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For Immediate Release

Santa Rosa Symphony Announces 2026-2027 Season “99 Years of Music”

Season Subscriptions go on Sale Monday, March 9, 2026
PLUS, One Series Concludes as Another Begins

(Santa Rosa, Calif.) – The Santa Rosa Symphony (SRS) announces its 99th performance season, defined by the exploration of destiny, drama, and symphonic storytelling. Marking the milestone “99 Years of Music,” Music Director & Conductor Francesco Lecce-Chong has curated a season that blends celebrated classical masterpieces with adventurous new commissions. Highlights include works by leading composers of our time, three world premieres, and appearances by more than a dozen world-class guest artists. The 2026-2027 Classical Series runs from October 10, 2026, to May 10, 2027, and is underwritten by the Anderman Family Foundation. Season subscriptions go on sale Monday, March 9, 2026.

“For my ninth season with the Santa Rosa Symphony, it will be a particular joy to revisit beloved classics from some of my first concerts here, such as Tchaikovsky's Fourth Symphony, Mussorgsky's *Pictures at an Exhibition*, and Mahler's Fourth Symphony. I believe the performances throughout the season will reflect how all of us—both our community and orchestra—have grown together through remarkable success and adversity in recent years. It is the perfect way to mark the final season before the festivities of our centennial season!”

- **Francesco Lecce-Chong**, Music Director and Conductor

2026-2027 Special Events

The season also marks the debut of **Winterlude...**, a new annual series of winter concerts that launches with Handel's *Messiah* on December 12 and 13, 2026. A cornerstone of the choral repertoire, Handel's *Messiah* is renowned for its grandeur, beauty, and the unforgettable “Hallelujah” chorus. Tickets on sale starting August 3, 2026.

Later in the season, the Symphony concludes its four-year cycle, **Road to 100: The Complete Beethoven Symphonies**, culminating in the final performance on June 6, 2027. Immediately following the performance, a lively no-host Beethoven BBQ will be held on the lawn adjacent to the hall. Tickets on sale starting August 3, 2026.

Celebration 2026! Viennese Nights: An Evening of Musical Elegance, the Symphony's annual fundraising gala, will take place on Friday, October 9, 2026, honoring distinguished patrons Sara and Edward Koziel while celebrating the arts, meaningful philanthropy, and the empowerment of young musicians through our transformative education programs. Tickets on sale starting March 9, 2026.

2026-2027 Classical Series

The Classical Series season opens in October with “**Twist of Fate**,” anchored by Tchaikovsky's Symphony No. 4—a personal and artistic milestone for Music Director Francesco Lecce-Chong, who performed the work in his very first appearance with SRS in 2017. The symphony will be paired with Liszt's fiery Piano Concerto No. 1, performed by acclaimed pianist Maxim Lando. The concert also introduces the world premiere of Matt Browne's Divertimento for Orchestra. An alumnus of the SRS First Symphony Project, Browne's return underscores the Symphony's ongoing commitment to living composers and emerging artistic voices.

November's “**Echoes of Innocence**” shifts the lens inward, exploring lyricism, reflection, and youthful wonder. Rachmaninoff's *Vocalise* sets an atmosphere of hushed beauty, Saint-Saëns' Cello Concerto No. 1 showcases the Bay Area native Oliver Herbert, and Mahler's Symphony No. 4 closes the program with a rare combination of orchestral intimacy and radiant vocal expression.

January's "**Beethoven & Dvořák**" opens the new year with two enduring pillars of the symphonic repertoire, balancing drama and joy. Beethoven's Piano Concerto No. 3 brings intensity and urgency to the stage, while Dvořák's Symphony No. 8 provides a contrasting spirit of warmth and optimism. Guest conductor David Danzmayr leads the orchestra alongside pianist Janice Carissa, with Jessie Montgomery's *Strum* adding a contemporary rhythmic spark that bridges classical tradition and modern influence.

In February, "**Of Myths & Masters**" embraces orchestral spectacle, blending virtuosity, narrative, and color. The program spans the heroic sweep of Strauss' *Don Juan*, the visceral flair of Liszt's Hungarian Rhapsody No. 2, and the emotional depth of Sibelius' Violin Concerto, performed by the young prodigy, violinist Mio Imai. Shuying Li's *The Phoenix Ascends* adds a modern voice that reinforces the program's themes of legend, transformation, and power.

March brings "**Mozart & Brahms**," a concert shaped by scale, intellect, and interpretive depth. Brahms' Piano Concerto No. 1—an expansive work that blurs the line between concerto and symphony—features internationally celebrated pianist Marc-André Hamelin. The program opens with Mozart's Overture to *Don Giovanni*, a compact burst of theatrical tension, and celebrates the world premiere of Jonathan Leshnoff's Symphony No. 7.

April's "**Carmina Burana**" widens the season's scope with one of the most recognizable and viscerally powerful works in the choral-orchestral canon. Featuring large-scale forces, including the Santa Rosa Symphony Chorus and the Young Women's Chorus of San Francisco, the program pairs Orff's iconic cantata with Brahms' *Ave Maria* and the California premiere of Gabriela Lena Frank's *Picaflor: A Future Myth*.

The 2026-2027 season concludes in May with "**Pictures at an Exhibition**," a finale built around orchestral imagination and sonic storytelling. Mussorgsky's celebrated work, orchestrated masterfully by Ravel, transforms visual art into sweeping musical scenes showcasing the orchestra's full expressive range. Violinist Elina Vähälä returns for Bruch's Violin Concerto No. 1, bringing lyrical warmth to one of the repertoire's most beloved works. The program also highlights two distinctive voices—Amy Beach's *Bal Masqué*, led by Assistant Conductor Alexander Kahn, and the West Coast premiere of *Campos Flotantes* by First Symphony Project alumnus Angelica Negrón—bringing the 99th season to a close with color and contrast.

All performances at Weill Hall, Green Music Center on the Sonoma State University campus in Rohnert Park, California. Saturdays and Mondays at 7:30 pm, and Sundays at 3:00 pm, with Discovery Rehearsals on Saturdays at 2:00 pm. Please note that there is no Discovery Rehearsal for the April 2027 concert to allow the singers to rest their voices.

"The 2026–2027 season marks 99 years of the Santa Rosa Symphony inspiring and changing lives while building community through music. Maestro Lecce-Chong has once again brilliantly curated a concert season of stunning programs that will showcase our virtuosic musicians while bringing to the Weill Hall stage some of the foremost guest artists on the concert circuit today. We warmly invite music lovers from across Sonoma County, the North Bay, and beyond to join us in experiencing the magic of the Santa Rosa Symphony in concert at Green Music Center."

