

Tacoma Symphony's 70th Anniversary Season finds a revitalized organization with new artistic leadership and vision

MARCH 20, 2016 / J. SUHRBIER /

World Premiere homage to Mount Rainier, Glass "Saxophone Concerto," and return of violinist Vadim Gluzman highlight Sarah Ioannides' third season

From the unusual and striking to the familiar and cherished, the Tacoma Symphony Orchestra's 2016-2017 reveals a robust, revitalized artistic institution with visionary leadership that is taking the orchestra to new heights. Founded in 1946 and professionalized during the 1990s, the Tacoma Symphony concluded a two-year international search for a new music director in 2014 with the appointment of **Sarah Ioannides**. Her inaugural season resulted in sold out concerts and a 35% increase in ticket revenue. The organization recently restated its Mission as *Building Community Through Music*; a new 10-year Strategic Plan, Artistic Vision, and refreshed brand are currently in development.

Sarah Ioannides' third season is a blend of innovation and tradition, and a remarkable demonstration of her skills as a musical curator. Guest artists include violinist **Vadim Gluzman**, whom *Strings Magazine* described as "fire walking while fiddling"; saxophonist **Amy Dickson**, just named the 2016 Young Australian of the Year; and Korean violinist **Kristin Lee**, praised for her "mastery of tone" by *The Strad*.

Major orchestral works include Dvořák's "New World" Symphony, Copland's *Appalachian Spring*, Tchaikovsky's "Winter Dreams" Symphony, and Debussy's *La Mer*. Jazz trumpeter **Jens Lindemann** will be the guest for a spring pops concert titled "Symphony Sweethearts." The **Tacoma Symphony Chorus** will perform Mozart's Requiem with the orchestra, as well as its annual *Messiah* concerts, both in Tacoma and Gig Harbor.

One of the highlights will be the World Premiere of a new symphonic poem written in homage to Mount Rainier by Puyallup native **Daniel Ott**. The work for chorus

and orchestra is being commissioned by the Symphony as part of the National Park Service centennial. Paired with Debussy's great impressionist opus *La Mer*, the project celebrates the region's richness and sense of place, and is intended to raise awareness of the plight of Mount Rainier's glaciers, which are melting at an increasing and alarming rate. The **Museum of Glass**(MOG) will create a piece of art inspired by mountain and glacier imagery. The glassblowing process will be captured on a video that will accompany the performance, juxtaposed with photography of the mountain.

On the October 22 season opening concert, Vadim Gluzman will be featured in Glazunov's Violin Concerto—performing it on the actual 1690 Stradivarius violin on which the great Leopold Auer premiered the work in 1905. In addition, Gluzman will perform with members of the string section at the Symphony's "**New World Masquerade**" Gala the previous night at Tacoma Art Museum.

November 19's concert will frontline the fascinating young saxophonist **Amy Dickson** in her own arrangement of the **Philip Glass** Violin Concerto No. 1, first heard on a critically-acclaimed RCA disc in 2010. "Amy Dickson has a luscious, creamy tone that sounds somewhere between a clarinet and a flute," writes a reviewer in *AllMusic*. She obtained Philip Glass's blessing to arrange the work for saxophone, premiering it in 2008. Because of its origins as a string concerto, it has leaps and intervals which present a formidable challenge to a wind player. It also includes lengthy phrases which require *circular breathing*: inhaling through the nose while exhaling through the mouth using air stored in the cheeks. The technique is beyond the capability of most players; Dickson pushes it beyond all previously known limits.

On December 4, the **Tacoma Youth Chorus** will return for **Sounds of the Season**, the Symphony's annual collage concert of holiday favorites. Sarah Ioannides and Geoffrey Boers will trade places this December, with Boers conducting **Sounds of the Season** at the Pantages, and Ioannides leading Handel's *Messiah* at St. Charles Borromeo in Tacoma and Chapel Hill Presbyterian in Gig Harbor. The December 15 *Messiah* at Chapel Hill launches a new three-concert series in Gig Harbor, with concerts following in February and March, each repeated across the bridge in Tacoma.

The February 25/26 concert cycle will introduce Korean violinist **Kristin Lee**, cited for her “driven, commanding performance” (*Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*), in the Tchaikovsky Violin Concerto. That same program concludes with Tchaikovsky’s Symphony No. 1 “Winter Dreams.” On March 25/26, Sarah Ioannides leads the Tacoma Symphony Chorus in Mozart’s gripping and powerful Requiem.

Jazz trumpeter **Jens Lindemann** is frontlined on **Symphony Sweethearts** on April 22. Hailed as one of the most celebrated soloists in his instrument’s history, Lindemann was recently named “International Brass Personality of the Year” (*Brass Herald*). Along with full symphony and guest jazz band, Lindemann and Ioannides will present a program of Ellington, Rodgers & Hart, Garner and others—the perfect “Lover’s Day” outing.

The season concludes on May 13 with a concert celebrating the richness and sense of place inherent in the region—from mountain to sound. Suite No. 1 from Grieg’s *Peer Gynt*, including the mysterious and fantastic “In the Hall of the Mountain King,” opens the program. This will be followed by the world premiere of the new “Mount Rainier Concerto” (a working title), written in honor of the centennial of **Mount Rainier National Park**. For chorus and orchestra, the piece is being commissioned by the Tacoma Symphony from composer **Daniel Ott**, a rising name in classical music who grew up in Puyallup and now teaches at Fordham University and The Juilliard School. Debussy’s great impressionist work *La Mer* concludes the evening.

Tacoma’s acclaimed **Museum of Glass** will create a piece of art inspired by the imagery of Mount Rainier and its imperiled glaciers. The glassblowing process will be captured on video and edited to accompany the performance on the big screen—along with images from the park. The environmentally-themed program will also incorporate educational outreach events featuring Ott, guest artists, MOG and National Park Service officials—engaging people of diverse ages and backgrounds from throughout the South Puget Sound region.

Current season ticket holders are being mailed renewal materials. New subscription orders are also being accepted; new subscribers will be seated after renewing subscribers and in advance of tickets going on sale to the general public. Subscription offerings—starting at \$108—include the Premier 8 (all concerts), and

the Master 6 (all five Classics concerts and choice of Sounds of the Season or Spring Pops). Subscribers save up to 25%—the equivalent of getting two concerts free. To subscribe, call 253-591-5894 or visit tacomasymphony.org.