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Santa Rosa Symphony Presents Bernstein & Brahms

Featuring Pianist Joyce Yang on Leonard Bernstein's Symphony No. 2, *The Age of Anxiety*
February 22, 23 & 24, 2025 Weill Hall, Green Music Center

(Santa Rosa, Calif.) — Santa Rosa Symphony, under the baton of Music Director Francesco Lecce-Chong, presents Bernstein & Brahms. This concert features Johannes Brahms' powerful Symphony No. 4 and Van Cliburn International Piano Competition silver medalist pianist Joyce Yang on Leonard Bernstein's riveting Symphony No. 2, *The Age of Anxiety*. Performances at Weill Hall, Green Music Center, on February 22, 23 & 24, 2025. Tickets available at srsymphony.org.

Brahms' Fourth Symphony is a masterpiece of emotional depth and intellectual brilliance. Its grand finale, a 32-variation chaconne inspired by Baroque tradition, radiates power and innovation. Hailed as "gigantic" and "unparalleled," this symphonic marvel remains a cornerstone of the classical repertoire, celebrated for its depth, energy, and elegance.

Renowned pianist Joyce Yang brings her captivating artistry to Leonard Bernstein's *The Age of Anxiety*. Yang's "poetic and sensitive pianism" (Washington Post) complements Bernstein's second symphony's autobiographical and lyrical nature. Inspired by W.H. Auden's Pulitzer Prize-winning poem, this unique work features a solo piano that serves as a reflective protagonist, exploring themes of identity and faith through the lens of post-war uncertainty.

California-based composer Shuying Li's *Purple Mountains* rounds out the concert. It is an orchestral overture inspired by her opera on the 1937 Nanking Massacre filled with dramatic contrasts and haunting melodies that explore humanity's darkest impulses with thought-provoking beauty.

"I am so happy to have two dear friends and sensational artists joining the Santa Rosa Symphony for this program. Pianist Joyce Yang will bring to life Leonard Bernstein's monumental masterpiece *The Age of Anxiety* – with its vivid depiction of young people in New York City finding joy and hope through each other. Ahead of a major collaboration in 2026, composer Shuying Li joins us with her remarkable *Purple Mountains* that reflects on the Nanking Massacre in China in WWII. Brahms' beloved fourth symphony rounds out the program with its rich harmonies, yearning melodies, and majestic musical structures."

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

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 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.

Joyce Yang, piano

Blessed with "poetic and sensitive pianism" (Washington Post) and a "wondrous sense of color" (San Francisco Classical Voice), Grammy-nominated pianist Joyce Yang captivates audiences with her virtuosity, lyricism, and interpretive sensitivity. She first came to international attention in 2005 when she won the silver medal at the 12th Van Cliburn International Piano Competition. The youngest contestant at 19 years old, she took home two additional awards: Best Performance of Chamber Music (with the Takács Quartet), and Best Performance of a New Work. In 2006 Yang made her celebrated New York Philharmonic debut alongside Lorin Maazel at Avery Fisher Hall along with the orchestra's tour of Asia, making a triumphant return to her hometown of Seoul, South Korea. Yang's subsequent appearances with the New York Philharmonic have included opening night of the 2008 Leonard Bernstein Festival – an appearance made at the request of Maazel in his final season as music director. The New York Times pronounced her performance in Bernstein's *The Age of Anxiety* a "knockout."

Over the last two decades, Yang has blossomed into an "astonishing artist" (Neue Zürcher Zeitung), showcasing her colorful musical personality in solo recitals and collaborations with the world's top orchestras and chamber musicians through more than 1,000 debuts and re-engagements. She received the 2010 Avery Fisher Career Grant and earned her first Grammy nomination (Best Chamber Music/Small Ensemble Performance) for her recording of Franck, Kurtág, Prokofiev & Schumann with violinist Augustin Hadelich ("One can only sit in misty-eyed amazement at their insightful flair and spontaneity." – *The Strad*).

