GSO concerts inspired by painting and dance

'The Firebird' features music from Stravinsky's first ballet

By Paul Hyde
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The Greenville Symphony Orchestra's Masterworks concerts on Saturday and next Sunday draw their inspiration from painting and dance.

Stravinsky's "Firebird" Suite, one of the cornerstones of 20th-century classical music, serves as the major work on the program.

Also featured are two pieces less often heard in the concert hall: Paul Hindemith's "Mathis der Maler" ("Matthias the Painter") and Claude Debussy's "Printemps" ("Spring").

"The whole program is designed to show the connection between art and music and to show how music can be inspired by art," says the Greenville Symphony Orchestra's music director, Edvard Tchivzhel, who'll conduct the program.

"What all these composer have in common also is that they were all contemporaries," Tchivzhel says. "They created the new musical language of the 20th century."

Stravinsky's "The Firebird," dating from 1910, was the first of the Russian composer's revolutionary ballet scores.

The ballet's colorful story, a traditional fairy tale of good versus evil, resulted in some of Stravinsky's most dramatic and majestic music.

Hindemith's three-movement work was inspired by the triptych that serves as the altarpiece of the Church of St. Anthony at Isenheim, painted by the 16th-century artist Matthias Grunewald.

"Each movement relates to one of the paintings in the altarpiece," Tchivzhel says. " 'Mathis der Maler' is one of the great masterpieces of the 20th century."

The three movements, each named after the scenes painted by Grunewald, are titled "The Concert of Angels," "The Entombment" and "The Temptation of Saint Anthony."

"Mathis der Maler" began life as an opera by Hindemith in which the German composer sought to protest the rising Nazi menace.

Debussy's two-movement "Printemps" was inspired by Botticelli's famous painting "Primavera."

Debussy's early work, dating from 1887, first earned the composer's music the description of "impressionism."

Similarly to the impressionistic painters of the time, Debussy evokes the effect of ever-shifting light on his sensuous and iridescent sonic landscape.

" 'Printemps' depicts the beginning of spring, followed by spring in full blossom, finishing with an ecstatic dance when all nature is awakened," Tchivzhel says.

Tchivzhel notes that "Printemps" is particularly timely, given that Tuesday is the first official day of spring.

On Monday, Tchivzhel and John Nolan, curator for the Museum & Gallery at Bob Jones University, will lead a salon-style dialogue on this weekend's concerts. The event, "Art as Music's Muse," takes place at 7 p.m. at the Spoonbread Restaurant in the Westin Poinsett Hotel in downtown Greenville.

Nolan will open the salon with a presentation and discussion on the inspiration behind "Mathis der Maler," and Tchivzhel will explore the Russian folktale that inspired Stravinsky's "Firebird" Suite.

The GSO salon is free to the public, and reservations are not required. Dinner and drinks will be available for purchase from the Spoonbread Restaurant. Dinner reservations can be made by calling 864-421-9700.

■ **Read Paul** Hyde's arts blog **under** "Entertainment" at greenvilleonline.com.



Greenville Symphony conductor Edvard Tchivzhel says the upcoming "Firebird" concert showcases the connection between music and art.

YOU CAN GO

What: The Greenville Symphony Orchestra's concerts, "The Firebird"
When: 8 p.m. Saturday; **3 p.m. Sunday, March 25**
Where: Peace Center Concert Hall
Tickets: $15 to $52
Information: 864-467-3000 or www.peacecenter.org