



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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February 25, 2024

### **Santa Rosa Symphony Presents a Celebration of Youth**

#### **"Young Heroes: *Peter and the Wolf*"**

#### **as part of the Snoopy Family Concert Series**

Francesco Lecce-Chong, Conductor

**Sunday, April 6, 2025, Weill Hall, Green Music Center**

(Santa Rosa, Calif.) — Santa Rosa Symphony's (SRS) 2024-2025 Snoopy Family Concert Series wraps up with an unforgettable concert, *Young Heroes: Peter and the Wolf* on April 6, 2025, at 3:00 PM, at Weill Hall, Green Music Center. Led by Maestro Francesco Lecce-Chong, this family-friendly performance brings to life the excitement and bravery of young heroes in classical music. Special guest Henry Miller, an exceptional young musician from the Santa Rosa Symphony Youth Ensembles, makes his solo debut with the orchestra. Affordable tickets are available now at [srsymphony.org](http://srsymphony.org).

Sergei Prokofiev's *Peter and the Wolf* ignites imaginations and the orchestra's expressive power. This timeless symphonic tale assigns each character a unique musical voice—from the soaring strings of Peter to the sly clarinet of the wolf and the lively flute of the bird—and offers an engaging experience for listeners of all ages. Narrated by Justin Thompson, this piece highlights Prokofiev's masterful storytelling, making it a compelling choice for both seasoned concertgoers and those new to classical music.

Explore the brilliance of young heroes through classical music with Maestro Francesco. In Engelbert Humperdinck's *Prelude to Hänsel and Gretel*, members of the Santa Rosa Symphony Youth Orchestra will perform side by side with the professional orchestra. Edvard Grieg's *Peer Gynt* follows a young boy who must outwit mischievous trolls to escape, while Gioachino Rossini's *William Tell* tells the story of a son facing the ultimate test of bravery.

Audiences will experience the breathtaking virtuosity of violinist Henry Miller as he performs Pablo de Sarasate's *Zigeunerweisen (Gypsy Airs)*. A former concertmaster of the Santa Rosa Symphony Youth Orchestra and Young People's Chamber Orchestra, Miller performed a solo on the famed Redwood Violin for Andy Carruthers at TEDxSonomaCounty 2022—all by the age of 13.

Maestro Lecce-Chong will welcome Snoopy on stage to introduce the orchestra musicians to the audience, setting the stage for a performance of Ellen Taaffe Zwilich's *Snoopy Does the Samba* from *Peanuts® Gallery*.

"Our family series closes with the most famous of all children's works: Prokofiev's *Peter and the Wolf*. It's a timeless classic for the whole family, and I am so happy my friend Snoopy will be around to give it an extra special spin. The entire program is a celebration of youth with Henry Miller, a star in the orchestra's education programs, making his soloist debut with the symphony along with music from *Hänsel and Gretel* and *William Tell* that celebrate young people."

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

## PROGRAM:

**ENGELBERT HUMPERDINCK:** Prelude to *Hänsel and Gretel* (with SRSYO)

**EDVARD GRIEG:** In the Hall of the Mountain King from *Peer Gynt*

**GIOACHINO ROSSINI:** Finale from the Overture to *Guillaume Tell* [*William Tell*]

**PABLO DE SARASATE:** *Ziguenerweisen* [*Gypsy Airs*] for Violin and Orchestra, Opus 20

**ELLEN TAAFFE ZWILICH:** Snoopy Does the Samba from *Peanuts Gallery*

**SERGEI PROKOFIEV:** *Peter and the Wolf* for Narrator and Orchestra

## CONCERT EXTRAS:

### **Santa Rosa Symphony Youth Orchestra (SRSYO) Side-by-side**

On the first piece of the program, young concertgoers will see peers from the SRSYO perform side-by-side with Symphony musicians.

### **FREE Instrument Petting Zoo**

These concerts are designed to be fun and educational for all ages. This affordable concert series includes a complimentary Instrument Petting Zoo one hour before each performance at 2:00 pm, which provides an opportunity for youngsters (and curious adults) to handle and play orchestral instruments.

### **Multimedia Experience**

Introducing a new immersive experience that gives audiences an up-close view of the musicians, their instruments, and Maestro Francesco. Projected on a big screen above the orchestra, concertgoers will see what's happening on stage wherever they sit.