- J. Andrew Bradford, President and CEO

2026-2027 CLASSICAL SERIES PROGRAMMING HIGHLIGHTS

Full List of Works in the 2026-2027 Classical Series

In order performed:

Matt Browne	Divertimento for Orchestra (World Premiere)
Franz Liszt	Concerto No. 1 in E-Flat major for Piano and Orchestra, S.124
Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky	Symphony No. 4 in F minor, Opus 36
Sergei Rachmaninoff	<i>Vocalise</i> in E minor for Soprano and Orchestra, Opus 34/14
Camille Saint-Saëns	Concerto No. 1 in A minor for Cello and Orchestra, Opus 33
Gustav Mahler	Symphony No. 4 in G major for Soprano and Orchestra
Jessie Montgomery	<i>Strum</i> for String Orchestra
Ludwig van Beethoven	Concerto No. 3 in C minor for Piano and Orchestra, Opus 37
Antonín Dvořák	Symphony No. 8 in G major, Opus 88
Shuying Li	<i>The Phoenix Ascends</i>
Jean Sibelius:	Concerto in D minor for Violin and Orchestra, Opus 47
Richard Strauss	<i>Don Juan</i> (tone poem) for Orchestra, Opus 20
Franz Liszt	<i>Hungarian Rhapsody</i> No. 2 in C-Sharp minor for Orchestra

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart	Overture to <i>Don Giovanni</i> , K. 527
Jonathan Leshnoff	Symphony No. 7 (World Premiere)
Johannes Brahms	Concerto No. 1 in D minor for Piano and Orchestra, Opus 15
Johannes Brahms	<i>Ave Maria</i> for Chorus and Orchestra, Opus 12
Gabriela Lena Frank	<i>Picaflor: A Future Myth</i> (California Premiere)
Carl Orff	<i>Carmina Burana</i> [<i>Songs of Beuren</i>] (scenic cantata) for Soprano, Tenor, Baritone, Orchestra and Chorus
Amy Beach	<i>Bal Masqué</i> for Orchestra, Opus 22
Max Bruch	Concerto No. 1 in G minor for Violin and Orchestra
Angelica Negrón	<i>Campos Flotantes</i> for Orchestra (West Coast Premiere)
Modest Mussorgsky, Arr. Maurice Ravel	<i>Pictures at an Exhibition</i> for Orchestra

Acclaimed guest artists

- Maxim Lando, piano
- Oliver Herbert, cello
- Elisa Sunshine, soprano
- David Danzmayr, guest conductor
- Janice Carissa, piano
- Mio Imai, violin
- Marc-André Hamelin, piano
- Caroline Corrales, soprano
- Ashley Faatoalia, tenor
- Gabriel Natal-Báez, baritone
- Elina Vähälä, violin

PLUS!

- Santa Rosa Symphony Chorus, Jenny Bent, director
- Young Women's Chorus of San Francisco, Matthew Otto, Artistic Director

2026-2027 CLASSICAL SERIES CONCERTS

99 Years of Music (October 2026 – May 2027)

The season opens Saturday, October 10, 2026, with the finale of the 7-concert Classical Series on May 10, 2027. Saturday and Monday at 7:30 pm, Sunday at 3:00 pm, Discovery Rehearsal–Saturday at 2:00 pm. Please note that there will not be a Discovery Rehearsal for the April 2027 concert. All performances are at Weill Hall, Green Music Center at the Sonoma State University campus in Rohnert Park, California.

Twist of Fate

October 10, 11 & 12, 2026

Francesco Lecce-Chong, conductor

Maxim Lando, piano

MATT BROWNE: Divertimento for Orchestra (World Premiere)

FRANZ LISZT: Concerto No. 1 in E-Flat major for Piano and Orchestra, S.124

PYOTR ILYICH TCHAIKOVSKY: Symphony No. 4 in F minor, Opus 36

The season's opener begins with a fanfare of fate, which marks a poignant full circle for Francesco Lecce-Chong. He returns to the first piece he led with the Symphony: Tchaikovsky's tempestuous Symphony No. 4. This high-octane program also features fiery virtuoso Maxim Lando in Liszt's thrilling Piano Concerto No. 1 and a world premiere by Matt Browne, a celebrated alumnus of the First Symphony Project.

Echoes of Innocence

November 14, 15 & 16, 2026

Francesco Lecce-Chong, conductor

Oliver Herbert, cello

Elisa Sunshine, soprano

SERGEI RACHMANINOFF: *Vocalise* in E minor for Soprano and Orchestra, Opus 34/14

CAMILLE SAINT-SAËNS: Concerto No. 1 in A minor for Cello and Orchestra, Opus 33

GUSTAV MAHLER: Symphony No. 4 in G major for Soprano and Orchestra

Rachmaninoff's *Vocalise* is a landmark piece of wordless longing and quiet intensity. Bay Area native Oliver Herbert performs Saint-Saëns' Cello Concerto No. 1, a work that unfolds in a single continuous movement, shifting seamlessly between urgency and repose. Closing the performance, Mahler's ethereal Symphony No. 4 features soprano Elisa Sunshine in its final movement, delivering a radiant and transcendent ending.

Beethoven & Dvořák

January 9, 10 & 11, 2027

David Danzmayr, guest conductor

Janice Carissa, piano

JESSIE MONTGOMERY: *Strum* for String Orchestra

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN: Concerto No. 3 in C minor for Piano and Orchestra, Opus 37

ANTONÍN DVOŘÁK: Symphony No. 8 in G major, Opus 88

Two masterworks of the symphonic repertoire take center stage under the baton of guest conductor David Danzmayr. Experience the dramatic fire and virtuosic depth of Beethoven's Piano Concerto No. 3 with the brilliant Janice Carissa, followed by Dvořák's Symphony No. 8, a jubilant celebration of nature brimming with openhearted, folk-inspired melodies. Jessie Montgomery's contemporary work, *Strum*, complements the program with lively, folksy dance rhythms.

Of Myths & Masters

February 6, 7 & 8, 2027

Francesco Lecce-Chong, conductor

Mio Imai, violin

SHUYING LI: *The Phoenix Ascends*

JEAN SIBELIUS: Concerto in D minor for Violin and Orchestra, Opus 47

RICHARD STRAUSS: *Don Juan* (tone poem) for Orchestra, Opus 20

FRANZ LISZT: *Hungarian Rhapsody* No. 2 in C-Sharp minor for Orchestra

Orchestral splendor takes center stage as the Symphony performs Strauss' fiery *Don Juan*, a tone poem of swashbuckling adventure and unbridled passion. Liszt's *Hungarian Rhapsody* No. 2 is a masterpiece of chaotic fun and cinematic flair that remains one of the most recognizable works in all of music. Young prodigy Mio Imai performs Sibelius's emotionally complex Violin Concerto with depth and vision. Shuying Li's *The Phoenix Ascends* provides a dazzling and contemporary exclamation point.

Mozart & Brahms

March 13, 14 & 15, 2027

Francesco Lecce-Chong, conductor

Marc-André Hamelin, piano

WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART: Overture to *Don Giovanni*, K. 527

JONATHAN LESHNOFF: Symphony No. 7 (World Premiere)

JOHANNES BRAHMS: Concerto No. 1 in D minor for Piano and Orchestra, Opus 15

Artistic mastery defines this program as the legendary Marc-André Hamelin performs Brahms' monumental Piano Concerto No. 1. A true titan of the repertoire, this concerto is celebrated for its searing intensity and profound emotional depth. The theatrical wit and dark mischief of Mozart's Overture to *Don Giovanni* opens the concert, followed by the world premiere of Jonathan Leshnoff's Symphony No. 7, a bold work of fresh contemporary energy.

