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Contact: Julie Winsel, Marketing & Communications Manager
julie.winsel@eugenesymphony.org | 541-687-9487 ext. 1106

Eugene Symphony presents Wagner's groundbreaking *Tristan und Isolde* on April 21, 2022

The first in a series spanning three seasons, Act I features four guest soloists and the Tenors and Basses of the Eugene Symphony Chorus



EUGENE, OR (March 30, 2022)— As the beginning of a three-year project exploring Richard Wagner's groundbreaking and moving *Tristan und Isolde*, an archetypal love story fated to end in tragedy, Eugene Symphony (ESA) presents Act I on April 21, 2022, at 7:30 pm at the Hult Center for the Performing Arts. This is only the second time the opera has been performed in Oregon, and was previously only performed in Portland some 50 years ago. Act II will be performed in Eugene Symphony's soon-to-be-announced 2022/23 season, with Act III concluding the series during the

2023/24 season.

"Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde* is one of the most consequential pieces of art ever created and I am thrilled to bring it in its entirety to Eugene for what may be the largest project in our orchestra's history," says ESA Music Director & Conductor Francesco Lecce-Chong. "By dividing the three epic acts of the opera across three seasons, audiences will have a chance to immerse themselves in this intoxicating sound world and discover how music, literature, and philosophy were all forever changed in its wake."

The concert features the talents of guest vocalists Nina Warren as Isolde and Roy C. Smith as Tristan, our ill-fated lovers, Ola Rafalo as Isolde's handmaiden Brangäne, and Eugene Villanueva as Tristan's servant Kurwenal. The Basses and Tenors of the Eugene Symphony Chorus — led by Chorus Director Dr. Sharon Paul — also join the fold as the first scene opens with our main characters aboard a ship transporting Isolde to her betrothed, King Marke of Cornwall, who is also Tristan's uncle. Tensions from previous traumatic occasions come to a head, but with the switching of a death potion for a love potion, the titular characters become romantically bound.

Veteran opera director Gregory Fortner will be serving as Artistic Advisor through the whole project to help realize Lecce-Chong's vision.

Francesco Lecce-Chong will set the stage at the top of the concert with an examination of what makes Wagner's music so moving before the orchestra plays Gustav Mahler's miniature masterpiece Blumine. Blumine, which translates to "Goddess of Flowers" from its German origins, is uplifting and poetic and was originally the second movement of his First Symphony.

March 17, 2022—New World Symphony

7:30 pm

Silva Concert Hall, Hult Center for the Performing Arts

Prices: prices range from \$10-\$68

Francesco Lecce-Chong, conductor

Gregory Fortner, artistic advisor

Nina Warren, Isolde

Roy C. Smith, Tristan

Ola Rafalo, Brangäne

Eugene Villanueva, Kurwenal

Tenors and Basses of the Eugene Symphony Chorus, Chorus Director Dr. Sharon Paul

Program includes: An introduction to Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde* by Music Director & Conductor Francesco Lecce-Chong

Mahler: Blumine

Wagner: Act I from *Tristan und Isolde*

Concert Week Events:

- Eugene Symphony Guild Pre-Concert Talk: Thursday, April 21, 6:30 pm, in Silva Concert Hall at the Hult Center

Media Opportunities: High-resolution photos and interviews with ESA Music Director Francesco Lecce-Chong, Chorus Director Dr. Sharon Paul, and Artistic Advisor Gregory Fortner are available upon request. Contact Marketing & Communications Manager Julie Winsel at 541-687-9487 ext. 1106 or by email at julie.winsel@eugenesympphony.org

Tickets: Partial-season subscriptions, as well as single tickets, are available now. All ticket options available at eugenesympphony.org or the Hult Center Ticket Office 541-682-5000

About Francesco Lecce-Chong

Conductor Francesco Lecce-Chong is the Music Director of the Eugene Symphony in Oregon, and the Santa Rosa Symphony, performing at the Green Music Center in Northern California. The press has described him as a "fast rising talent in the music world" with "the real gift" and recognized his dynamic performances, fresh programming, deep commitment to commissioning and performing new music as well as to community outreach. Lecce-Chong has appeared with orchestras around the world including the San Francisco Symphony, New York Philharmonic, National Symphony, Atlanta Symphony, Pittsburgh Symphony, Toronto Symphony, St. Louis Symphony, and Hong Kong Philharmonic and collaborated with top soloists including Renée Fleming and Itzhak Perlman.

