

Centralia-raised piano prodigy Charlie Albright plays with the Tacoma Symphony

Tacoma News Tribune November 18, 2014



Award-winning pianist Charlie Albright of Centralia will play with the Tacoma Symphony this Sunday.

It's clear that Charlie Albright is popular in the South Sound. The nationally known pianist, music prodigy and Centralia native has attracted so many ticket-buyers to his performance with the Tacoma Symphony this Sunday that the orchestra has had to move the concert from the Rialto to the Pantages, which has about 300 more seats.

It helps that he's playing the Tchaikovsky Piano Concerto No. 1, an all-time audience favorite; the rest of the program is equally beloved: Beethoven's "Fidelio" overture and Brahms' Symphony No. 2.

But then Albright is used to being in demand. A repeat soloist with the Olympia Symphony, where friends and family from his childhood home in Centralia flock to visit, the 26-year-old Albright was also asked recently by new TSO director Sarah Ioannides to fill in at the last minute for a soloist with her other orchestra in Spartanburg, South Carolina — where he also played the

Tchaikovsky No. 1. Now on Albright's YouTube channel (youtube.com/user/pianomanca/videos) along with classics such as Chopsticks, Prokofiev-style improvisations, and a Rachmaninov-esque Harry Potter imitation, the Tchaikovsky performance is swift, nimble and fluid.

"I was looking for young rising soloists (for the Tacoma Symphony) and found Charlie," said Ioannides last month as she took up her new position in Tacoma. "He's an amazing improviser, very talented."

Albright began piano lessons at age 3, but he also had a talent for math and science, gaining his Associate of Science degree from Centralia College while still in high school. Since then he's earned a joint degree of Pre-Med/Economics at Harvard University and a Master of Music at the New England Conservatory, an Artist Diploma from the Juilliard School of Music, and awards from the Arthur W. Foote to an Avery Fisher Career Grant. Called one of "the most gifted musicians of his generation" by the Washington Post, he's now building an international solo career, appearing this year with the BBC Orchestra, the Edmonton Symphony, and in recitals from Germany to the United States.