Carmina Burana

April 10, 11 & 12, 2027

Francesco Lecce-Chong, conductor

Caroline Corrales, soprano

Ashley Faatoalia, tenor

Gabriel Natal-Báez, baritone

Santa Rosa Symphony Chorus, Jenny Bent, director

Young Women's Chorus of San Francisco, Matthew Otto, Artistic Director

JOHANNES BRAHMS: *Ave Maria* for Chorus and Orchestra, Opus 12

GABRIELA LENA FRANK: *Picaflor: A Future Myth* (California Premiere)

CARL ORFF: *Carmina Burana* [*Songs of Beuren*] (scenic cantata) for Soprano, Tenor, Baritone, Orchestra and Chorus

Symphonic grandeur and driving rhythms define Carl Orff's *Carmina Burana*. Featuring a massive chorus and vocal soloists, this beloved work is celebrated for its dramatic impact and sheer sonic scale. The program also features the California premiere of Gabriela Lena Frank's *Picaflor: A Future Myth*, an imaginative work whose vibrant contemporary textures provide a sophisticated contrast to Orff's iconic work.

Pictures at an Exhibition

May 8, 9 & 10, 2027

Francesco Lecce-Chong, conductor

Alexander Kahn, assistant conductor

Elina Vähälä, violin

AMY BEACH: *Bal Masqué* for Orchestra, Opus 22

MAX BRUCH: Concerto No. 1 in G minor for Violin and Orchestra

ANGELICA NEGRÓN: *Campos Flotantes* for Orchestra (West Coast Premiere)

MODEST MUSSORGSKY, arr. Maurice Ravel: *Pictures at an Exhibition* for Orchestra

Orchestral storytelling reaches its pinnacle with Mussorgsky's *Pictures at an Exhibition*, a vivid tour de force of towering scale and instrumental color. Returning violinist Elina Vähälä brings her profound artistry to Bruch's beloved Violin Concerto No. 1, while Amy Beach's elegant *Bal Masqué* adds a touch of ballroom charm. Completing the program is the West Coast premiere of *Campos Flotantes* by audience favorite and First Symphony Project composer, Angelica Negrón.

2026-2027 SEASON SPECIAL EVENTS

Celebration 2026! Viennese Nights: An Evening of Musical Elegance

Honoring Distinguished Patrons Sara and Edward Kozeł October 9, 2026, at 6:00 pm at the Green Music Center

The Symphony's annual fundraising event, Celebration 2026! will be held on Friday, October 9, 2026, at 6:00 pm at Green Music Center. Celebration 2026! centers around meaningful philanthropy, celebrating the arts, and empowering young musicians through our transformative education programs. The evening includes an elegant reception and a private recital by acclaimed pianist Maxim Lando. A gourmet dinner in the Person Lobby features a paddle raise for the Symphony's music education programs. Tickets are \$350/person and can be purchased by calling Patron Services at (707) 546-8742. Tickets available starting March 9, 2026.

Winterlude... Handel's Messiah

Saturday, December 12, 2026, at 7:30 pm | Sunday, December 13, 2026, at 3:00 pm

Weill Hall, Green Music Center

Francesco Lecce-Chong, conductor & harpsichord | **Santa Rosa Symphony Chorus**, Jenny Bent, director

GEORGE FRIDERIC HANDEL: *Messiah* [oratorio] for Solo Voices, Orchestra and Chorus HWV 56

Introducing Winterlude..., a new annual winter tradition. For its inaugural year, we present Handel's *Messiah*—a cherished musical rite of the season. Uplifting and joyful, this choral masterpiece concludes with the 'Hallelujah' chorus, offering inspiring meditation on hope and the promise of a better world. Tickets available starting August 3, 2026.

Road to 100 | The Complete Beethoven Symphonies, Year 4 (Plus! The Beethoven BBQ)

Sunday, June 6, 2027, at 3:00 pm | Weill Hall, Green Music Center

Francesco Lecce-Chong, conductor

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN: Symphony No. 8 in F major, Opus 93

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN: Symphony No. 7 in A major, Opus 92

The final year of Road to 100: The Complete Beethoven Symphonies closes with two of his most exuberant, rhythmically charged works. Symphony No. 8 sparkles with playful wit and inventive humor, while Symphony No. 7

surges with unstoppable momentum and infectious vitality. Together, they build toward one of the most electrifying finales in the symphonic repertoire. Tickets available starting August 3, 2026.

Beethoven BBQ – On Weill Lawn

To top off the Road to 100 concert experience, a lively no-host Beethoven BBQ will be on the lawn adjacent to the hall immediately following the performance. Patrons can mingle with Maestro Lecce-Chong, orchestra musicians, and fellow concertgoers. The BBQ is open to all Road to 100 ticket holders and will feature an eclectic assortment of food trucks. *Food and beverages are not included in the ticket price. The Beethoven BBQ is not open to the public.*

SUBSCRIPTIONS FOR THE 2026-2027 CLASSICAL SERIES

On sale **March 9, 2026** (*The subscription renewal deadline to retain the same seats is April 3, 2026*)

7-Concert Classical Series

The seven-concert package secures the same seat for all the Symphony's Classical Series concerts. Packages are **\$189-\$686**. (Some seating areas require a minimum, per-seat donation.) *Packages available for purchase starting March 9, 2026.*

4-Concert Mini-Series

Select four of the seven Classical Series concerts to create a customized Mini-Series. 4-Concert packages are **\$120-\$420**. 5-Concert packages are also available. (Some seating areas require a minimum, per-seat donation.) *Packages available for purchase starting March 9, 2026.*

Come As You Can Series

Eight ticket vouchers, which may be redeemed in any combination of performance days and seats. Offers the greatest flexibility. Seating is subject to availability at the time of redemption. The package is **\$456** and is *available for purchase starting May 26, 2026.*

Discovery Rehearsal Series

These general-seating, working rehearsals are ideal as a shared family experience, a sneak preview of the performances, or as an economical alternative for price-conscious patrons. Saturday at 2 pm of the concert weekend. Some restrictions apply. The package is **\$119** (adults) and **\$70** (youth 12 and under) and is *available for purchase starting May 26, 2026.*

Please note that there will not be a Discovery Rehearsal for the April 2027 concert weekend. Included in the package price is one ticket for a Saturday or Monday April performance at no extra cost.

Single tickets on sale August 3, 2026.

TICKET OFFERS

Complementary Youth Tickets To encourage a love for classical music and transform Symphony attendance into a family outing, youths 7-17 years of age may attend the Symphony for free with a paid adult. These one-for-one tickets are not available for purchase online and only apply to Classical Series concerts. To request tickets, please call Patron Services at (707) 546-8742. Complementary youth tickets are also available with the purchase of subscription packages.

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

Group Sale tickets are available by calling Patron Services at (707) 546-8742.

CLASSICAL SERIES EXPERIENCE ENHANCEMENTS

PRE-CONCERT TALK (*one hour prior to Classical Series performances*)

Music Director Francesco Lecce-Chong discusses the music and composers, often with the guest artists, one hour prior to the Classical Concert Series performances in Weill Hall. These informative, 30-minute pre-concert talks, which are included in the price of the ticket, are general seating. The Pre-Concert Talks are held before Saturday and Monday night performances at 6:30 PM and prior to Sunday afternoon performances at 2:00 pm.