About Gregory Fortner

For more than 20 years, Gregory Fortner's work in the arts, location-based entertainment, and technology has been defined by a drive to create live experiences that leave a lasting impression on those they serve. As a creative director, Greg has led more than 30 large-scale theatrical productions for

the Walt Disney Company, the New National Theater of Tokyo, the Vienna Staatsoper, the Metropolitan Opera, the Teatro Municipal in Rio de Janeiro, and the San Francisco and Los Angeles Operas, as well as numerous other companies throughout Europe and the US. This October, he will travel to Milan, Italy, to make his La Scala Opera debut. Throughout his career, he has had the good fortune to collaborate with, and learn from, such masters of their craft as Robert Altman, Peter Stein, Robert LePage, Michael Grandage, Tony Kushner, Maurice Sendak, and artist David Hockney.

About Nina Warren

Nina Warren is an internationally acclaimed artist known for her interpretations of the most demanding dramatic soprano repertoire. Her world premieres include Tan Dun's *Marco Polo* in Munich, Hong Kong and Amsterdam (recorded for Sony Classics), and her debut with Hamburg opera in the world premiere of Zemlinsky's *König Kandaules* as Nyssia, which was televised on the Arte channel and recorded for the Capriccio label which she later reprised at the Teatro Colon and Köln Opera, and Stephen Albert's *Treestone* at Alice Tully Hall. Notable appearances on the concert stage include a televised concert of *Salome* and Alban Berg Lieder with the Kölner Rundfunk Symphonie Orchester under the baton of Hans Vonk and Zemlinsky's "Lyric" Symphony with The Royal Flemish Orchestra.

About Roy C. Smith

American tenor Roy Cornelius Smith has established himself among the ranks of the finest tenors of his generation through his voice of exceptional color and beauty, his compelling dramatic interpretations, and outstanding musicianship. He has already been heard on some of the world's great operatic stages. Recent performances include Eléazar in *La Juive* (Antwerp, Ghent), Pagliacci (Mannheim), Siegmund and Siegfried in *Der Ring an einem Abend* (Mannheim), Otello (Copenhagen), and his role debut as Tristan in concert at the San Francisco War Memorial Performing Arts Center Herbst Theater with the Claude Heater Foundation.

About Ola Rafalo

Ola Rafalo, dramatic mezzosoprano, has been called a "Vocal Powerhouse", and "the next Cossotto". She has earned critical acclaim in a variety of roles and venues with her "voluptuous," "deep contralto sound" and mesmerizing acting. Postponed appearances from 2020 include her debut with the Israel Philharmonic as Emilia in Verdi's *Otello* under Maestro Gianandrea Noseda, followed by the role of Mamma Lucia in *Cavalleria Rusticana* at Teatro Voghera, and concerts in Sirmione, Italy, for the Maria Callas Festival, as the winner of the Maria Callas prize at the Giulio Fregosi competition. Upcoming engagements include a debut at the Teatro di Bibiena in Mantova, Beethoven's 9th with the Evanston Symphony, and the Mother/Chinese Tea Cup/Dragonfly in *L'enfant et les Sortilèges* with Florentine Opera. Also upcoming, Ola will sing the role of Santuzza in Japan, in the world premiere of a newly discovered unabridged version of Mascagni's masterpiece, *Cavalleria Rusticana*.

About Eugene Villanueva

American baritone Eugene Villanueva is establishing himself as one of the most appealing talents of his generation. He has performed with many prestigious international companies and festivals throughout the United States, Europe, and Asia. He most recently made his Seattle Opera debut as Schaunard in Puccini's *La bohème*, well received by both critics and the public. In the fall of 2019, prior to the pandemic, he returned to San Francisco Opera as the The Novice's Friend in *Billy Budd* and presented a recital of German and Italian art song for the LiederAlive! Series in San Francisco with Peter Grünberg from the San Francisco Symphony. He was also featured as a soloist with the Argovia Philharmonic in Switzerland in their 2020 concert series celebrating the New Year.

About Eugene Symphony

Now in its 57th season, Eugene Symphony is an 83-member part-time orchestra based in Eugene, Oregon, led by Music Director & Conductor Francesco Lecce-Chong with a mission of enriching lives through the power of music. With the addition of virtual programming initiated during the COVID-19 pandemic, Eugene Symphony reached more than 60,000 people around the world. Now back in the concert hall, Eugene Symphony presents annual classical and pops concerts, as well as music education and community engagement programs, regularly commissioning and premiering new American works, and disseminating its performances via radio broadcasts and recordings. More at eugenesymphony.org

COVID-19 Protocols

In accordance with Oregon state mandates being lifted, beginning March 12, 2022, the Hult Center for the Performing Arts and Eugene Symphony will no longer require mandatory face masks or proof of vaccination or negative COVID tests for patrons.

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