

**ARTS & CULTURE**    MAY 4, 2016 5:54 PM

# Tacoma Symphony plays Stravinsky's famous 'Rite of Spring' for the first time

## HIGHLIGHTS

Final season concert also includes Rodrigo guitar concerto, de Falla

Pepe Romero is soloist for 'Concierto de Aranjuez'

Director Sarah Ioannides in town for three weeks



BY ROSEMARY PONNEKANTI

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There were no riots in the Broadway Center's rehearsal studio Monday night, but there was definitely a lot of intense concentration.

As music director Sarah Ioannides walked into the first rehearsal for Saturday night's Tacoma Symphony concert, she had just four rehearsals ahead of her to prepare the orchestra for a piece that's still as shocking as it was when it premiered in 1913, but which the symphony as a group has never, apparently, played: Stravinsky's "The Rite of Spring."

Part of a Pantages concert that includes legendary guitarist Pepe Romero playing Rodrigo's ever-popular "Concierto de Aranjuez" and Suite No. 1 from De Falla's "The Three-Cornered Hat," the Stravinsky represents the kind of challenge that Ioannides has brought in her first two years with the ensemble.

"It can be that some musicians will have played the piece and some won't have played the piece," explained Ioannides, "so (we try) to use those rehearsals to bring everyone up to speed as quickly as we can so that we can start to make music."

Ioannides is in town for over three weeks, much longer than her usual visit due to an upcoming children's concert and a new chamber series for the orchestra. She's even brought her family with her, with her three children attending school, choir and dance classes. But she is having to prepare well for "The Rite of Spring" — an extraordinarily difficult piece even today, thanks to cross-rhythms, multiple and unexpected meters, and a massive orchestra that calls for unusual instruments and extremes of register, like the famous opening bassoon solo.

In her private study time on Monday, Ioannides worked her way through a tricky bit, half conducting, singing under her breath and counting aloud as she read the score. To begin with a steady beat, she counted herself in with 11 beats — using the 11-syllable mnemonic "I-gor Stra-vin-sky is a son-of-a-(expletive)."

"It's hard," said executive director Andy Buelow. "To my knowledge the orchestra has never played this piece."

Yet, while the Paris premiere caused ballerina drama and an audience riot, "The Rite of Spring" is now part of the standard repertoire for good reason. Driving, passionate and earthy, it encapsulates a musical time period when all the rules were being broken and that connection to our primal selves that's just below the surface of civilization.

Rodrigo's "Concierto de Aranjuez," on the other hand, is possibly the best-known guitar concerto ever, used for countless films and commercials, and sways between lyrical Spanish melodies and dramatic orchestral moments.

Romero, honored by kings, heads of state and major institutions, is part of the world's leading guitar-playing family, and has more than 60 recordings to his credit.

Spanish composer Manuel de Falla's "Three-Cornered Hat" suite is equally atmospheric and was, like "The Rite of Spring," commissioned by Ballet Russe director Sergei Diaghilev. It premiered in 1919.

For the Tacoma Symphony, though, most of this week's rehearsal time will focus on the Stravinsky, with careful management by Ioannides.

"When you only have four rehearsals and a difficult program, you're having to make choices very, very fast on the spot as to what will fix itself and what (you) need to immediately stop for and redo, and that comes with experience," she said.

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## FALLA, RODRIGO AND STRAVINSKY

**Who:** Tacoma Symphony Orchestra, directed by Sarah Ioannides with Pepe Romero, guitar.

**When:** 7:30 p.m. Saturday.

**Where:** Pantages Theater, 901 Broadway, Tacoma.

**Tickets:** \$19-\$80; \$12 for students.

**Information:** 253-591-5894, [tacomasympphony.org](http://tacomasympphony.org), [broadwaycenter.org](http://broadwaycenter.org).



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