

today

Violinist eager to revisit Honolulu stage

By Steven Mark
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The Hawai'i Symphony Orchestra launches its second season this weekend, and classical music lovers aren't the only ones excited about it. Guest soloist Sarah Chang and guest conductor Jahja Ling are happy to be coming back to perform with the orchestra that rose out of the ashes of the Hono-

HAWAII SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

>> **Where:** Blaisdell Concert Hall
>> **When:** 8 p.m. Saturday, 4 p.m. Sunday
>> **Cost:** \$32-\$90
>> **Info:** 800-745-3000 or ticketmaster.com

lulu Symphony.

"I can't wait to go back. I'm literally counting the days," Chang said in a phone call from Boston, where she was preparing for a concert a day after performing in Los Angeles.

She's enjoyed a jet-setting lifestyle for more than 20 of her 32 years, juggling not only a full concert schedule, but a whirlwind of activities that have had her serving

on a presidential commission on Russian relations and as a cultural ambassador promoting children's music education worldwide.

Just recently, however, Chang posted on Twitter that she's found a "balance" between her personal and professional life, which to her means "working with the most amazing conduc-

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COURTESY HONOLULU SYMPHONY

Violinist Sarah Chang performs with the Hawai'i Symphony Orchestra this weekend.

MUSIC: Violinist Chang to play concerto by Bruch

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tors and phenomenal orchestras" while still finding time for friends and family back in Philadelphia, where she was born and lives when she's not touring.

"When you realize something about yourself, whether it's your professional life or personal, it rounds you out a bit," she said. "I'm in a happier place now, and for something like music — it's such an emotional profession — I think when you're in a good place, that sort of overflows and influences how you play."

"I'm one of those people who have a lousy poker

face. If I'm happy, I'm infectious, but if I'm ... angry about something, I'm not really good at hiding it."

In Honolulu she'll play Bruch's Violin Concerto No. 1, which has become a signature work after an unusually long period of gestation. Chang learned it at age 5 as an audition piece for the Juilliard School but put it down for a decade before bringing it back into her repertoire. She finally recorded it in 2009. A performance of the piece a year later was praised in The New York Times for "an emotional investment (that) made it all sound unusually personal."

"It's a beautiful, glorious, romantic piece," she said. "When it comes to being unapologetically heart-on-your-sleeve romanticism, this is it. ... What I love about the Bruch is the fact that Joseph Joachim (a celebrated violinist who helped revise the work after its initial performance) has his handprints all over it. Some of my favorite concertos are ones that Joachim worked on."

Ling, conductor of the San Diego Symphony, also was a child prodigy. As a 3-year-old in his native Indonesia, he was able to pick out melodies and even harmonies on the piano, learning from European teachers when Indonesia was a Dutch colony. He got a scholarship to Juilliard after an American vacationing on Bali heard him play, and has gone on to work with some

of the great American conductors, including Leonard Bernstein and George Szell.

Both of those great conductors will leave their mark on this concert through Ling. The program features Bernstein's "Overture to Candide," which Ling saw him conduct. "He taught me how to know the score, how to conduct to live the music, and to inspire the musicians to play the content of the music, not just the notes," Ling said of Bernstein.

Also on the program is Dvorak's Eighth Symphony, which Szell recorded with the Cleveland Orchestra. "When I got to Cleveland, I learned all of his craftsmanship — how he bowed it, how he balanced it, all the phrasing, the articulation," Ling said. "I learned my part, and I'll bring that to Honolulu this time."