In recent years, Yang has focused on promoting creative ways to introduce classical music to new audiences. She served as the Guest Artistic Director for the Laguna Beach Music Festival in California, curating concerts that explore the "art-inspires-art" concept – highlighting the relationship between music and dance while simultaneously curating outreach activities to young students. Yang's collaboration with the Aspen Santa Fe Ballet of *Half/Cut/Split* – a "witty, brilliant exploration of Robert Schumann's *Carnaval*" (The Santa Fe New Mexican) choreographed by Jorma Elo – was a marriage between music and dance to illuminate the ingenuity of Schumann's musical language. The group toured nationwide, including five performances at the Joyce Theater in New York.

Yang began the 2024/2025 season with a tour of Australia performing Grieg's Piano Concerto at the Sydney Opera House with Sydney Symphony and performing solo recitals in Angel Place, Sydney as well as in Melbourne, Brisbane, and Canberra. Back in the states, Yang continued her action-packed summer

performing at the Aspen Music Festival, Newport Classical, Caramoor, Brevard Music Center, La Jolla Music Society's SummerFest among others. This season, as one of the most in-demand soloist and recitalist today, Yang will continue to present her wide range of repertoire in over 30 cities around the world playing piano concerti, solo recitals, and chamber music.

Born in Seoul, South Korea, Yang received her first piano lesson from her aunt at the age of four. In 1997, Yang moved to the United States to begin studies at the pre-college division of the Juilliard School with Dr. Yoheved Kaplinsky. During her first year at Juilliard, Yang won the pre-college division Concerto Competition, resulting in a performance of Haydn's Keyboard Concerto in D with the Juilliard Pre-College Chamber Orchestra. After winning the Philadelphia Orchestra's Greenfield Student Competition, she performed Prokofiev's Third Piano Concerto with that orchestra at just twelve years old. She graduated from Juilliard with special honor as the recipient of the school's 2010 Arthur Rubinstein Prize, and in 2011 she won its 30th Annual William A. Petschek Piano Recital Award. She is a Steinway artist.

PROGRAM AT A GLANCE:

SHUYING LI: *Purple Mountains* for Orchestra

JOHANNES BRAHMS: Symphony No. 4 in E minor, Opus 98

LEONARD BERNSTEIN: Symphony No. 2 for Piano and Orchestra, *The Age of Anxiety*

High-res photos and interview opportunities available: Francesco Lecce-Chong and Joyce Yang

CONCERT ENHANCEMENTS:

Concert Program books: Available at all Classical Series concerts.

Concert Program notes: These can be read on the [Digital Program Books & Notes](#) page.

Pre-concert talk: Conductor Francesco Lecce-Chong and Joyce Yang provide a 30-minute pre-concert talk one hour prior to the performances.

SPONSORS:

Classical Series underwritten by **Anderman Family Foundation**

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

Joyce Yang sponsored by **Sandra Jordan**

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

Pre-concert talk sponsored by **Jamei Haswell & Mack Schwing**

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

AT A GLANCE / CALENDAR LISTINGS:

WHO: [Santa Rosa Symphony](#), [Francesco Lecce-Chong, Conductor](#)

WHAT: [Bernstein & Brahms](#)

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

WHEN:

Saturday, February 22, 2025, at 2:00 pm – Discovery Open Rehearsal (no Pre-concert talk)

Saturday, February 22, 2025, at 7:30 pm (Doors at 6:00 pm, Pre-concert Talk 6:30 pm - 7:00 pm)

Sunday, February 23, 2025, at 3:00 pm (Doors at 1:30 pm, Pre-concert Talk 2:00 pm - 2:30 pm)

Monday, February 24, 2025, at 7:30 pm (Doors at 6:00 pm, Pre-concert Talk 6:30 pm - 7:00 pm)

TICKET PRICES:

\$20/adult; \$10/youth (7-17) for Discovery Open Rehearsal.

\$34-\$110 for Classical Series performances.

Youths 7-17 may receive one complimentary ticket with every paid adult. Request tickets through Patron Services at (707) 546-8742. Classical Series concerts only.

\$10 student rush tickets for college 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

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 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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