

ARTS

Young musician merges her two passions

Pacific Youth Symphony Orchestra's 17-year-old concertmaster Rubi Lee's goal is to uplift the community

BY MARRIE STONE

Rubi Lee, one of Irvine's youngest preeminent musicians, performed as a guest violin soloist with the Pacific Symphony Orchestra in five concerts this summer, playing a movement from Tchaikovsky's Violin Concerto in Irvine parks and other venues across OC. It was a major step for this rising musician, but only the first in her promising career.

How did you get your start as a musician?

I began playing at age 6 after attending a friend's violin lesson. I couldn't even hold the violin properly. But I remember going home and replaying violinists performing "Carmen Fantasy" over and over.

Tell us about the concerto you played this summer.

We moved to Irvine from the Bay Area during the pandemic, and music became an outlet for me. Tchaikovsky's Concerto resonated with me. There's a lot of emotional turbulence and complexity throughout the piece. Tchaikovsky was going through depression during that time, and during quarantine, I listened to this piece a lot. It allowed me to express emotions that words couldn't. Those emotional aspects connected with audiences when I was performing it this summer.

How much time do you devote to music each day?

I practice between four and five hours each weekday and more on weekends. I attend the Pacific Academy in Irvine, which allows me flexibility to study at the Colburn Conservatory of Music in Los Angeles.

How does music enhance your life?

I've learned how to express myself and let other people see my true intentions through music. It's



Rubi Lee was a guest soloist for five concerts with the Pacific Symphony Orchestra over the summer.

reassuring to see musicians collaborate and uplift one another, creating something beautiful for audiences.

Will you pursue music as a career?

Yes, I plan to pursue a double major in college: music and psychology. I'm interested in music's beneficial impact on elderly patients struggling with dementia and Alzheimer's. I want to merge my two passions to create a project that can uplift communities and spread the value of music.

Are there specific things you like about Irvine?

I love the natural surroundings and nearby parks. They are a great place to unwind between concerts and rehearsals. And I love all things Korean – from food to K-pop. My Korean culture is an important part of my life here.

See Pacific Youth Symphony Orchestra at 7 p.m. Nov. 18 at Renée and Henry Segerstrom Concert Hall. Tickets are free, but reservations are required. Go to pacificsymphony.org for more information.

HOLIDAY ARTS EVENTS



Hikari Festival of Lights

Loosely translated, hikari means lights in Japanese. Check out more than a million twinkling lights at Tanaka Farms while sipping

hot cocoa and going for a wagon ride. There are also arts and crafts, games, a chance to meet Santa and live music on Friday and Saturday nights. *Adults \$25-\$35; children \$15-\$25, 4:30-9 p.m., Nov. 29 through Dec. 29 (closed Dec. 24 & 25), tanakafarms.com*

Holiday music

Celebrate the season with several festive concerts in December at Irvine Barclay Theatre. The Juilliard-trained sibling piano quintet, The 5 Browns, will perform Dec. 1; the Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra brings its Big Band Holidays tour Dec. 5; Canadian Brass returns to Irvine on Dec. 12; and the renowned cappella group, The King's Singers, will travel from the United Kingdom to perform Dec. 13. thebarclay.org

Christmas Train

All aboard the Irvine Park Railroad's annual Christmas Train for a magical holiday journey to the North Pole to meet Santa Claus. After your

festive ride, explore Santa's Village, where you can enjoy activities such as ice fishing, cookie decorating, mini diggers and much more. *Irvine Regional Park, Nov. 29-Dec. 23, irvineparkrailroad.com*

'The Nutcracker'

Create holiday memories for your family by sharing the magic of Festival Ballet Theatre's production of "The Nutcracker," featuring colorful scenery and dazzling costumes, which make this age-old tradition sparkle like new. *Irvine Barclay Theatre, Dec. 7-8, 14-15 and 20-24, thebarclay.org*

Illuminate Irvine

Gather family and friends to visit winter-wonderland-themed activities and classic holiday music, all leading up to the lighting of the Holiday Tree with thousands of twinkling lights. Be sure to stop by Holiday Market inside Hangar 244. *Great Park Palm Court Arts Complex, 3 p.m. Dec. 7, cityofirvine.org*



PHOTOGRAPH BY SKYE SCHMIDT