

Symphony Tacoma to feature violin soloist Kristin Lee

PUBLISHED IN THE TACOMA WEEKLY

Thursday, 16 February 2017



PRODIGY. Rising violin star Kristin Lee will make her debut with Symphony Tacoma during performances of “Classics III: Mozart & Tchaikovsky” next week. Sarah Ioannides will conduct. *Photo by Sophie Zhai / The Tacoma Weekly*

Award-winning violinist Kristin Lee - a rising star in the world of classical music - will make her debut with Symphony Tacoma next week. Lee will be a featured soloist during “Classics III: Mozart & Tchaikovsky,” a program that will begin at 7:30 p.m. Feb. 25, at Gig Harbor’s Chapel Hill Presbyterian Church and 2:30 p.m. Feb. 26, at Broadway Center’s Rialto Theater.

The shows will mark Lee’s fourth time collaborating with conductor and Symphony Tacoma Musical Director Sarah Ioannides in a relatively short span. Ioannides first became enamored with Lee’s playing in 2015, the year she had won a prestigious Avery Fisher Career Grant; and she hired her to perform Jean Sibelius’ “Violin Concerto, op. 47” with South Carolina’s Spartanburg Philharmonic Orchestra, which she also directs.

However, a serendipitous turn of events would find them sharing another far away stage weeks before that performance: Both had been hired to appear in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic that October with the National Symphony Orchestra. “So I got the second opportunity within a month to work with her,” Ioannides

recalled last week, speaking by phone from home in New Haven, Conn. “We got on great. We had a lovely time and developed a fondness and respect. ... She is a very intelligent, sophisticated, thoughtful artist with just unbelievably phenomenal technique and richness to her musicianship.”

“We had to delve into learning this violin concerto by Carl Nielsen,” Lee recalled. “It’s notoriously difficult for the orchestra and for the violin. I was doing it for the very first time, and Sarah was doing it for the first time. Our first meeting created a very strong bond right away because of this wonderful piece that was such a huge challenge for both of us.

“The concert ended up being extremely successful with great reviews, standing ovations. When I went down to Spartanburg to play Sibelius with her, I had a very high level of trust in her, the integrity of what she brings across with her music and also the charisma that she has. She’s a very petite woman, but something about her presence was just so huge and large on that stage.”

They worked together for a third time in October with the Nordic Chamber Orchestra in Östersund, Sweden. It was there that Ioannides learned that Lee, a resident of New York, would be spending more time in the Pacific Northwest: For two years, she had been helping her friend, Seattle resident Andrew Goldstein, develop the Emerald City Music series which, in its inaugural season, has showcased high-quality chamber music in unconventional settings.

“We bring it to places that are very intimate (and,) we keep our dialogue very open with our audience to make it much more of a social experience,” Lee explained. The series brought her to the University of Puget Sound’s Schneebeck Hall in November, her first appearance in Tacoma.

“It seemed to be an obvious match that she’d be in Seattle and Tacoma anyway,” Ioannides said, “and what a wonderful thing if she’d come and play with us.”

Next week’s program juxtaposes the works of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart and Russian composer Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky.

“I’m really happy with this program because it pairs two of the greatest composers of all time,” Ioannides said. “Tchaikovsky completely revered Mozart. In particular, the overture that we’ve playing is ‘The Don Giovanni Overture,’ which starts with the scary moment of the opera where the Commendatore is there as a ghost. This work was a really, really important piece (that influenced) Tchaikovsky’s early start as a composer. So when we do Tchaikovsky, the performance is in a way that emphasizes that relationship.”

Lee will join Symphony Tacoma to perform Tchaikovsky’s iconic “Violin Concerto,” among the most celebrated pieces of music in history.

“I would describe it as a very complete piece of work,” Lee said. “It really captures every single kind of emotion you could imagine. There are moments that are very youthful. It’s very warm, but also very melancholy, and very very dark and sad

“It’s also very notoriously difficult, and it wasn’t very well-received when he first wrote it because people said it’s not playable. That shows a lot of how violin playing has evolved over the years, because now, it’s become one of the standards. It’s a familiar work to many, many people. But I think in a way it’s very challenging in that sense because everybody knows it, and everybody plays it. So I’m really excited to bring my own take and my own personality to this work in Tacoma.”

Tickets are still available for next week’s performances, with prices ranging from \$19 to \$80. To learn more, call the Broadway Center box office at (253) 591-5894 or visit www.broadwaycenter.org.