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BREAKING

PSO welcomes violin professor in key role

By KELLY FARRELL kfarrell@paducahsun.com

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Dr. Ching-Yi Lin is the new concertmaster for the Paducah Symphony Orchestra. She's an associate professor at Western Kentucky University. The PSO's new concert season opens Saturday, Sept. 17.

Photo by Rina Ricketts

PADUCAH — An acclaimed violinist will take the spotlight this weekend at The Carson Center, as the Paducah Symphony Orchestra opens its 2022-23 concert season for the community and officially welcomes Dr. Ching-Yi Lin as its new concertmaster.

Lin, an associate professor at Western Kentucky University, began learning violin at a young age, and has since performed around the world. Her music career, whether playing or teaching masterclasses, has taken her to the National Concert Hall in Taipei, Taiwan, and to several other countries, including South Korea and Norway, in addition to the United States.

She's always had an interest in music, having started piano at age 4.

"I enrolled in this special music school, because I grew up in Taiwan, and they required you to have a minor at this ripe age of 7 years old, and violin was what I picked. I just kept playing. My family moved to the states when I was 12. It wasn't so easy to buy a piano, so I just kind of kept playing (violin)," she told The Paducah Sun.

"I also probably just kept playing because I didn't speak any English, so music and violin seemed like something easier for me ... and to communicate because I didn't speak the language. I just kept playing, and kept playing, and kept playing, and never thought about doing anything else with my life."

Lin shared that she loves the sound of the violin, and teaches violin to pupils ranging from young children to graduate students. She thinks playing and teaching violin goes “hand-in hand,” and that teaching actually helps her play better as a musician.

“Inevitably, if you are constantly nagging on your students to have really good technique, you are going to want to go home and try to set a good example,” she said.

Wearing different hats throughout her career, Lin expressed excitement about serving as the PSO’s concertmaster and said she loves the Paducah symphony — its musicians, its conductor and the concert hall of The Carson Center. She also loves the PSO’s programs, noting that the programming introduces repertoire of substance, which was a “really big draw” for her.

“I’m both incredibly honored, and just thrilled, and can’t wait to see what this new chapter brings,” she said, on being concertmaster.

Maestro Raffaele Ponti, the PSO’s conductor and artistic director, described the role as being key to the string section for a conductor and that the musical relationship is “very, very intricate and very important.” He also reflected on the PSO’s previous concertmaster, Sue-Jean Park, and expressed gratitude to her, noting that Park did an “excellent job.”

“We were able to make some really great strides and accomplish a lot of things, so I can’t thank her enough,” he told The Sun. “She did really great and I wish her well for her future endeavors now that she’s moved away.”

Ponti said he knew Lin from her previous performances playing with the orchestra.

“I was impressed with her playing then and when this position became available, I had a very short list of people that I wanted to have sitting in that chair,” he said.

“And, after conversations with a few people, she quickly rose to the top — not only musically, but I knew that this was a personality that was going to be able to help me bring the string section again to even a higher level.”

Ponti said the season’s first concert of “Sheherazade” is perfect to introduce Lin to the community with, adding that the classical work by Russian composer Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov has a “huge concertmaster solo.”

Opening night is Saturday, Sept. 17 at The Carson Center, where the symphony will perform “Sheherazade.” The concert will also feature cellist Julian Schwarz, who is set to perform Edward Elgar’s Cello Concerto. Schwarz was originally scheduled to play with the symphony back in 2020, but that was delayed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Lin said the two different pieces, “Sheherazade” and Elgar’s Cello Concerto, are “phenomenal gems” in the classical repertoire. “The Rimsky-Korsakov ‘Sheherazade’ has a beautiful violin solo that is like a dream of every musician to play,” she added.

She invites and welcomes people to attend a PSO concert, if they haven’t before, because “it’s magical and it’s special.”

“I think it’s very family-friendly, and every decade — every century, people think that classical music is in danger, but it’s really never in danger because it really touches our heart and our soul in a very special way,” Lin said.

More information about the PSO's new concert season is available online at paducahsymphony.org, including tickets and other details.

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