

Living

El Paso Times

Saturday, Sept. 17, 2005

Features Editor Paula Monarez Diaz

Orchestra, Ioannides make beautiful music together

By Jim Braden

Special to the Times

She's the new girl in town. And the El Paso Symphony Orchestra's new conductor, Sarah Ioannides, makes her debut this weekend with the first

concert of the orchestra's 75th season.

The Australian-born, England-trained music director will lead the orchestra during a program of three works during tonight's



Ioannides

8 o'clock concert at the Abraham Chavez Theatre.

During the final rehearsal Thursday, the 80-or-so casually dressed musicians worked out timing and tones for famous music by Peter Tchaikovsky and Johannes Brahms and a third lesser-known work.

J. Wagenaar's "Taming of the Shrew" overture, Opus 25, a composition not well known to El Paso audiences, is first on the schedule.

It's a lively piece, somewhat reminiscent of animated cartoon music, with many changes

Make plans

► **What:** El Paso Symphony Orchestra with new conductor Sarah Ioannides.

► **When:** 8 p.m. today.

► **Where:** Abraham Chavez Theatre, 1 Civic Center Plaza.

► **How much:** \$10-\$35.

► **What else:** The soloist will be Alexander Kobrin, 2005 gold medal winner of the Van Cliburn International Piano Competition.

► **Information:** 532-3776; 544-8444; www.epso.org.

in tempo and lots of varied voicing among the orchestra's instruments. Ioannides and the orchestra spent more time with this piece than the program's other selections, as the conductor offered suggestions and resolved the players' questions. After that, piano soloist

REVIEW

Alexander Kobrin joined the musicians on stage for Tchaikovsky's famed Piano Concerto No. 1, Opus 23 in B-flat minor.

The Russian Kobrin — this year's Van Cliburn Completion Gold Medal winner — performed the soloist's showcase in a serious, effortless fashion. His keyboard runs are remarkably smooth, and when Ioannides occasionally stopped the orchestra to make a point or change rehearsal numbers, the dedicated Kobrin sometimes continued to finish complicated passages without the orchestra. Nobody minded.

The Tchaikovsky *concerto* is perhaps the best-known, most recognized of all such works for piano. It's been played and parodied by a wide range of musicians — from tuxedoed masters to the Muppets.

At 25 years of age, Kobrin impressively played Tchaikovsky's big opening chords as well as the delicate filigree of notes to create a memorable performance of this musical monument.

During the final rehearsal in the Abraham Chavez Theatre,

Ioannides was dressed in black as she crisply made final interpretive suggestions as to how the music would be played.

Today's program will, to a great extent, feature the orchestra's French horn, low brass, bass viol and violin-viola sections, with an occasional surprise from the timpani and bass drum.

Brahms' Symphony No. 1 in C Minor, finishes the program. The conductor's love of elegant melodies is easy to hear, and the musical pictures suggested by this work seem to describe the intrigue and mystery of night.

The orchestra and conductor

worked out a couple of unevenly played violin passages, proving that the camaraderie established during her April tryout concert wasn't a fluke.

Under Ioannides' gifted and expressive hands, she and the musicians lived up to their billing.

If this concert is any indicator, the El Paso Symphony Orchestra's 75th season is going to be a fascinating musical journey.

Jim Braden reviews entertainment for the El Paso Times.

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