PROGRAM NOTES

Program Notes, posted on each of the seven Classical Series concert event pages, offer insight and fascinating details about the concert program. See srsymphony.org. Program notes are also included in the concert program

book.

SPOTIFY PLAYLISTS

Classical Series concert event pages include a Spotify playlist of the works on that concert program. Full-season Spotify playlists can also be found on the Symphony's website under Plan Your Visit.

LOGISTICS - THE GREEN MUSIC CENTER

All Classical Series performances are at Weill Hall at the Donald and Maureen Green Music Center on the campus of Sonoma State University in Rohnert Park, with access from the Rohnert Park Expressway entrance near Petaluma Hill Road. The campus is just 42 miles north of San Francisco's Golden Gate Bridge.

PARKING

Entering the Sonoma State University campus from Rohnert Park Expressway, there are parking lots immediately to the right. Parking in lots L, M, N and O is included in the price of a ticket for Santa Rosa Symphony Classical, Discovery Rehearsal and Family Series concerts. *(Parking fees may be charged for additional or special events.)*

PATRON SERVICES OFFICE LOCATION AND HOURS

Location: 50 Santa Rosa Avenue (1st floor, off elevator lobby)

Hours: Mon, Tues, Thurs, and Fri, 9:00 am - 5:00 pm; Wed, 10:30 am - 5:00 pm; closed Sat and Sun.

Mailing Address: Santa Rosa Symphony, 50 Santa Rosa Ave, Suite 410, Santa Rosa, CA 95404

Phone: (707) 546-8742, **Online:** srsymphony.org, **Email:** tickets@srsymphony.org

CONDUCTOR AND GUEST ARTIST BIOGRAPHIES

Francesco Lecce-Chong, Music Director and Conductor

Francesco Lecce-Chong has established himself as a respected leader in the orchestral world through acclaimed performances, innovative projects, and passionate arts advocacy.

Appointed Music Director of Santa Rosa Symphony (SRS) and Eugene Symphony before age 30, he launched groundbreaking projects, commissioned over a dozen major works, and forged innovative community partnerships. Now in his seventh season, he has grown the SRS's reputation as one of the most prominent US regional orchestras, with performances at the world-class Green Music Center. This season, he also serves as Artistic Partner with the Eugene Symphony, further advancing his artistic vision.

Lecce-Chong regularly appears with major US orchestras, from the San Francisco Symphony to the New York Philharmonic, collaborating with top soloists such as Renée Fleming and Itzhak Perlman. Additional debuts include Seattle Symphony, Baltimore Symphony, Utah Symphony, North Carolina Symphony, Louisville Orchestra, Kansas City Symphony, and Detroit Symphony. In 2023, Lecce-Chong debuted in Europe at the prestigious George Enescu Festival with the Romanian National Radio Orchestra, which led to a regular relationship with the orchestra.

Throughout his career, Lecce-Chong has fostered an unparalleled dedication to the orchestral art form's future. One of his first large-scale endeavors was the "First Symphony Project," which consisted of major commissions from next-generation composers across four seasons, including multiple residencies. He has integrated a dozen new orchestral works into the repertoire from composers like Grammy winner Michael Daugherty, Conrad Tao, Clarice Assad, and Gabriella Smith. To keep SRS connected to its community during the pandemic, he spearheaded SRS @ Home, which brought live internet performances to thousands of households. Several performances were broadcast on local PBS TV, reaching two million viewers. This series included works by living composers and a partnership with Pulitzer Prize winner Ellen Taaffe Zwilich, culminating in a CD release in 2022.

Trained 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 has received several distinctions, including the Solti Foundation Award. He has been mentored by renowned conductors, including Bernard Haitink, David Zinman, Edo de Waart, Manfred Honeck, Donald Runnicles, and Michael Tilson Thomas.

Maxim Lando, piano

"One of the most powerful pianists I have ever experienced."

– *Bechstein World*

American pianist Maxim Lando was lauded by Anthony Tommasini in the *New York Times* for his “brilliance and infectious exuberance.” He is hailed as “one of the most brilliant and imaginative young pianists to emerge in recent years” (*Gower Festival*), “a total musical being” (*National Review*), “a Demigod at the keys” (*Frankfurter Neue Presse*), and “a dazzling fire-eater” (*ARTS San Francisco*).

Lando first made international headlines performing together with Lang Lang, Chick Corea, and The Philadelphia Orchestra led by Yannick Nézet-Séguin at Carnegie Hall’s 2017 Opening Night Gala. Since then, he has performed with major orchestras around the world, including the Cleveland Orchestra, Pittsburgh Symphony, Toronto Symphony, Israel Philharmonic, Orpheus Chamber Orchestra, Mariinsky Theater Orchestra, Vancouver Symphony, Zurich Chamber Orchestra, St. Petersburg Symphony, and over 60 other orchestras across the United States and Europe.

Recent and upcoming highlights of 2025-2026 include a 9-city-USA tour with the Czech National Symphony Orchestra; appearances with the Arizona Musicfest Festival Orchestra, Frankfurt Opera Museum Orchestra, Orquesta Clásica Santa Cecilia, Belgrade Philharmonic, and the Baltimore, Buffalo, Columbus, Charleston, Anchorage, and Princeton Symphony Orchestras; recitals featuring Lowell Liebermann’s brilliant new masterpiece *Frankenstein*; and a recording with the ORF Radio Symphony Orchestra Vienna.

Awarded the 2025 Khaledi Prize for Excellence and Innovation in Classical Music from Festival Napa Valley, Lando is also the winner of the 2022 New York Franz Liszt International Competition, 2022 Vendome Grand Prize, and top prizes at both the 2024 Cleveland International Piano Competition and the 13th International German Piano Award. Lando is the recipient of a Gilmore Young Artist Award and won the Young Concert Artists Susan Wadsworth International Auditions at age 16. His following recital debuts at Carnegie’s Zankel Hall and Kennedy Center Terrace Theater were hailed by the *New York Times* as concerts “You Won’t Want To Miss!” Dedicated to making classical music accessible to his own generation, Lando has been featured on CNN, NPR, BBC, WQXR, Bavarian Radio, Euroradio’s Top Young Performers, Israel’s “Intermezzo with Arik”, and Russia’s TV Kultura.

Lando’s concerts include venues such as Carnegie Hall, Alice Tully Hall, Beijing National Center for Performing Arts, Alte Oper Frankfurt, Louis Vuitton Foundation and Salle Cortot in Paris, Symphony Hall in Shenzhen, Kulturpalast Dresden, Tchaikovsky Hall in Moscow, and Chicago’s Millennium Park. A frequent Guest Artist on the music festival scene, recent appearances have included The Gilmore, Aspen, Caramoor, Moritzburg, Dresden Music Festival, Kissinger Sommer, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern Festival, Stars and Rising Stars Munich, Musical Olympus International Festival in Russia, Vilnius Piano Festival, Gower Festival in Wales, and Lednice-Valtice Music Festival in Czech Republic. He was invited by Lang Lang to perform for the historic opening of Steinway and Sons in Beijing.

