



Tacoma Symphony music director Sarah Ioannides conducts the University of Puget Sound orchestra April 24.

DANE GREGORY MEYER — Courtesy of Dane Gregory Meyer

- IF YOU GO

**What:** Sarah Ioannides conducts the UPS Symphony Orchestra

**When:** 7:30 p.m. April 24

**Where:** Schneebeck Hall, University of Puget Sound, 1701 N. Union Ave., Tacoma

**Tickets:** Free

**Information:** 253-879-3555, pugetsound.edu, tacomasymphony.org

It doesn't feel like a historical moment. The University of Puget Sound orchestra is at rehearsal number 121 of the fourth movement of Shostakovich's Symphony No. 5. As the strings come in for the unison, the horns are struggling with clef changes, and the cymbalist looks a little uncertain of where he is. The brass don't quite make their triumphant entry, and the conductor stops them.

“You’ve got to get into the cycle of before your entrance to breathe in time,” the conductor says patiently, voice stuffy with a thick cold and 18 hours at an airport the night before. It’s Sarah Ioannides, new music director of the Tacoma Symphony, who’s rehearsing the university’s orchestra for their free concert Friday (April 24) — and making a little Tacoma history at the same time as the first TSO conductor to unite the two institutions since Edward Seferian began the orchestra back in 1959.

“This is an opportunity to make Sarah’s first year in Tacoma special,” said Keith Ward, chairman of the university’s Music Department, as Ioannides moved on to the third movement, pulling the second violins into their difficult opening with encouraging warmth. “She’s coming back to the roots of where the TSO began.”

A violin professor at what was then called the College of Puget Sound, Seferian began the Tacoma Symphony in 1959 as a “town-and-gown” ensemble made up of both students and local amateurs. By the time he stepped down in 1994, Seferian had established a regular performance season, pulled in high-quality soloists and set the orchestra on the path to becoming a fully professional ensemble — a path Harvey Felder was then brought in to finish. The university went on to establish its own orchestra and music school, but was searching for a new orchestra director after Huw Edwards left last December.

Ioannides, who became the Tacoma Symphony’s director last year when Felder stepped down, has spent her first year reaching out to the community both on and offstage, and UPS music faculty Maria Sampen and Gerard Morris suggested Ward ask her to guest-conduct for the April 24 concert. She accepted.

“The Tacoma area is fortunate to have such a fine institution as Puget Sound, with students and faculty who hold to a very high level of quality and excellence,” said Ioannides in a press release, adding that she chose a professional-level program to both showcase the students’ skill and give them some challenges.

As well as the mammoth and heart-rending Shostakovich, which Ioannides conducted at her audition concert for the TSO in February 2013, the program includes Leonard Bernstein’s Overture to “Candide” and “The Upward Stream” by Russell Peck, featuring UPS tenor saxophonist Brady McCowan, who recently won the school’s concerto/aria competition.

While this isn’t the first TSO-UPS collaboration since Seferian’s day — TSO players regularly give master classes, the college hosts the orchestra’s Mini Maestro kids’ concerts, and many UPS faculty and graduates have played in the orchestra — it’s a first for the current orchestra students, who appreciated the chance to work under a director of this level.

“She’s got a very unique style,” said bass principal and fourth-year music/science major Kelton Mock during the rehearsal break. “She has a much more commanding presence than I’ve seen in a college orchestra. It seems like everyone’s much more attentive today.”

“I really like how she focuses on the sound,” said principal flutist Megan Reich, a second-year music major. “She has a real feel for the piece, and she’s easy to follow.”

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