

NEWS

Media Contact:

Brenda Fox
Director of Marketing and Patron Services
(707) 546-7097 x 218
bfox@srsymphony.org

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Francesco Lecce-Chong conducts the Santa Rosa Symphony's "Beethoven's Ninth"

Featuring Sonoma State University's Symphonic Chorus, directed by Jenny Bent, with other guest artists
December 3, 4 & 5, 2022 at Weill Hall, Green Music Center

(Santa Rosa, Calif.) — The Santa Rosa Symphony (SRS), conducted by Francesco Lecce-Chong, presents Beethoven's joyous Ninth Symphony on December 3, 4 and 5, 2022 at Weill Hall, Green Music Center. Also known as, "Ode to Joy", this beautiful masterpiece features an array of celebrated soloists and the Sonoma State University's Symphonic Chorus, directed by Jenny Bent. Also, on the program, Jessie Montgomery's, "Soul Force for Orchestra" and Ralph Vaughan Williams', "Flos Campi [Flower of the Field]: Suite for Viola, Orchestra and Chorus". SRS principal violist and this season's Artistic Partner, Elizabeth Prior, is featured on the Vaughan Williams piece.

"Beethoven's monumental Ninth Symphony, "Ode to Joy", is a work that never fails to live up to the moment and is a constant reminder of how a single work of art can be life-changing, even world-changing. I look forward to welcoming our terrific chorus back to the stage for the first time since 2019 for this performance. I am also delighted to feature our Artistic Partner, Elizabeth Prior, as soloist on a stunningly beautiful, but rarely performed work for viola, chorus, and orchestra: Vaughan Williams' *Flos Campi*." *Francesco Lecce-Chong*

Elizabeth Prior, viola and Artistic Partner

Santa Rosa Symphony Principal Violist Elizabeth Prior is the 2022-2023 Season Artistic Partner. As such, Prior, in addition to performing in the December concert for Ralph Vaughan Williams' *Flos Campi [Flower of the Field]: Suite for Viola, Orchestra and Chorus*, will develop a Santa Rosa Symphony Family Concert, serve as a visible ambassador for the orchestra, and to the Symphony's patrons and donors. Prior has been principal violist with the Symphony for 11 years. She is also a member of the New Century Chamber Orchestra, a season substitute with the San Francisco Ballet and associate principal violist with the Marin Symphony. She also performs regularly with the San Francisco Opera Orchestra and the San Francisco Symphony. A native of South Africa, she was a prizewinner in the International String Competition in Pretoria and gave her debut at Carnegie Hall with the Russian Chamber Orchestra.

Program at a glance:

JESSIE MONTGOMERY: *Soul Force*, for Orchestra

Acclaimed composer Jessie Montgomery's work combines classical language with elements of vernacular music, improvisation, language, and social justice. The resulting music has earned Montgomery rave reviews for her "vibrantly inventive original works for strings" (ClassicsToday.com) and numerous awards.

“*Soul Force* is a one-movement symphonic work which attempts to portray the notion of a voice that struggles to be heard beyond the shackles of oppression,” Montgomery writes. “The music takes on the form of a march which begins with a single voice and gains mass as it rises to a triumphant goal.

“Drawing on elements of popular African-American musical styles such as big-band jazz, funk, hip-hop, and R+B, the piece pays homage to the cultural contributions, the many voices, which have risen against aggressive forces to create an indispensable cultural place.

RALPH VAUGHAN WILLIAMS: *Flos Campi* [*Flower of the Field*]: Suite for Viola, Orchestra and Chorus
Vaughan Williams’s music cannot be easily categorized. *Flos Campi*, written in 1925, occupies a category of its own. This unusual work, a quasi-concerto for solo viola, chorus, and orchestra, reflects Ravel’s tutelage, particularly its use of wordless chorus phonating on the syllable “Ah,” (Ravel used a wordless chorus in *Daphnis et Chloé*), as well as the subtle shadings of its harmonies. But the overall harmonic language is both unexpected and unique; nothing else in Vaughan Williams’ catalog sounds quite like it.

Vaughan Williams used texts from the Biblical Song of Songs as his inspiration for this exotic – and in places erotic – love song. Each of *Flos Campi*’s six sections, played without pause, is paired with a particular quotation from the Song of Songs.