Lando partners frequently with violinist Daniel Hope and is passionate about chamber music and unusual repertoire. He has collaborated with Lynn Harrell, Julian Rachlin, and the Danish String Quartet, among others, and plays regularly with Jupiter Symphony Chamber Players in New York City. Together with his German friend and violinist Tassilo Probst, his album *Into Madness*, recorded by Bavarian Radio on Berlin Classics, was awarded a 2023 International Classical Music Award (ICMA) as best chamber music recording of the year. It also received a double nomination for Opus Klassik, and the duo was honored at the National Forum of Music in Wrocław, Poland.

Lando is a Laureate of Artemisia Foundation since 2019, an alumnus of the Lang Lang International Music Foundation, and studies with long-time mentors Hung-Kuan Chen and Tema Blackstone at The Juilliard School.

Oliver Herbert, cello

Oliver Herbert is a concert cellist with a rapidly growing international presence and a 2021 Avery Fisher Career Grant recipient. He has appeared as a soloist with the San Francisco Symphony, Chicago Symphony Orchestra, and others, performing under conductors such as Michael Tilson Thomas, Giancarlo Guerrero, and Juanjo Mena.

Gaining attention for the clarity and imagination of his musical thinking, Herbert curates recital and chamber programs with a distinct artistic focus, often drawing connections across eras, styles, and disciplines. This has led to opportunities to present his curatorial work with institutions such as Deutschlandfunk.

He has appeared as soloist with ensembles such as the San Francisco Symphony and Chicago Symphony Orchestra and performs regularly at leading festivals and venues including Marlboro, Carnegie Hall, the Rheingau Festival, Verbier Festival, the Utrecht Festival, and the Philadelphia Chamber Music Society. He has performed with musicians such as Mitsuko Uchida and Tabea Zimmermann.

With a love for programming, Herbert approaches his projects with a wide-ranging curiosity—exploring lesser-known repertoire, music of today, and connections that reveal new perspectives on familiar works. His interests have led to

projects around the world, including chamber music curations for Deutschlandfunk and the TICA Festival in Hong Kong, as well as premieres of new works by composers such as Andrew Moses and Žibuoklė Martinaitytė.

Herbert studied at the Curtis Institute of Music and the Colburn School, where he worked with Carter Brey, Pamela Frank, Clive Greensmith, and Peter Wiley, and at the Kronberg Academy in the Professional Studies Program with Frans Helmerson. He plays on a Guadagnini cello that belonged to Antonio Janigro, generously on loan from the Janigro family. In 2025, Herbert was accepted into the Orpheum Foundation's development program for young soloists.

Elisa Sunshine, soprano

Celebrated for her "blend of vocal sparkle and theatrical charisma" by the *San Francisco Chronicle*, American soprano Elisa Sunshine is a recent graduate of San Francisco Opera's Adler Fellowship. In the 2025-2026 season, she returned to San Francisco Opera in a double appearance as the Page and Gilda cover in *Rigoletto* and a Flower Maiden and Squire in *Parsifal*, both conducted by Music Director Eun Sun Kim, as well as her Seattle Opera, Portland Opera, and San Diego Opera debuts as Lucy in *Fellow Travelers*. She also debuted with The Santa Fe Symphony for Handel's *Messiah* and looks excitedly ahead to future collaborations with The Santa Fe Opera, the Sag Harbor Song Festival, and the Santa Rosa Symphony.

In the 2024-2025 season, Sunshine returned to the Lyric Opera of Chicago to cover Susanna in *Le nozze di Figaro* and Gilda in *Rigoletto* and made debuts with The Atlanta Opera as Iris in *Semele* and Boston Symphony Orchestra as Juliette in *Die tote Stadt*, garnering critical acclaim for Iris as "the most delightful singer of the evening" for her "superb technique and Mozartean timbre. She will excel in leading roles" (*OperaWire*). Sunshine joined The Santa Fe Opera as an Apprentice Artist in 2024, marking her company debut as Annina in a new production of *La Traviata* and covering Sheila in the world premiere of *The Righteous*.

In previous seasons, Sunshine covered Marie in Laurent Pelly's sparkling production of *La fille du regiment* with Lyric Opera of Chicago and won third prize in The Dallas Opera's 2024 National Vocal Competition. San Francisco Opera's centennial season celebration saw Sunshine return as part of Richard Strauss's masterpiece *Die Frau ohne Schatten*, conducted by Sir Donald Runnicles. In concert, Sunshine has made debuts with the Philharmonia Baroque Orchestra for Handel's *Messiah*, led by Music Director Richard Egarr, and with the San Francisco Symphony under the baton of Esa-Pekka Salonen for Mendelssohn's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

David Danzmayr, guest conductor

David Danzmayr is in his fifth season as Music Director of the Oregon Symphony. His 2024-2025 season culminated in a performance of Mahler's Symphony No. 3 described by Oregon ArtsWatch as 'an emotionally rewarding experience...Led by Danzmayr, the orchestra created the sensation of timelessness, [...] taking concertgoers to a heavenly dimension.'

Alongside his position in Oregon, Danzmayr also serves as Music Director of the innovative ProMusica Chamber Orchestra, comprised of musicians from all over the USA who are building exciting projects towards their upcoming 50th anniversary season. He also works regularly with Zagreb Philharmonic Orchestra with whom he previously served as Chief Conductor—highlights of his tenure included several European tours with concerts in Vienna Musikverein as well as Salzburg Festival Hall, where together they performed the prestigious New Year's concert.

As a guest conductor, Danzmayr has worked extensively across North America, and recent and forthcoming engagements include Seattle, St Louis, Atlanta, Vancouver and Dallas symphonies, as well as the orchestras of Detroit, Baltimore, Houston, and San Diego.

In Europe, relationships include City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, Bamberger Symphoniker, Sinfonieorchester Basel, Mozarteum Orchester, Iceland Symphony Orchestra, and he has a regular relationship with Deutsche Kammerphilharmonie Bremen, with whom he embarks on a summer festivals tour in 2026.

Working with soloists at the highest level, Danzmayr has enjoyed collaborations with Yefim Bronfman, Emanuel Ax, Sir Stephen Hough, Renee Fleming, and Yo-Yo Ma. The 2025-2026 season includes regular partners Joshua Bell, Joyce Yang, Colin Currie, and Gil Shaham. In the same season, he will make the world premiere of a new Jazz piano concerto by David Schiff, commissioned by Oregon Symphony with pianist Darrell Grant.

Danzmayr received his musical training at the University Mozarteum in Salzburg where, after initially studying piano, he went on to study conducting in the class of Dennis Russell Davies and his first post was in Scotland, as Assistant Conductor to the Royal Scottish National Orchestra.

At the beginning of his career, he was awarded prizes at some of the world's most prestigious conducting competitions, including the International Gustav Mahler Conducting Competition and the International Malko Conducting Competition. In recognition of his success, he has been awarded the Bernhard Paumgartner Medal by the Internationale Stiftung Mozarteum.

