

A Very Busy Season

Maestro brings two world premieres to SoNA

BECCA MARTIN-BROWN
NWA Democrat-Gazette

The Paul Haas masterfully wielding the baton in front of the Symphony of Northwest Arkansas is just one incarnation of a very busy man.

This summer, he was in New York City collaborating with Nouveau Classical Project on “Mysterium Novum,” a synesthetic music and art experience; created a musical and visual experience to celebrate the 70th anniversary of the Fay Jones School of Architecture and Design at the University of Arkansas and the opening of a new building; saw the opening of an installation featuring his work at the Anchorage Museum; conducted the Young Artists Orchestra at Tanglewood; and earned a permaculture design certificate, studying and camping on a farm in upstate Vermont.

And he also put together a season for SoNA that includes not one but two world premieres.

“When I heard Adam Schoenberg’s string quartet music, it was so beautiful that I asked him if he’d be willing to write a version for SoNA’s entire string section,” Haas says. “He was excited about the idea, and so in January 2017 — a year after our conversation — we’ll be unveiling his piece onstage at the Walton Arts Center.

“David Leisner is a wonderful friend and colleague, and we’ve had great



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Paul Haas returns to the baton for a 2016-17 SoNA season that includes two world premieres.

conversations ranging pretty much the entire gamut of experience,” Haas goes on. “So when I heard he had written a piece for guitar and cello that dealt with the breath, I knew I had to hear it. When I did, I was blown away by its simplicity and its profundity — so much so that I asked him if he’d be willing to expand on that idea to create a piece for full orchestra. To my delight, he accepted the challenge, and we’ll

be hearing it on the very same concert where David is our guest guitar soloist.”

But that’s not all. “We’re welcoming three distinguished guest artists and planning special collaborations with Crystal Bridges and TheatreSquared,” adds SoNA Executive Director Matthew Herren. “And we can’t wait to perform our full season of beautiful, exciting music in the newly renovated Walton Arts Center.”

FYI

SoNA Season

DEC. 3 — A Very SoNA Christmas, 7:30 p.m., Walton Arts Center: A collection of sacred and secular music celebrating the magic and beauty of Christmas. Featuring the SoNA Singers, Schola Cantorum and special guest soloists.

DEC. 4 — The Snowman: A Family Concert, 2 p.m., WAC: A holiday family favorite returns for a third year to the Walton Arts Center for a special screening of the award-winning film “The Snowman” while SoNA musicians

bring to life the extraordinary musical score. Tickets are \$8.

JAN. 28 — Masterworks I: Momentum, 7:30 p.m., WAC: With the world premiere of Adam Schoenberg’s “Slo-mo.”

MARCH 4 — Masterworks II: Beethoven 5, 7:30 p.m., WAC: With violinist Alexi Kenney playing Sibelius’ Violin Concerto.

APRIL 29 — Masterworks III: The Romantic, 7:30 p.m., WAC: With the

world premiere of David Leisner’s “Pranayama” and Leisner playing classical guitar on Rodrigo’s Concierto de Aranjuez.

JUNE 3 — Pops: Music and Animation, 7:30 p.m., WAC: Featuring a special guest appearance by TheatreSquared.

Season subscription prices are \$125, \$185 & \$235 (for five concerts, excluding “The Snowman”). Single ticket prices are \$30, \$42 & \$52.

INFO — 443-5600

WHAT'S UP

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ON THE COVER

Nora McCormick of Prairie Grove smiles as she holds her 9-month-old son Jackson on the merry-go-round at the 118th annual Tontitown Grape Festival.

STAFF PHOTO ANDY SHUPE

