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Santa Rosa Symphony's 99th Season Opens with Tchaikovsky's Fourth Symphony in *Twist of Fate*

October 10, 11 & 12, 2026, Weill Hall, Green Music Center

(Santa Rosa, Calif.) — Santa Rosa Symphony (SRS) opens its 99th season, "99 Years of Music," with *Twist of Fate*, conducted by Artistic & Music Director Francesco Lecce-Chong and featuring acclaimed pianist Maxim Lando. The program brings together Franz Liszt's dazzling Piano Concerto No. 1, Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky's powerful Symphony No. 4, and a world premiere by Colorado-based composer Matt Browne. Performances are October 10, 11, and 12, 2026, at Weill Hall, Green Music Center. Tickets are available at srsymphony.org.

The season opener marks a poignant full circle for Lecce-Chong, who returns to Tchaikovsky's Symphony No. 4—the first work he conducted with the Santa Rosa Symphony in 2017. Written during a period of profound personal turmoil, including a disastrous marriage and the composer's subsequent flight from it, the symphony became an expression of Tchaikovsky's struggle with fate, despair, and the search for happiness. From its ominous opening fanfare—Tchaikovsky's musical representation of an inescapable "fatal power"—the symphony traces a turbulent emotional journey through melancholy, fleeting moments of lightness, and ultimately a jubilant, hard-won embrace of life. Its explosive finale transforms the recurring Fate motif into a thrilling musical confrontation, making the work both deeply personal and irresistibly dramatic.

The program begins with the world premiere of *Divertimento for Orchestra* by Matt Browne, an alumnus of SRS's First Symphony Project, a multi-year project that invited four acclaimed American composers to write their first symphonies. Browne's return to SRS highlights the orchestra's ongoing commitment to developing and presenting new voices in orchestral music. *Divertimento* opens the season with a fresh perspective and a celebration of the orchestra's creative possibilities.

First Prize winner of the New York International Liszt Competition in 2022, pianist Maxim Lando joins the Symphony for Liszt's Piano Concerto No. 1 in E-flat major. The work is a dazzling showcase of virtuosity, drama, and orchestral color. Rather than following the traditional concerto structure of contrasting movements, Liszt shapes the work as a continuous musical journey, moving seamlessly between fiery bravura, lyrical passages, and playful exchanges between soloist and orchestra. Lando brings his acclaimed artistry and electrifying technique to one of the piano repertoire's most demanding and exhilarating concertos.

"I'm delighted to welcome back composer Matt Browne who, in 2019, received the first commission of my tenure as part of the First Symphony Project. I also look forward to introducing audiences to the phenomenal virtuosity and artistry of Maxim Lando. Rounding out the program is the work I first conducted with the Santa Rosa Symphony, Tchaikovsky's Fourth Symphony, and it will be extra special to return to it in a place that has become so special to me."

-**Francesco Lecce-Chong**, Artistic & Music Director

BIOGRAPHIES:

Francesco Lecce-Chong, Artistic & Music Director

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 groups, 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, 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 debuted in Europe at the prestigious George Enescu Festival with the Romanian National Radio Orchestra, and in 2025, he will debut with the Janáček Philharmonic.

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 orchestra's first commercial recording, 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.

Maxim Lando, piano

Twenty-three-year-old American pianist Maxim Lando has been described as a "dazzling fire-eater" (*ARTS San Francisco*) and as "one of the most imaginative young pianists" (*Gower Festival*). He was lauded in *The New York Times* as displaying "brilliance and infectious exuberance" combined with "impressive delicacy" and a "wild-eyed danger."

Lando first made international headlines performing 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 Pittsburgh Symphony, Toronto Symphony, Israel Philharmonic, Moscow Philharmonic, St. Petersburg Symphony, and many others. Highlights of the 2025-2026 season include a US tour with the Czech National Symphony Orchestra, debuts with orchestras

across Europe and the US, and a recording with the ORF Radio Symphony Orchestra Vienna. He has appeared on media outlets such as CNN, NPR, and BBC.

Besides being a Gilmore Young Artist and the winner of the 2025 Khaledi Prize for Excellence and Innovation, Lando has received multiple awards, including the First Prize in the New York International Liszt Competition, the Vendome Grand Prize, top prizes at both the 2024 Cleveland International Piano Competition and the 13th International German Piano Award, and the First Prize at the Young Concert Artists Susan Wadsworth International Auditions.

Passionate about chamber music, he frequently performs with violinist Tassilo Probst. Their album *Into Madness* was awarded a 2023 International Classical Music Award as the best chamber music recording of the year and received a double nomination for the Opus Klassik. Lando partners regularly with violinist Daniel Hope and plays with Jupiter Symphony Chamber Players in New York City.

Lando is dedicated to making classical music accessible to his own generation. He studies with long-time mentor Hung-Kuan Chen at The Juilliard School.

