

By Michael C. Moore

9:20 a.m.



Tacoma Symphony, north of the Narrows

TACOMA — Sarah Ioannides isn't just building bridges as the Tacoma Symphony Orchestra's music director. She's also crossing them.

Ioannides begins her second season on the TSO's podium with a program of spring-inspired music that includes Beethoven's "Pastorale" symphony (No. 6), and a road trip north of the Tacoma Narrows. The first of a season-opening brace of concerts, Feb. 27, will be at Gig Harbor's Chapel Hill Presbyterian Church, with the orchestra's home opener set for the next night in the Rialto Theater in Tacoma.

Though TSO has been to Chapel Hill on two previous occasions to contribute to holiday-season performances of "The Messiah," this is the first full-orchestra march across the Narrows Bridge.

"There seemed to be a keen classical music audience there," said the Australian-born, London-raised Ioannides, who's in the second year of a five-year pact to lead TSO. She's also music director of the Spartanburg, South Carolina, Philharmonic, and a sought-after guest conductor not only around the U.S., but in Europe, as well. "It's good for us to take our concerts to some different places, expose more people to what we're doing.

"It's something I'd really like to do more of," she added. "I have a part in our planning, and as a team we decide what we can do, how much, and where we can go."

The program for the two season-opening concerts also includes Debussy's "Prelude to the Afternoon of a Faun" and the harp concerto of Elias Parish Alvars, with Valerie Muzzolini Gordon as guest soloist. Ioannides said the concerto affords concertgoers the rare opportunity to hear the harp, alongside two other, more familiar pieces seemingly geared toward ushering in the spring season.

"I always aim to present a program that would be really satisfying, and to some degree be in familiar territory," who splits time between Tacoma and her home in Stafford Spring, Conn., where she and husband Scott Hartman — who teaches trombone at Yale University — and their three children have been based. "With spring coming, the 'Pastorale' seemed to fit. It's about being out in the countryside, where he would go to escape the stresses of his everyday life. Being out in nature was very meaningful to him, and wanted to capture that in this symphony."

Ioannides is no stranger to the kind of long-haul commuting that her current coast-to-coast routine requires. She did double duty with the Spartanburg Philharmonic and El Paso Symphony Orchestra for several years, and in a New York-London commute earlier in her career. Since she's settled in her TSO post, her family travels right along with her.

"It's a life change," she said. "It's a long haul from Yale, but that's nothing new to us. We're part of our community there, and we've become part of our community here.

"It's just a bit different for us," Ioannides added of her brood, the eldest of which will be in fourth grade next fall. "It's a bit of a challenge with things like sleepovers and parties, but we make it work. At this point, they seem happy with it."

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The signs point to the family being a part of the Tacoma community for quite some time, especially since she's already announced that she'll end her tenure at Spartanburg after the 2016-17 season.

Her goal here is to continue to grow TSO into a "very important and vibrant part of the whole South Sound."

Muzzolini Gordon currently is Principal Harp of the Seattle Symphony. The native of Nice, France, is a faculty member of the University of Washington's School of Music.

PREVIEW

TACOMA SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

Who: Tacoma Symphony Orchestra, Sarah Ioannides, music director; Valerie Muzzolini Gordon, harp

What: A program of music featuring works by Beethoven, Debussy and Alvars