

## Journey into the unknown

Symphony Tacoma presents a trio of titans

By [Christian Carvajal](#) on March 22, 2018



Charles Butler, featured trumpeter on a Haydn concerto. Photo courtesy Symphony Tacoma

When Ludwig van Beethoven died in March of 1827, possibly from cirrhosis of the liver, he'd been in poor health for years. Despite that, he managed to finish several string quartets and his now-beloved Ninth. The finale of that symphony, an allegro familiar to anyone who ever watched *Die Hard*, famously builds on Friedrich Schiller's "Ode to Joy" theme. After the maestro took to his deathbed, though, all he was able to complete of Symphony No. 10 was five short sketches. It's not absolutely clear which of his scrawls were intended for which project. Be that as it may, in

1988, English composer and musicologist Barry Cooper decided to play detective, fitting the sketches together like puzzle pieces and creating new music to fill in gaps in ways that conform to Beethoven's preferred form and structure.

The result is a so-called "hypothetical" version of one symphonic movement, a piece that can only be called "Beethoven's Symphony No. 10" because it's the closest we'll ever get to it. Imagine being handed a few pages of disconnected sheet music handwritten by a bedridden John Lennon. Now imagine being asked to turn those notes into side B of *Abbey Road*. Such is the difficulty and uncertainty of attempting such a project. Even so, the reconstructed 10th is as formally satisfying and emotionally transporting as Beethoven's greatest hits. Perhaps Cooper had the right idea after all. "This is a very valid presentation," asserts Sarah Ioannides, music director for Symphony Tacoma since 2014. "It's the only one and the best one ... I would challenge anyone to do a better job with the material."

Ioannides conducted "Symphony No. 10" in Philadelphia last November. A critic for *Philly* called her performance "particularly notable: This is music with no real performance tradition, though you wouldn't have known that from what was heard."

"Everybody will take away different meaningful moments," Ioannides says of an upcoming Tacoma rendition. "I always recommend to a listener, when you hear something for the first time, to lose any sense of expectations and ... allow it to take you on a journey into the unknown. ... Look for the beauty of contrast. Look for the complexity of polyphonic lines ... Follow the peaks and valleys, as you would exploring any new landscape."

Symphony Tacoma will present "No. 10" this Sunday alongside Brahms' Symphony No. 1, which was written in conscious homage to Beethoven's Ninth, and a Haydn concerto that highlights the talents of principal trumpeter Charles Butler. "This seemed just the right timing and program to feature (Butler)," said Ioannides, "who has had an incredibly wonderful career, formerly also the principal of Seattle Symphony." Butler, who began his career with the Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra, is the principal trumpeter for Portland Opera and a substitute for Oregon Ballet Theater and Pacific Northwest Ballet.

**BEETHOVEN & BRAHMS**, 2:30 p.m., Sunday, March 25, Rialto Theatre, 310 S. 9th St., Tacoma, \$19-\$82, 253.272.7264, [symphonytacoma.org](http://symphonytacoma.org)