GSO opens 64th season

Top soloists featured in 'Double Delight'

By Paul Hyde
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The Greenville Symphony Orchestra opens its 64th concert season Saturday evening featuring two popular works by beloved composers: Brahms' Double Concerto for Violin and Cello, and Tchaikovsky's Symphony No. 4.

"These are two jewels of the repertoire — profoundly emotional works," says the orchestra's conductor and music director Edvard Tchivzhel, who will be on the podium for the concert.

The Brahms concerto features Karen Gomyo (violin) and Christian Poltera (cello), whom Tchivzhel calls "two of the finest soloists of our time."

Gomyo will be familiar to Greenville classical music audiences. She last appeared here in 2008 as soloist in a well-received performance of Lalo's "Symphonie Espagnol."

"She played with great success," says Tchivzhel, speaking by phone from Brisbane, Australia, where he currently is conducting the Queensland Symphony Orchestra.

The Zurich-born Poltera, meanwhile, is making his Greenville Symphony debut.

Both of the young soloists enjoy international careers, performing with major orchestras in New York, Los Angeles, Oslo, Munich and elsewhere.

In planning the concert, Tchivzhel says he decided to spotlight two 19th century romantic composers who nevertheless were miles apart in temperament and expression — and sometimes critical of each other's works.

Tchaikovsky, with his heart-on-the-sleeve emotionalism, was the most fervent and sentimental of composers while Brahms was far more reticent.

"Brahms was a romantic in

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classical formal dress," Tchivzhel says. "Under Brahms' classical dress, you can hear his very romantic heart."

Brahms' Double Concerto, his very last work for orchestra, dates from 1887 and exhibits the dignity and poetic serenity characteristic of the German composer's late works.

"It's Brahms at his very best," Tchivzhel says.

Tchaikovsky's Fourth Symphony, meanwhile, is one of the most often performed staples of the orchestral repertory. Composed in 1878, it focuses on the theme of fate: "the fatal power which hinders one in the pursuit of happiness," as Tchaikovsky says in one of his letters.

But the work also is about the struggle to rise above formidable challenges. The symphony proceeds from a mood of anxiety and melancholy to find hope and joy in the commonplace.

"I think it's popular because of its incredible melodic richness and energy," Tchivzhel says. "It also expresses the Beethovenian idea of striving to overcome tragedy and arrive at victory."

Tchaikovsky's Fourth Symphony may resonate especially with listeners in the wake of the recent 10th anniversary of Sept. 11, 2001, Tchivzhel says.

"We are shaken by terrible tragedy but we who survive must find some sort of spiritual strength to love this world and humanity," he says. "We have to believe in the ultimate victory of good over evil."



Cellist Christian Poltera is a featured soloist in Brahms' Double Concerto for Violin and Cello with the Greenville Symphony. MARCO BORGGREVE



Violinist Karen Gomyo is a featured soloist in the Greenville Symphony's opener Saturday and Sunday. COURTESY PHOTO

YOU CAN GO

What: The Greenville Symphony Orchestra's season-opener "Double Delight"
When: 8 p.m. Saturday, 3 p.m. Sept. 25 (A free pre-concert talk takes place an hour before each concert.)
Where: Peace Center Concert Hall
Tickets: $52-$15
Information: 864-467-3000 or www.peacecenter.org

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