Matt Browne, composer
Colorado-based composer Dr. Matt Browne (b. 1988) strives to create music that meets Sergei Diaghilev's famous challenge to Jean Cocteau: "Astonish me!", through incorporating such eclectic influences as the timbral imagination and playfulness of György Ligeti, the shocking and humorous polystylism of Alfred Schnittke, and the relentless rhythmic energy of Igor Stravinsky. His music has been praised for its "unbridled humor" (*New Music Box*) and described as "witty" (*The Strad*) and "beautifully crafted and considered" (*What's On London*).

Dr. Browne has had the privilege to collaborate with such ensembles as the Minnesota Orchestra, Alarm Will Sound, PRISM Quartet, Albany Symphony, Milwaukee Symphony, Eastman Wind Ensemble, PUBLIQuartet, New York Virtuoso Singers, New Jersey Symphony, New England Philharmonic, and the Villiers Quartet. Recent projects include his Symphony no. 1 'The Course of Empire,' commissioned by the Santa Rosa and Eugene Symphonies, States of Mind for percussion quartet, and a collaboration with Opera Omaha's Poetry and Music.

Recently, Dr. Browne's music has received honors such as winner of the ASCAP Foundation Rudolf Nissim Prize (2017), first prize in the 2020 New Classics International Competition of the Moscow Conservatory (out of 2,000 submissions in 84 countries), a BMI Student Composer award (2015), a residency at the Mizzou International Composers Festival, fellow at CULTIVATE Copland House (2017), winner of the New England Philharmonic Call for Scores (2014), a residency at the Minnesota Orchestra Composers Institute (2016), winner of the American Viola Society's Maurice Gardner Composition award (2014), and a residency at the Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra's First Annual Composers Institute (2013). Dr. Browne holds a Doctor of Musical Arts in Music Composition from the University of Michigan-Ann Arbor and a Bachelor of Music from the University of Colorado at Boulder. Previous teachers include Michael Daugherty, Kristin Kuster, Carter Pann, and Daniel Kellogg.

PROGRAM AT A GLANCE:

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

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

CONCERT ENHANCEMENTS:
Concert Program books: Available at all Classical Series concerts.
Concert Program notes: Coming soon.

Pre-Concert Talk: Conductor Francesco Lecce-Chong, Maxim Lando, and Matt Browne provide a 30-minute pre-concert talk one hour prior to the performances.

SPONSORS:
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AT A GLANCE / CALENDAR LISTINGS:
WHO: Santa Rosa Symphony, Francesco Lecce-Chong, conductor

WHAT: Twist of Fate

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

WHEN:
Saturday, October 10, 2026, at 2:00 pm – Discovery Rehearsal (no Pre-Concert Talk)
Saturday, October 10, 2026, at 7:30 pm (Doors at 6:00 pm, Pre-Concert Talk 6:30 pm - 7:00 pm)
Sunday, October 11, 2026, at 3:00 pm (Doors at 1:30 pm, Pre-Concert Talk 2:00 pm - 2:30 pm)
Monday, October 12, 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 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 or (707) 546-8742 or in person: 50 Santa Rosa Ave, 1st Floor, Santa Rosa CA. (Weekdays 9:00 am – 5:00 pm; 10:30 am – 5:00 pm on Wednesday; closed Saturday & Sunday.)

ABOUT SANTA ROSA SYMPHONY
Now in its 99th season, the Santa Rosa Symphony (SRS) is the third-oldest professional orchestra in California and one of the oldest symphony orchestras in the western United States. The resident orchestra at Sonoma State University's Donald and Maureen Green Music Center, SRS performs seven Classical Series concert sets in the acoustically acclaimed 1,400-seat Weill Hall, along with Snoopy Family Concert Series, Discovery Rehearsal Series, and Winterlude… Also performed are the summer series Symphony Uncorked all over Sonoma County, the Symphony Pops at the Luther Burbank Center for the Arts, and a series of intimate chamber performances at the Brannan Center.

Led by Music Director Francesco Lecce-Chong since 2018, the orchestra is recognized for artistic excellence, innovative programming, and a commitment to presenting both established masterworks and new music. SRS has earned national recognition for its adventurous programming and community engagement, including an ASCAP award for adventurous programming and an American Symphony Orchestra League MetLife Award for Community Engagement.

Through the Santa Rosa Symphony Institute for Music Education, SRS reaches more than 20,000 young people annually through five youth ensembles, a beginning strings program, Simply Strings, inspired by El

Sistema, in-school programs, summer music education, and free concerts for youth. Its broad community offerings also include free, family-friendly chamber music performances across all twelve Sonoma County Library regional branches, as well as other community programs throughout the region.

In 2022, SRS released its first commercial recording, Cello Concerto & Other Works, featuring music by Pulitzer Prize-winning composer Ellen Taaffe Zwilich. The Santa Rosa Symphony is led by J. Andrew Bradford, who joined SRS as President and CEO in 2023. It is supported by a 15-person full-time administrative staff and is a member of the League of American Orchestras and the Association of California Symphony Orchestras.

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