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN: Symphony No. 9 in D minor, Opus 125, Choral

The Ninth Symphony extends beyond the realm of the concert hall and has permeated Western culture on many levels, including socio-political and commercial arenas. The music of the Ninth, particularly the “Ode to Joy” melody of the final movement, is so familiar to us that it has lost its unique character and taken on the quality of folk music; that is, it has shed its “composed” identity as a melody written by Ludwig van Beethoven and simply exists within the communal ear of our collective consciousness.

While some classical works are inextricably linked to the time in which they were written, Beethoven’s profound musical statements about freedom, equality, and humanity resonate just as powerfully today as they did at the Ninth’s premiere.

ENHANCEMENTS:

- [Concert Program books](#) are available to view online. Mailed to full-season subscribers
- [Concert Program notes](#) can be read on the concert event page
- Lecce-Chong provides a 30-minute pre-concert talk one hour prior to each performance, accompanied by Elizabeth Prior

SPONSORS:

Sponsored by **The Donald and Maureen Green Orchestral Works Endowment Fund**

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

Guest Artist Elizabeth Prior sponsored by **Ellen and Chuck Wear**

Guest Artist Abigail Nims sponsored by **Joanne and Ed Enemark, in memory of her parents,**

Robert and Shirley Skeels

Guest Artist Christopher Pfund sponsored by **Karen Brodsky and Mark Dierkhising**

Guest Artist Sonoma State University Symphonic Chorus sponsored by **Linda and David Hanes**

Discovery Open Rehearsal Series sponsored by **The Stare Foundation and David Stare of Dry Creek Vineyard**

Pre-concert Talks sponsored by **Jamei Haswell**

Season Media Sponsor: ***The Press Democrat***

High-res photos available:

- [Lecce-Chong](#)
- [Prior](#)
- [SRS Orchestra](#)
- [Soloists](#)

Interview Opportunities: Francesco Lecce-Chong & Elizabeth Prior

AT A GLANCE / CALENDAR LISTING:

WHAT: [Santa Rosa Symphony “Beethoven’s Ninth”](#)

WHO: [Santa Rosa Symphony](#)

[Francesco Lecce-Chong, conductor](#)

[Elizabeth Prior, Violist](#)

[Leslie Ann Bradley, soprano](#)

[Abigail Nims, mezzo-soprano](#)

[Christopher Pfund, tenor](#)

[Michael Dean, bass](#)

[SSU Symphonic Chorus, Jenny Bent, director](#)

WHEN:

Saturday, December 3, 2022 at 2:00 pm – Discovery Open Rehearsal, no talk

Saturday, December 3, 2022 at 7:30 pm (Doors at 6:00 pm, Pre-concert talk 6:30 pm -7:00 pm)

Sunday, December 4, 2022 at 3:00 pm (Doors at 1:30 pm, Pre-concert talk 2:00 PM-2:30 pm)

Monday, December 5, 2022 at 7:30 pm (Doors at 6:00 pm, Pre-concert talk 6:30 PM-7:00 pm)

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

TICKET PRICES:

\$18 / adult; \$10 / youth (7-17 years of age) for Discovery Open Rehearsal

\$32-\$105 for Classical Series performances

Youths 7-17 years of age 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 college students with a valid student ID. Available at the door only

TICKETS: rsymphony.org or (707) 546-8742 (Weekdays 9:00 am – 5:00 pm, opening at 10:30 AM Wed. closed Sat & Sun)

ABOUT SANTA ROSA SYMPHONY

Santa Rosa Symphony, the Resident Orchestra of the Green Music Center, is the third-oldest professional orchestra in California, and the largest regional symphony north of Los Angeles. Francesco Lecce-Chong, the Symphony's fifth music director in its 95 years, began his tenure in 2018. Alan Silow, President & CEO, began his tenure in 2002. The Symphony is committed to the core values of artistic excellence, innovative programming, comprehensive music education and community service.

The Symphony’s performance schedule includes 21 Classical Series concerts (seven sets), seven Discovery Dress Rehearsal concerts, a three-concert Family Series and a four-concert Pops Series, as well as special concerts.

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.

The Symphony is recognized as having one of California's most comprehensive music education programs, serving nearly 30,000 youths annually. Collaborations with schools and organizations across Sonoma County have gained the Santa Rosa Symphony national attention and support.

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