Janice Carissa, piano

A Gilmore Young Artist and winner of Salon de Virtuosi, Janice Carissa has “the multicolored highlights of a mature pianist” (*Philadelphia Inquirer*) and “strong, sure hands” (*Voice of America*) that “convey a vivid story rather than a mere showpiece” (*Chicago Classical Review*). Her artistry has been showcased at an array of renowned stages, including the Sydney Opera House, Carnegie Hall, the United Nations, the Kennedy Center, Jay Pritzker Pavilion in Millennium Park, and the Saratoga Performing Arts Center.

Following her Philadelphia Orchestra debut at age sixteen, Carissa has since performed with the Orpheus Chamber Orchestra and the Pittsburgh, San Diego, Nashville, Kansas City, Delaware, Amarillo, Des Moines, Knoxville and Jakarta symphonies, among others. Highlights of the 2025-2026 season include concerto appearances with the Minnesota Orchestra, Houston Symphony, ProMusica Chamber Orchestra of Columbus, Jackson (MI) Symphony, and Florida Orchestra, as well as a solo recital at Pepperdine University and a duo with cellist Sterling Elliott for Capital Region Classical.

Carissa's passion for chamber music has led her to performances with Bravo! Vail where she was a piano fellow, the Brooklyn Chamber Music Society, and Jupiter Chamber Concert Series; collaborations with Vadim Gluzman, Miriam Fried, Paul Neubauer, Lucy Shelton, Marcy Rosen, David Shifrin, Jennifer Cano, Peter Wiley, among other distinguished musicians; and appearances at Marlboro, North Shore, Ravinia, Caramoor, and Kneisel Hall festivals.

Born on July 26, 1998, in Indonesia, Carissa left Indonesia in 2013 to enter the Curtis Institute of Music with a full scholarship from Gerry and Marguerite Lenfest, where she was a pupil of Gary Graffman. She went on to earn a Master of Music at The Juilliard School where she studied with Robert McDonald. When away from the piano, Carissa is an avid foodie and loves going on strolls with her camera.

Mio Imai, violin

Mio Imai studies violin with Kimberly Fisher, the Principal Second Violin of The Philadelphia Orchestra. She is also coached by Grammy-nominated pianist, Mark Livshits. Imai made her first appearance as a soloist at age of 9. She has performed as a soloist with multiple orchestras, including Nashville Symphony Orchestra (US, 2025), Vancouver Symphony Orchestra (US, 2025), Allentown Symphony Orchestra (US, 2025), Kalamazoo Symphony Orchestra (US, 2024), FVG Orchestra (Italy, 2023), and Accademia d'Archi Arrigoni Orchestra (Italy, 2023-2024). She won the first prize in the 2024 Arthur Grumiaux International Violin Competition (Belgium), 2024 Stulberg International String Competition (US), 2024 MTNA National Competition (US), and 2023 Piccolo Violino Magico International Competition (Italy). Imai is also a former major prize winner at Leonid Kogan International Competition (Belgium), Ronald Sachs International Music Competition (US), Johansen International Competition (US), Nashville Symphony Curb Concerto Competition (US), and Chicago Violin International Competition (US). She played in Masterclasses for renowned violinists and string quartets, including James Ehnes, Ida Kavafian, Karen Aroutiounian, Takacs Quartet, Paul Kantor, Sibbi Bernhardsson, Robert Chen.

Imai plays a Vincenzo Sannino violin and Francois Nicolas Voirin bow on loan from the Takeuchi Collection through the Nippon Violin Society program.

Marc-André Hamelin, piano

Pianist Marc-André Hamelin, a “performer of near-superhuman technical prowess” (*The New York Times*), is acclaimed worldwide for his unrivaled consummate musicianship. He continues to amass praise for his brilliant pianism in the great works of the repertoire, and for his intrepid exploration of the rarities of the 19th, 20th, and 21st centuries. He regularly performs around the globe with the leading orchestras and conductors of our time, and gives recitals at major concert venues and festivals worldwide.

Hamelin's 2025-2026 season spans North America, Europe, Asia, and Australia, with a dynamic mix of orchestral, recital, and chamber music engagements. He opens the season with a tour of Australia and Asia, featuring concerto and recital appearances with the Sydney Symphony under Sir Donald Runnicles, concerto engagements with the Wuxi, Ningbo, and Shenzhen symphonies, and solo recitals in Adelaide, Xiamen, and Shenzhen.

In North America, Hamelin appears with the Philadelphia Orchestra and Yannick Nézet-Séguin, the San Diego Symphony with Thomas Guggeis, the Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra with Jaime Martin, and with the Orpheus

Chamber Orchestra, on tour. Recital highlights include Chicago Symphony Presents, San Francisco Symphony, Chamber Music Pittsburgh, The Gilmore Piano Festival, Keyboard Concerts in Fresno, and Soka Performing Arts Center.

European appearances include Rhapsody in Blue with the Bayerisches Staatsorchester and Vladimir Jurowski, the Marx Piano Concerto with the Tonkünstler-Orchester Niederösterreich and Fabien Gabel, and performances with the Bremer Philharmoniker, Wigmore Hall, the Schubertiade, MDR Wartburg, and the Chipping Campden Festival. Additional recitals take place in Italy, the Netherlands, and Berlin.

Chamber music highlights include the Chausson Concert with Augustin Hadelich and members of the Boston Symphony Orchestra, and the Franck Piano Quintet with the Juilliard String Quartet for the Philadelphia Chamber Music Society. With Canadian pianist Charles Richard-Hamelin, Hamelin tours to Koerner Hall in Toronto, Salle Bourgie in Montréal, Club musical de Québec, and the Isabel Bader Centre in Kingston.

An exclusive recording artist for Hyperion Records, Hamelin has released 92 notable recordings of a broad range of solo, orchestral, and chamber repertoire. In October 2025, Hyperion releases *Found Objects / Sound Objects*, a recording of contemporary works. Recent acclaimed recordings include Beethoven's Hammerklavier Sonata, Op. 106, and Sonata in C major, Op. 2 No. 3, as well as the Dvořák and Florence Price quintets with the Takács Quartet.

Also a noted composer, Hamelin has written more than 30 works. Many, including his *Études* and Toccata on "*L'homme armé*"—commissioned by the Van Cliburn International Piano Competition—are published by Edition Peters. He performed the Toccata in 2023 on NPR's *Tiny Desk* alongside works by C.P.E. Bach and William Bolcom. His most recent composition, *Mazurka*, was commissioned by the Library of Congress to celebrate 100 years of concerts and premiered in April 2024. Featuring nine original pieces, Hamelin's 2024 album *New Piano Works* is a survey of some of his own recent works, exhibiting his formidable skill as a composer-pianist whose music imaginatively and virtuosically taps into his musical forebears. "His previous offerings of his own music were rich, but his latest self-portrait album is on another level," wrote *The New York Times*. It was Hamelin's first album of all original compositions since *Études* (2010).

