

# Symphony delivers strong performance in world premiere

By **Tacoma Weekly Staff** -

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Symphony Tacoma closed out its 2018-19 season with a flourish, with a performance of Beethoven's 9th Symphony "Choral." But the real highlight was a world premiere of "In Hopes of Finding the Sun." Composed by Hannah Lash, a rising star in American orchestral music, the piece served as a perfect opening act. Written as response to response to Beethoven's 9th, particularly "Ode to Joy," it perfectly complemented the masterpiece by the German composers.

Prior to the performance, Lash spoke to a group of Symphony Tacoma season-ticket holders, board members and other supporters. She discussed her childhood in upstate New York. At the age of 4 she began taking violin lessons under the Suzuki method. Even at that young age, she imagined herself being a composer when she grew up. Her teaching did not include notation at first, as she learned to read music at age 6.

She attended the Eastman School of Music at the University of Rochester, where she studied harp performance. She later earned a Ph.D. in composition for Harvard University. Lash described her dual goals of playing as well as composing music, which was the focus of her doctoral dissertation. Lash is currently a professor at Yale University, where she teaches composition to graduate students.

She discussed how her piece was inspired by Beethoven, and likened her approach to this composition to making a dish with leftovers, including basil as a flavoring agent. "You can taste the basil in my piece."

Lash said many people this work by Beethoven with a feeling of joy, but she interprets as having darker meaning as an

exploration of death. The text is her re-imagining of Schiller's poem, which Beethoven set.

Geoffrey Boers, director, noted that Symphony Tacoma began practicing her work a month ago. He described it as a challenging piece of music to learn in such a short time.

Sarah Ioannides, music director, did a marvelous job conducting the orchestra. At 15 minutes long, "In Hopes of Finding the Sun" was very effective in utilizing a short period of time to make a powerful musical statement. It shifted back and forth from the stringed instruments taking the forefront to them stepping back and the woodwinds moving into the spotlight.

The chorus added another layer of complexity to the composition.

"In Hopes of Finding the Sun" is an impressive work; we look forward to hearing more great output from Lash in the future.