### **Meet & Greet**

Meet with Maestro Francesco Lecce-Chong and a symphony musician immediately following the concert.

Special thanks to the [Charles M. Schulz Museum and Research Center](#) and [Snoopy's Home Ice](#).

## BIOGRAPHY:

### **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 Eugene Symphony and Santa Rosa Symphony (SRS) 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.

### **Henry Miller, violin**

Henry Miller is currently a freshman at Maria Carillo High School in Santa Rosa. He plays violin for the San Francisco Symphony Youth Orchestra and oboe for the Santa Rosa Symphony Youth Orchestra.

Miller began playing the piano with his mother at the age of four and the violin with Melanie Webster at the age of five. He has studied violin with Aaron Westman since 2021 and oboe with Elena Sloman since 2022.

He served as concertmaster of the Santa Rosa Symphony Youth Orchestra and the Young People's Chamber Orchestra from ages 12 to 14. At age 13, he was honored to perform a solo on the locally famed Redwood Violin for violin maker Andy Carruthers during the 2022 TEDxSonomaCounty presentation, *Emergence*. In 2022, Henry was selected to perform at the Junior Bach Festival in San Francisco, CA.

In the fall of 2023, Miller played the part of "The Fiddler" in 6<sup>th</sup> Street Playhouse production of *Fiddler on the Roof*. In 2024, he won the Santa Rosa Symphony Youth Orchestra concerto competition and was selected for the All-State Junior High Symphonic Band for oboe. Later that year, he was asked to play violin for the opening of the Redwood Arts Council's presentation of the Miró Quartet. Miller spent the summer of 2024 studying at the Meadowmount School of Music in upstate New York. He also plays alto sax for the Maria Carillo High School touring jazz ensemble.

In his off time, he enjoys playing tennis, pickleball, and table tennis.

### **Justin Thompson, narrator**

Justin Thompson is currently a Senior Artist at the Charles M. Schulz Creative Associates studio in Santa Rosa. During his 21 years with the studio, he has worked extensively in Japan, providing presentations and art direction for licensees using *Peanuts* on their products, representing *Peanuts* at national events, and serving as a Creative Consultant for the Snoopy TV shows and specials on Apple TV.

Thompson is a published children's books illustrator and author; his latest book for *Peanuts* is titled *If I Gave the World My Blanket*, published by Simon and Schuster. He has designed and painted two Snoopy murals in Muraleando – an arts community in central Havana, Cuba – and a mural of his own creation in Shirati, Tanzania, for New Tina's School in 2023, where he teaches a continuing class in expressing emotions through cartooning.

His own comic strip MythTickle can be seen at GoComics.com and at MythTickle.com.

Thompson is also an accomplished actor, having performed with Shakespeare in the Park in New York City, several national Shakespeare tours, and as an improv performer, swordsman, and joustier. He has acted on daytime soap operas and battled bad guys in live stunt shows such as Robin Hood and Batman. He was most recently seen in Santa Rosa at the California Theater production of *Ideation* and in West Side Story and Wait Until Dark at 6<sup>th</sup> Street Playhouse.

### **SPONSORS:**

Snoopy Family Concert Series underwritten by **Victor and Karen Trione**, and **Irene Sohm**  
Conductor Francesco Lecce-Chong sponsored by **Anonymous**

**AT A GLANCE:**

**WHAT:** [Young Heroes: \*Peter and the Wolf\*](#)

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

Francesco Lecce-Chong, conductor

Henry Miller, violin

Justin Thompson, narrator

**WHEN:** April 6, 2025 at 3:00 pm

Complimentary Instrument Petting Zoo one hour prior to the concert at 2:00 pm.

Meet & Greet with Francesco Lecce-Chong and a symphony musician immediately following the concert.

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

**SINGLE TICKET PRICES:**

\$20/adult, \$10/child (12 and under)

**TICKETS:** [srsymphony.org](https://srsymphony.org) or (707) 546-8742 (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, 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 began his tenure in 2018 as the Symphony's fifth music director in its 97 years. J. Andrew Bradford joined SRS as President and CEO in 2023. 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 grouped into seven sets, seven Discovery Dress Rehearsal concerts, a three-concert Family Series, a four-concert Pops Series, and 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 (ASCAP).

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.

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