Hamelin is the recipient of a Lifetime Achievement Award from the German Record Critics' Association, and over 20 of its quarterly awards. Other honors include eight Juno Awards, 11 Grammy nominations, the 2018 Jean Gimbel Lane Prize from Northwestern University, and the Paul de Hueck and Norman Walford Career Achievement Award from the Ontario Arts Foundation. Hamelin is an Officer of the Order of Canada, a Chevalier de l'Ordre national du Québec, and a member of the Royal Society of Canada. Born in Montreal, Hamelin lives in the Boston area with his wife, Cathy Fuller, a producer and host at Classical WCRB.

Caroline Corrales, soprano

Praised for her "robust and luxuriant tone," soprano Caroline Corrales returns to the San Francisco Opera as a second-year Adler Fellow.

This season at San Francisco Opera features exciting role debuts for the soprano. She performs as Countess Ceprano in *Rigoletto*; Kitty Hart in Jake Heggie's *Dead Man Walking*, and the sixth Flower Maiden in *Parsifal*. Recent stage credits include performances of Ma Zegner in Missy Mazzoli's *Proving Up* and Anne Trulove in *The Rake's Progress*.

During the 2024-2025 season, she bowed as Moira in *The Handmaid's Tale* and covered Erste Dame in *Die Zauberflöte*. Elsewhere, she performed Mimì in Opera Naples' production of *La bohème*, conducted by Ramón Tebar. Also with San Francisco Opera, Corrales covered the role of Mimì on the mainstage, and performed it in *Bohème Out of the Box*, touring the Bay Area's surrounding communities.

As a competitor, Corrales received the 2023 Career Grant and first place award in the Pasadena Vocal Competition. She has won the New York City and Boston Districts of the Metropolitan Opera Laffont Competition and has also won awards with the Orpheus Vocal Competition, Saengerbund Vocal Competition, St. Botolph Club Foundation, National Opera Association Vocal Competition, Camerata Bardi International Vocal Competition, and Concurso Internacional de Canto Tenor Viñas.

On the concert stage, Corrales has been featured with The Metropolitan Chorale in Orff's *Carmina Burana* and Verdi's *Inno delle Nazioni*. With The Metropolitan Chorale, she covered the soprano solos in Verdi's *Requiem*. Also in her concert repertoire are the soprano solos in the Mozart *Requiem*. Corrales is a frequent collaborator with The Boston Pops Symphony in their *Holiday Pops! Concerts Series*.

Corrales has trained at the nation's most prestigious programs. Prior to her residency as an Adler Fellow with San Francisco Opera, she trained as a Young Artist with the Merola Opera Program, an Apprentice Singer with Santa Fe Opera, and a Young Artist with the Boston University Opera Institute.

Corrales holds a Master of Music degree in Vocal Performance from Boston University and a Bachelor of Music degree in Vocal Performance from Webster University. She currently resides in San Francisco, California.

Ashley Faatoalia, tenor

Ashley Faatoalia is a versatile and compelling tenor praised for his expressive range, beauty of tone, and commanding stage presence. Born and raised in Los Angeles, he studied vocal performance at Chapman University with Dr. Peter Atherton and has since performed on major stages across the U.S. and internationally. *The LA Times* calls him "Outstanding," *Opera News* describes his singing as "hauntingly beautiful" with "a voice of winning purity and variety of expression," and *The San Francisco Chronicle* praises his "sweet-toned" voice.

Highly sought after for new works and contemporary repertoire, Faatoalia has collaborated with leading composers including Anthony Davis, Christopher Cerrone, Jessie Montgomery, Rand Steiger, Lewis Pesacov, and Anne LeBaron. Recent and notable performances include: Remus in the world premiere of the new *Treemonisha with Volcano*; Beethoven's Symphony No. 9 with the Oakland Symphony; roles with Los Angeles Opera including Simón (*Las Tres Mujeres de Jerusalén*), Emperor Altoum (*Turandot*), and Amadou in the West Coast premiere of *Omar*; Senator Frank Falmouth in the world premiere of *The Grand Hotel Tartarus* by Richard Danielpour; and Korey Wise in the Pulitzer Prize-winning *The Central Park Five* with Long Beach Opera.

Additional highlights include The Crab Man in *Porgy & Bess* with San Francisco Opera (for which he received critical acclaim), Marco Polo in the Emmy Award-winning *Invisible Cities* with The Industry, and appearances with Seattle Opera, Los Angeles Philharmonic, and San Francisco Lyric Opera. He has performed "*The Star-Spangled Banner*" for sold-out audiences at Dodger Stadium and Crypto.com Arena, serves as a teaching artist with LA Opera Connects, and appears on multiple professional recordings, including *Dicks: The Musical* (A24), *Invisible Cities* (The Industry), *The Edge of Forever* (The Industry), *Porgy & Bess* (SF Opera), and the forthcoming studio cast recording of *The Central Park Five* (Long Beach Opera). For more info, visit www.ashleyfaatoalia.com and follow on IG and Bluesky @ashthetenor.

Gabriel Natal-Báez, baritone

Gabriel Natal-Báez, Puerto Rican baritone, is establishing himself as one of the most exciting emerging voices in opera today. Known for his "strong, richly warm voice" (Civic Center Blog) and "loud and rich" tone (The Opera Tattler), he brings authenticity and emotional depth to every performance.

In 2026, Natal-Báez joins the San Francisco Opera as an Adler Fellow. A 2025 participant in the prestigious Merola Opera Program, he worked closely with leading conductors, directors, and coaches. As part of his Merola experience, he and pianist Tzu Kuang Tan were selected to present the Schwabacher Debut Recital, *Paths of the Heart*, next spring.

In the 2025–2026 season, Natal-Báez will also make his debut as the baritone soloist with the Puerto Rico Symphony Orchestra in Parrandón Sinfónico. Earlier in the season, he won the Puerto Rico District of the Laffont Metropolitan Opera Competition, where he was also awarded the CulturArte Prize, adding to his accolades that include placing third in the Gulf Coast Region in 2024 and being a semi-finalist in Houston Grand Opera's Concert of Arias.

On the operatic stage, Natal-Báez has performed roles such as Beaumarchais in Corigliano's *The Ghosts of Versailles*, Aeneas in Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas*, Marullo in Verdi's *Rigoletto*, Mr. Gobineau in Menotti's *The Medium*, Escamillo (cover) in Bizet's *Carmen*, and Le Podestat in Bizet's *Le Docteur Miracle*. Additional roles include Captain Petrovich in Tchaikovsky's *Eugene Onegin*, Count Almaviva in scenes from *Le nozze di Figaro*, and Tarquinius (cover) in Britten's *The Rape of Lucretia*. In May 2024, he premiered the role of the Explorer in Theo Chandler's *Breath in Light*.

A passionate recitalist and concert artist, Natal-Báez has performed as the baritone soloist in Orff's *Carmina Burana*, Beethoven's *Choral Fantasy*, and Schubert's *Die schöne Müllerin*. His recital work includes Ravel's *Don Quichotte à Dulcinée*, Vaughan Williams's *Songs of Travel and Five Mystical Songs*, *Neapolitan songs*, *Noche Española* with Ana María Martínez, and *Zarzuela* with Ópera de Puerto Rico.

Natal-Báez holds a Bachelor's degree in Humanities with a concentration in Painting and a Master of Music degree from Rice University.

