auditory dramaturgy” (Salzburger Nachrichten). With an irrepressible curiosity and penchant for unusual repertoire, she proves her versatility with a wide range of repertoire spanning from Bach and Scarlatti via German and Russian romanticism to Bernstein, Amy Beach, and Samuel Barber.

In solo recitals and with international orchestras, Huangci has appeared in some of the most prestigious halls such as Carnegie Hall, Segerstrom Concert Hall, Suntory Hall Tokyo, NCPA Beijing, Paris Philharmonie, Frankfurt Alte Oper, Dortmund Konzerthaus, Munich Prinzregententheater, Hamburg Elbphilharmonie, Leipzig Gewandhaus, Berlin Philharmonie, Vienna Konzerthaus, and Salzburg Festspielhaus. She is a welcome guest of renowned festivals including the Lucerne Festival, Rheingau Musik Festival and Klavier Festival Ruhr. Her esteemed musical partners include the Mozarteumorchester Salzburg, Stuttgart Radio Symphony Orchestra, Tonhalle-Orchester Zurich, Musikkollegium Winterthur, Munich Chamber Orchestra, Basel Chamber Orchestra and Iceland, Eugene and Pacific Symphonies, together with Elim Chan, David

Danzmayr, Michael Francis, Howard Griffiths, Pietari Inkinen, Francesco Lecce-Chong, Jun Märkl, Cornelius Meister, Sir Roger Norrington, Eva Ollikainen, Alexander Shelley, Carl St.Clair, and Mario Venzago.

In recent seasons, she has been a fixture on the concert circuit presenting an unusual breadth of repertoire and also directing various concertos from the piano in the play-direct tradition. Highlights from Huangci's 2025-2026 season in the US include her concerto debuts playing Mozart with the Baltimore Symphony and Santa Rosa Symphony, and Chopin with North Carolina Symphony, as well as returns to Eugene Symphony playing Grieg, Columbus (GA) Symphony playing Beethoven, and Prokofiev with Fairfax Symphony.

Her 2024-2025 season included Huangci's return to the Frankfurt Opera and Museum Orchestra, Porto, Iceland, Vorarlberg, and Pacific Symphony orchestras, and debuts with the Basel, Hannover, Bremen, and Bochum symphonies. Particular highlights of this season include Huangci performing both Ravel Concerto in G and Concerto for the Left Hand in 8 concerts on tour in Europe with the Nordwestdeutsche Philharmonie, as well as making her debut with the Milwaukee Symphony led by David Danzmayr featuring a rare performance of Beethoven's reimagining of his Violin Concerto (Piano Concerto No.6).

Huangci's extensive discography also reflects her artistic versatility. The newest release in her collaboration with Alpha Classics, a solo disc titled MADE IN USA featuring Gershwin, Beach and Barber, received the "Preis der Deutschen Schallplattenkritik". This followed a highly acclaimed Mozart concerto album with the Mozarteum Orchestra Salzburg and Howard Griffiths. A 3-CD box set of Schubert's late sonatas, the Drei Klavierstücke and a selection of songs from Schwanengesang with baritone Thomas E. Bauer was released at her 10-year anniversary at Berlin Classics in the fall of 2023. Her debut CD in 2013 with solo works by Tchaikovsky and Prokofiev was followed by her double album of Scarlatti sonatas, which also won the "Preis der Deutschen Schallplattenkritik" and the Gramophone Editor's Choice Award. In addition to a complete recording of Chopin's Nocturnes and Rachmaninoff's Préludes, her discography also includes rarities such as Paderewski's Piano Concerto and a complete recording of Bach's Toccatas.

Born in Rochester, New York, Huangci displayed an early penchant for piano and began her international career at the age of nine with concert performances and competition victories. She studied with Gary Graffman and Eleanor Sokoloff at the Curtis Institute of Music before moving to Hannover for further studies with Arie Vardi. She rose to international prominence with top prizes at several major competitions, including European and US Chopin competitions, ARD Music Competition, Geza Anda Competition, and Grand Prix of the Paris Play Direct Academy.

Huangci is a proud ambassador of the Henle Publishing House, and in 2024 was named Artistic Director of the Erbach Kammerkonzerte series.

#### **Nicola Vann, actor**

Nicola Vann is a Los Angeles-based actor who enjoys stage, screen, and voiceover work. She studied drama at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, where she was a Morehead-Cain scholar. Other notable training includes The Groundlings School and the Gaiety School of Acting (Dublin, Ireland).

She is the artistic director of Bardfly Theatre Company, a site-specific Shakespeare company, which began touring Northern California wine country in 2025. Additionally, she works as an acting coach for kids & teens, an intimacy coordinator, and a screenwriter.

Originally from the Bay Area, much of her family now lives in Santa Rosa, CA, and she regularly visits. To learn more about her, visit [www.nicolavann.com](http://www.nicolavann.com).

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

**SAMUEL COLERIDGE-TAYLOR:** Incidental Music from *Othello*

**WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART:** Concerto No. 20 in D minor for Piano and Orchestra, K. 466

**William Shakespeare:** Monologue from *Hamlet*

**PYOTR ILYICH TCHAIKOVSKY:** *Hamlet* (Fantasy Overture) in F minor, Opus 67, TH 53

**William Shakespeare:** Monologue from *Romeo and Juliet*

**PYOTR ILYICH TCHAIKOVSKY:** *Romeo and Juliet* (Fantasy Overture) in B minor, TH 42

High-res photos and interview opportunities available: Francesco Lecce-Chong, Claire Huangci, and Nicola Vann.

### **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**

Sponsored by **Jacques & Barbara Schlumberger**

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

Claire Huangci sponsored by **Sara & Edward Kozel**

Piano Concerto No. 20 in D Minor sponsored by **Dr. Larry Schoenrock Endowment Fund**

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**

Season Media Sponsor: **The Press Democrat**

### **AT A GLANCE / CALENDAR LISTINGS:**

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

**WHAT:** [Shakespeare in Music](#)

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

### **WHEN:**

Saturday, May 2, 2026, at 2:00 pm – Discovery Open Rehearsal (no Pre-concert talk)

Saturday, May 2, 2026, at 7:30 pm (Doors at 6:00 pm, Pre-concert Talk 6:30 pm - 7:00 pm)

Sunday, May 3, 2026, at 3:00 pm (Doors at 1:30 pm, Pre-concert Talk 2:00 pm - 2:30 pm)

Monday, May 4, 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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