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ECYS CELEBRATES 150TH SIBELIUS JUBILEE WITH AN ALL-SIBELIUS PROGRAM AND FINNISH VIOLINIST MINNA PENSOLA!

(Palo Alto, CA – September 28, 2015) El Camino Youth Symphony (ECYS) debuts its 2015-16 Season on Sunday, November 1 at Flint Center with the Sibelius Celebration Concert, featuring Minna Pensola, a stunning Finnish violinist sponsored by a Finlandia Foundation 150 Sibelius Jubilee Grant. 2015 marks the 150th anniversary of the birth of Finnish composer Jean Sibelius. In his honor, the all-Sibelius program features the Violin Concerto in D minor with Ms. Pensola, and selections from The Tempest Suite No. 1. The powerful and mythical Sibelius Symphony No. 5 anchors the celebration.
“For Sibelius, a symphony is more than just a compositional form - It is a reflection of his faith, his love of nature, and his devotion to his country,” says Dr. Cai. “I think this is true for many classical composers, who use music to reveal their souls - and this is what I hope our young musicians will learn from this very special Sibelius program: the experience of life.”

The performance will begin at 7:30pm and tickets ($15 General/$8 Student-Senior) are available through Ticketmaster.com.

Since winning the 3rd prize at the Nordic NordSol Competition in 1997, soloist Minna Pensola has performed extensively as a chamber musician and soloist collaborating with conductors such as Sakari Oramo, Olari Elts and Juha Kangas.

She is a founding member of the Meta4 string quartet which is the first prize winner of the Dimitri Shostakovich String Quartet Competition (Moscow 2004) and the Joseph Haydn Chamber Music Competition (Vienna 2007). Ms. Pensola is also co-founder of the Punavuori Chamber Music Society, and runs a club for classical music in her hometown of Helsinki since 2008.

Born in Beijing, Music Director and Conductor Dr. Jindong Cai received his early musical training in China, where he learned to play the violin and the piano. He came to the United States for his graduate studies at the New England Conservatory and the College-Conservatory of Music in Cincinnati. In 1989, he was selected to study with famed conductor Leonard Bernstein at the Tanglewood Music Center, and won the Conducting Fellowship Award at the Aspen Music Festival in 1990 and 1992.

Professor Cai served on the faculties at the Louisiana State University, the University of Arizona, the College-Conservatory of Music at the University of Cincinnati, and the University of California at Berkeley. He held assistant conducting positions with the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra, Cincinnati Pops Orchestra, and the Cincinnati Chamber Orchestra, working closely with conductors Jesus Lopez-Cobos, Erich Kunzel, and Keith Lockhart. Dr. Cai joined the Stanford University faculty in 2004 as the first holder of the Gretchen B. Kimball Director of Orchestral Studies’ Chair and Associate Professor in Music Performance. Currently he is the Artistic Director of the Stanford Pan-Asian Music Festival, which he founded in 2005.

Two core principles underlie the ECYS mission: **Music Education**, to nurture, train and develop young musicians from culturally diverse backgrounds and encourage a lasting appreciation of music, and **Musical Excellence**, to provide high-quality performance opportunities for young
people and outstanding musical events for the wider community. The Senior Symphony, El Camino Youth Symphony’s preeminent orchestra, is comprised of over 100 talented young musicians from all over the Bay Area who perform professional repertoire and travel internationally. ECYS offers its students the opportunity to learn from and perform with world-renowned musicians, recent guest artists include pianists Ilya Yakushev and Naomi Kudo, violinists Philippe Quint and David Kim, cellist Zuill Bailey, and Brandon Ridenour, trumpet. Previous Music Directors include Dr. Camilla Kolchinsky, Melissa McBride, and Dr. Arthur Barnes. Virginia Kiraly is the current President of the Board of Directors.

*Interviews and photographs are available upon request!*