Elina Vähälä, violin

Born in the US and raised in Finland, Elina Vähälä made her orchestral debut with the Lahti Symphony Orchestra at the age of twelve and was later chosen by Osmo Vänskä as the orchestra's 'Young Master Soloist'. Since then, her versatility and charismatic performances have won praise from audiences and musicians alike: 'a fluent, stylish and gifted musician whose brilliant technique is matched by an abundant spirit, sensitivity and imagination' (*Chicago Tribune*).

Vähälä began her 2025-2026 season with the Tapiola Sinfonietta performing Bruch's Violin Concerto no. 1 under Andrew Manze. She went on to debut with the MAV Symphony Orchestra in Budapest to commemorate the Finnish Independence Day with Kuusisto's Violin Concerto, which was written for her, followed by a concert with the Vaasa City Orchestra. January 2026 saw both a concert with Turku Philharmonic Orchestra, and also the first of this season's two concerts with the Polish National Radio Symphony Orchestra. She will be performing with them again in March, where she performs Beethoven's Triple Concerto at the Gala concert of the Beethoven Festival in Warsaw alongside Nicolas Alstaedt and Alexander Lonquich.

She later goes to Toronto Symphony Orchestra alongside Hannu Lintu to perform the world premiere of a violin concerto by Liam Ritz. Returning to Lahti Symphony Orchestra, she will perform Bruch's Violin Concerto no. 1, and later in the season she performs Schumann's Violin Concerto with the Jyväskylä Sinfonia.

A highlight of the season is a performance at the Concertgebouw with the Radio Philharmonisch Orkest, where she will be playing Sibelius' Violin Concerto. In the same concert, conducted by Oscar Jockel, she will be performing a new piece by Jockel himself for violin, electronics, choir and orchestra.

Last season, Vähälä gave world premieres of Cecilia Damström's *Earth Songs* with the chamber ensemble Tampere Raw, and also of Olli Mustonen's Violin Concerto No. 2 '*Larin Paraske*' with the Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra under Nicholas Collon. She also gave the Finnish premiere of Samy Moussa's *Adrano* with the Helsinki Philharmonic Orchestra under Dalia Stasevska. Further highlights included a re-invitation to Wrocław Philharmonic to perform Szymanowski's Violin Concerto No. 1, and a performance of Britten's Violin Concerto with the Hamburg Symphoniker under Sylvain Cambreling.

Highlights of previous seasons include performances with BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra, BBC Symphony Orchestra, Hamburg Symphony, Beethoven Orchester Bonn, Dortmund Philharmoniker, Orchestre Philharmonique de Strasbourg, the RTVE, Nordic Chamber Orchestra, Norrköping Symphony, Prague Radio Symphony Orchestra, Wrocław Philharmonic, Janacek Philharmonic, Belgrade Philharmonic, Seoul Philharmonic, the Adelaide Festival, Columbus Symphony Ohio, Princeton Symphony, Houston Symphony, Vancouver Symphony, Symphony Nova Scotia, and Yomiuri Nippon Symphony Orchestra. Vähälä is a regular guest of all major Finnish orchestras.

Vähälä collaborates with high-profile conductors, including Leonard Slatkin, Carlos Kalmar, Jukka-Pekka Saraste, Okko Kamu, Jakub Hrůša, Thierry Fischer, Sakari Oramo, Santtu-Matias Rouvali, Leif Segerstam, Josep Caballé-Domenech, and Alexander Liebreich.

An advocate for new music, Vähälä has given world premieres of Aulis Sallinen's Chamber Concerto, Curtis Curtis-Smith's Double Concerto, and Kalevi Aho's Concerto No. 2, all of which were written for her, as well as Jan Sandström's Concerto. In addition, she gave the first Nordic performance of Corigliano's Violin Concerto 'The Red Violin' and is one of the composer's soloists of choice for this work. Befitting her Finnish roots, she has premiered many chamber works and violin concertos by Finnish composers and is one of very few to perform the Sibelius concerto in its early version.

Vähälä is committed to the development of skills and opportunities for young musicians. In 2009, she launched the Violin Academy, a masterclass-based educational project for highly talented young Finnish violinists funded by the Finnish Cultural Foundation. Previously a professor at the Hochschule für Musik in Karlsruhe, Germany, she has been professor at the Universität für Musik und Darstellende Kunst in Vienna since September 2019.

Vähälä plays a Giovanni Battista Guadagnini violin made in 1780.

Jenny Bent, Santa Rosa Symphony, director

Dr. Jenny Bent is Professor of Music and Director of Choral and Vocal Activities at Sonoma State University. With degrees from Boston University and University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, Dr. Bent's expertise spans voice performance, choral conducting, and choral literature. Described by the San Francisco Classical Voice as "superb" with "excellent diction and well-controlled dynamics," Dr. Bent's choirs have earned unanimous superior ratings and command performances at festivals throughout California and have performed under her baton at such venues as

Carnegie Hall in New York City and Grace Cathedral in San Francisco. Her ensemble SonoVoce was recently honored to perform at the CA All-State Music Educators Conference (CASMEC).

Recognized for her achievements as a choral educator, Dr. Bent received the 2019 CMEA Bay Section Outstanding Choral Educator Award and the 2023 CMEA Pearson/Scott Foresman/Silver Burdett Choral Educator Award. She brings over a decade of high school teaching experience, notably at the Marin School of the Arts.

Beyond her academic work, Dr. Bent contributes to the choral music community as a guest conductor, adjudicator, and conference presenter for organizations including CMEA, ACDA, and Golden State. From 2016-2023, she served on the board of the California Choral Directors Association (CCDA), and she currently holds the positions of Repertoire & Resources Collegiate Choirs Coordinator for National ACDA and Western Region Representative for the National Collegiate Choral Organization (NCCO). From 2007-2014, Dr. Bent shared her passion for choral music as a host of "The Choir Loft" on KRCB-FM. She is also a proud (and semi-obnoxious) baseball mom whose favorite moments are watching her two sons do what they love.

The Young Women's Chorus of San Francisco, Matthew Otto, Artistic Director

The Young Women's Chorus is the premier ensemble of the Young Women's Choral Projects of San Francisco. The Chorus, conducted by Artistic Director Dr. Matthew Otto, is comprised of singers ages 12-18, and has been praised for its beauty of sound, stellar musicianship, and dynamic programming. Acclaimed in the American Record Guide for its "refined and beautifully controlled singing," the Young Women's Chorus has also won many competitive, national awards, including the American Prize in Choral Performance; the Margaret Hillis Award for Choral Excellence, the Dale Warland Singers Commission Award from Chorus America and American Composers Forum; and the ASCAP Adventurous Programming Award. They have performed with the London Philharmonia Orchestra and the San Francisco Symphony and graced stages from Carnegie Hall to acclaimed venues in South Africa, France, Argentina, Canada, and New Zealand. Performing repertoire from early music to contemporary selections, the Chorus annually performs a professional series of concerts in the Bay Area and commissions new works by leading composers. Learn more at YWCP.org

High-res photos and interview opportunities available upon request.

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. J. Andrew Bradford joined SRS as President and CEO in 2023. SRS celebrates its 99th season in 2026-2027.

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

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

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). 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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