

# A 'CLASSICAL' GAS

Liberty Theatre launches Classical Series with acclaimed Finnish pianist; pro musicians to hold workshops with high school band students

By JANAE EASLON  
FOR COAST WEEKEND

The Liberty Theatre is kicking off its long-planned Classical Series Saturday, Sept. 23. The first performance features the Portland Chamber Orchestra and returning Finnish pianist Ruusamari Teppo at 4 p.m.

All ages are welcome; admission is \$30.

For \$60, the Astoria Music and Dining Package includes the first Classical Series performance, along with a prix fixe menu at Astoria Coffeehouse & Bistro and Carruthers Restaurant, followed by the Cascadia Concert Opera's "Opera and Tango" show at Clatsop Community College's Performing Arts Center at 7 p.m.

"We have a very significant Finnish community here, so that group of folks will be working together and happy to come out for this," Bereniece Jones-Centeno, the Liberty's artistic director, said.

Teppo is related to the Finnish composer and violinist Jean Sibelius (1865-1957), who wrote works such as "Finlandia" and "Kullervo Symphony," and became one of the most well-known composers in Scandinavia.

Teppo previously performed in Astoria for the "March Mini-Fest" in 2015.

The Classical Series features vocal and instrumental artists — specifically, soloists, orchestral and chamber music, who will take advantage of different sections of the Liberty Theatre.

## Seeing sparks

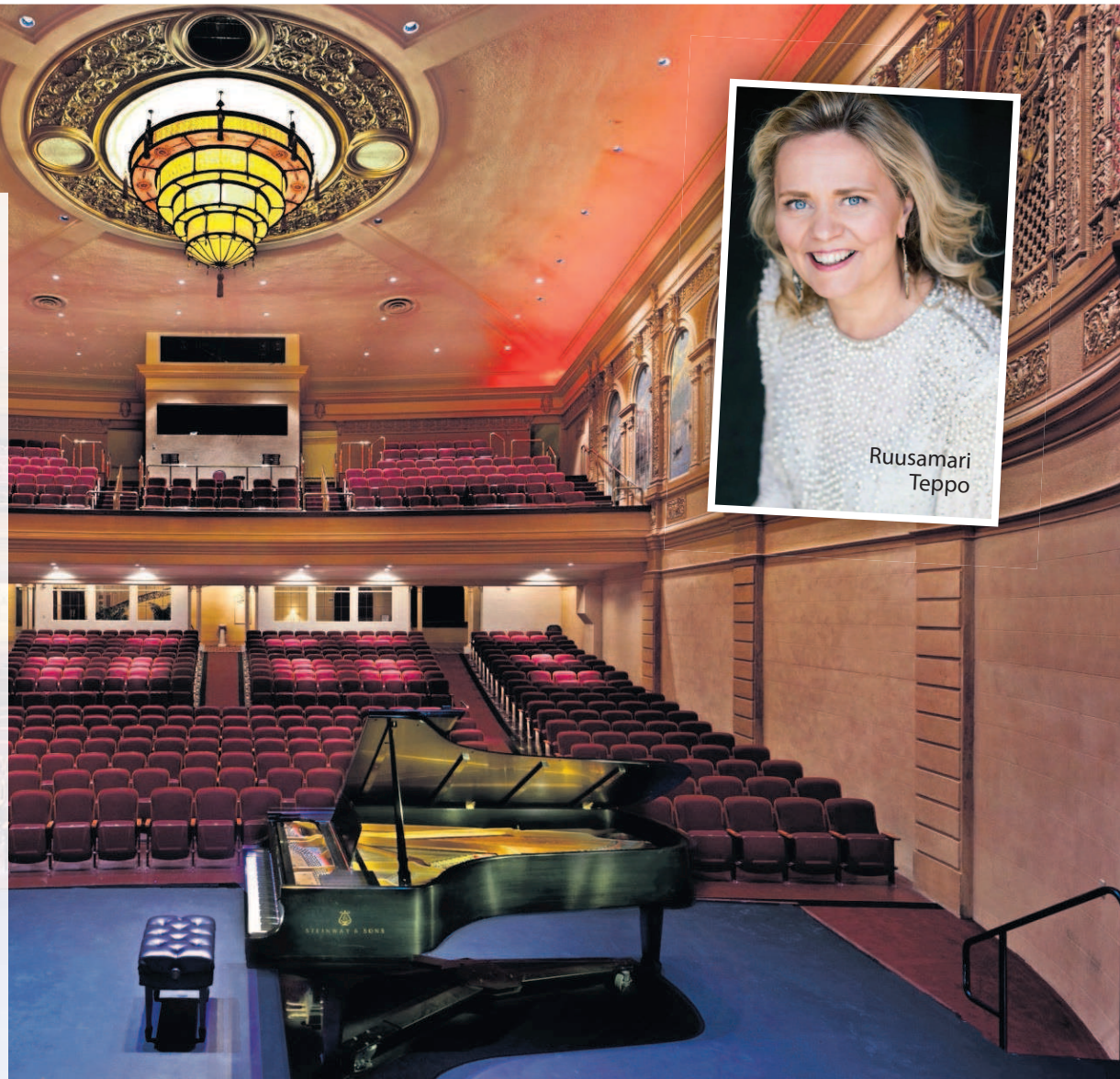
The series musicians will hold free workshops with Astoria High School students participating in band, choir, orchestra and dance.

Students can prepare music to get feedback from the artists, whole student music sections can work with individual pros, or students can learn more about how to be a professional musician.

"I feel strongly that the Liberty should be one of the performing arts hubs in the county, and I think the way to do that is to partner with the school," Liberty Theatre Director Jennifer Crockett said.

Students don't often get to see professional musicians in Clatsop County, she said.

Jones-Centeno said she and Crockett were lucky to have music education growing up, "so we believe students should get a similar exposure and allow the artists to enjoy the process and share it with the next generation."



Ruusamari  
Teppo

SUBMITTED PHOTOS

## CLASSICAL SERIES SCHEDULE

**The Portland Chamber Orchestra with Ruusamari Teppo on Sept. 23, 4 p.m.**

The Schubert Ensemble of London on Oct. 4, 7 p.m.

The Tacoma Opera on Nov. 17, 7 p.m.

PROJECT Trio on Jan. 4, 7 p.m.

Song & String Trio on Feb. 4, 3 p.m.

The Bodhi Trio on Feb. 17, 3 p.m.

The Delgani String Quartet on March 16, 7 p.m.

The Oregon Brass Quintet on April 26, 7 p.m.

The Solstice Wind Quintet on May 25, 7 p.m.

Matthew Pierce, the high school choir director, said his students enjoy the chance for guests to be in the classroom with them. About 50 of Pierce's students will work with The Tacoma Opera before its Nov. 17 performance.

"I have a certain way I look at things and

describe stuff to them, but it is neat to see them spark when a guest says something, and they go, 'Oh, I get it!' or 'I never thought about it that way,'" Pierce said.

## Real-world examples

"With music being an aural tradition where you are always listening to others and trying to hear what they are doing, it is valuable to have those real-world examples for the kids," Pierce continued. "It is nice for them to ask questions and not just have recordings to learn from."

Students will be surveyed before and after the workshops, helping the theater gauge the collaboration's success.

"Some have asked why we will only work with Astoria High, but I believe once we get through this pilot year developing and keeping things manageable, we can see about opening up offerings to other schools in the future," Jones-Centeno said.

*Tickets to the Liberty Theatre's shows can be purchased on its website.* CW