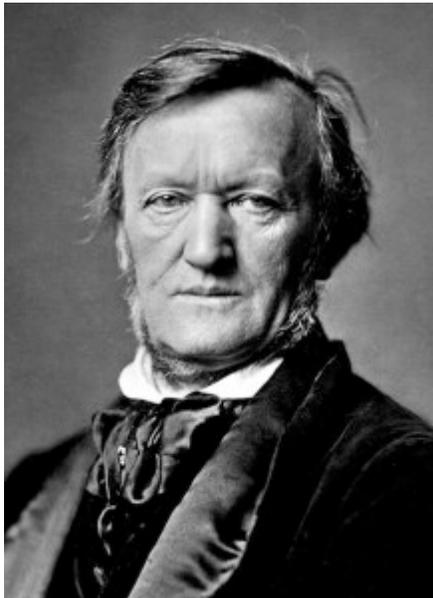


# Symphony Tacoma finishes season with an operatic flourish

By Dave Davison  
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In the ornate and spacious interior of Tacoma's Pantages Theater, on May 12, Symphony Tacoma finished its 2017-18 season in style with a combined choral and symphonic concert that included the powerful vocals of Kelly Cae Hogan, a soprano from the Metropolitan Opera in New York. Music director and conductor of Symphony Tacoma, Sarah Ioannides was like a combination of a dancer and a wizard as she expressively captained the musicians through an evening of sonic wonderment.

The evening opened with a performance of the six movements of Francis Poulenc's "Gloria," which brought to bear the full orchestra, the Symphony Tacoma Voices and Hogan's talents. Decked out in a sparkling, creamy gray gown and with eyes catching the lights as brilliantly as her jeweled ring, Hogan sang the Latin text of "Gloria" with sumptuous verbosity.

Each movement of the 1959 composition has its own quality and contour, progressing from the rolling buildup of the opening movement, to the festive sweetness on the second movement, "Laudamus Te." Hogan made her presence felt in the third movement of the piece, "Domine Deus." The fourth movement was rather short and sweet – consisting of sonic waves punctuated by melodic passages. Hogan came in again during the somber and dissonant fifth movement, "Domine Deus Angus Dei." During the final movement, the symphony achieved a pipe organ effect at times. The choir and Hogan all played their parts during the final Amen.

For my money, the first portion of the concert was just an appetizer for that which followed after the intermission. The second half of the evening featured the works of the great German composer Richard Wagner. Symphony Tacoma performed something of a "greatest hits" selection from Wagner's oeuvre.

The prelude from "Die Meistersinger" ("The Mastersingers") engages the woodwinds in a pleasant interaction before the brass and the strings engage in a kind of call and response. Those two great streams of music then flow together and build into a great, brassy fanfare.

Following that, there was a performance of the overture from "Der fliegende Hollander" ("The Flying Dutchman"). Here, the low brass seemed to brew up storm fronts of music while the strings would run up and down in windy sweeps. Majestic gales of brassy music are interspersed with light and airy moments before more musical swellings and sonic upwelling are called into being by conductor Ioannides, who, with her wand-like baton, was transformed into a Prospero-like figure. There are few composers who understand how to use the richness and the power of low brass like Wagner.

The high point of the concert came during "Liebestod" from Wagner's opera, "Tristan und Isolde." Hogan returned to the stage, now draped in a purple-gray gown. She performed in character, as Isolde, an Irish princess who is betrothed to a British king, but who is in love with Tristan. In "Liebestod," Isolde is singing

over the body of the dead Tristan. Filled with passion and pathos, Hogan delivered a demonstration of the power of the human voice. She evoked prickly chills as her voice rose to the heights of the hall. I had a vivid realization of the potential of the human body to be trained to function as a musical instrument, far more expressive than any mechanical invention. The performance brought the audience to its feet for a prolonged standing ovation.

After that, only something as fantastic as the "Ride of the Valkyres," the final piece of the evening, could come close to rivaling the penultimate selection.

With that, Symphony Tacoma's 2017-18 season came to a close. Renovations will soon begin on the Pantages Theater, so the first concert of next season will take place at the Rialto Theater. Symphony Tacoma will return to the Pantages in November.

For more on Symphony Tacoma, visit [symphonytacoma.org](http://symphonytacoma.org).