GSO's season filled with highlights

From Masterworks to holiday fare, orchestra tempts music lovers

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Greenville Symphony Orchestra Artistic Director Edvard Tchivzhel is exuberant over the 2010-2011 season programs he and his orchestra will offer.

"Our listeners will have the best of the best of the classical repertoire," he says. "For me, with this season, it is difficult to name any particular highlight because each concert will serve as one."

Masterworks Series

The GSO opens the season with a concert Tchivzhel has titled "Beethoven's Fifth," Sept. 25 and 26. The symphony gallops in with Von Suppé's "Light Cavalry" Overture; followed by Chopin's Piano Concerto No.2, featuring American soloist Andrew Von Oeyen; and hammers to a close with Beethoven's Fifth Symphony.

Among "Orchestral Favorites," Nov. 6 and 7, Tchivzhel has included Smetana's "The Bartered Bride" Overture and "Three Dances"; Borodin's "Prince Igor" Overture and "Polovtsian Dances"; Wagner's "Tannhauser" Overture and "Ride of the Valkyries"; and Berlioz' "Roman Carnival" and "Rakoczy March."

The GSO welcomes the New Year with "Marvelous Mahler" Jan. 15 and 16, featuring the German composer's majestic Fifth Symphony. The intensely romantic work is one of Tchivzhel's favorites, he says.

Mahler's Fifth also has a special meaning for the Russian-born conductor. When Tchivzhel returned for the first time to his former homeland after his 1991 defection from the Soviet Union, he led the world-renowned St. Petersburg Philharmonic in Mahler's Fifth in a concert at the Mariinsky Theatre, the same theater in which Tchaikovsky, Borodin, Glazunov and other great composers had once conducted.

Tchivzhel says preceding the Mahler concerts, he will hold two salon-style discussions at the Bohemian Restaurant to talk about the German composer's nine symphonies and his song cycles. "His music is not only extremely romantic," Tchivzhel says, "but bears a range of emotions and contrasts that is very deeply felt."

Conducting Mahler's works is a huge challenge for both conductor and orchestra, he says, because they represent enormous power and range.

On Valentine's weekend, Feb. 12 and 13, the GSO will entertain with two of the most consistently satisfying works in the classical repertoire: Prokofiev's "Romeo and Juliet" ballet music and Tchaikovsky's "Swan Lake." The concert is headlined as "Love Stories."

March madness comes under the title of "Springtime for Schumann(n)s," a little word play on nearly identical names. The program includes German composer Schumann's Symphony No. 1 "Spring," and American composer Schuman's "Newsreel."

The March 26-27 concert also features soloist Marina Kolomiitseva in Tchaikovsky's Piano Concerto No. 2. Although it's not as well known as its predecessor, Tchivzhel says it's nevertheless a beautiful piece of music.

The April 30-31 concert represents the GSO Masterworks' "Grand Finale," with Dvorak's "New World Symphony" and Mussorgsky's "Pictures at an Exhibition."

Chamber Music

The GSO's four chamber music concerts, offered Friday through Sunday, will stick to tradition, Tchivzhel says.

The fun starts with "Oktoberfest," Oct. 15-17. The irrepressible sounds of Handel, J.S. Bach, Mendelssohn and Haydn will ring out in a concert of Baroque and Romantic music — all German, of course, and related to the traditional Munich festival of good beer and lively tunes.

A free beer tasting follows the opening concert, courtesy of Thomas Creek Brewing Company.

"An Evening with Mozart" — one of the GSO's perennially sold-out concerts — takes place Nov. 19-21. Tchivzhel says he put together a program that will flow from the humorous, as with "Ein Musikalischer Spass" ("A Musical Joke"), to the more serious, with the Salzburg wunderkind's 27th and 40th symphonies.

On March 11-13, audiences will be treated to "Mediterranean Nights," with brilliant melodies by Verdi, Puccini, Elgar and Bizet/Shchedrin. The works range from Verdi's Symphony for Strings to Elgar's "Spanish Lady" and also include Puccini's "Crisantemi" and Bizet/Shchedrin's "Carmen Suite." "The whole program is designed for strings," Tchivzhel says.

The conductor describes the final chamber series event, "Classical Twist," April 15-17, as a "funny program," because each composer imitates musical styles from earlier eras. The musical jokes include Britten's "Soirées Musicales" (after Rossini), Prokofiev's "Classical Symphony," Barber's "Souvenirs" and Daugherty's "Flamingo."

Holiday at Peace

"Holiday at Peace" is a beloved Upstate tradition that rings in Christmas cheer. The GSO returns Broadway star Doug LaBrecque to the stage. He lit up the concert hall in 2008, and Tchivzhel says he expects nothing less this time around. LaBrecque is best known as the Phantom in the Harold Prince production of "The Phantom of the Opera."

Spotlight Series

Casual, social and fun, these mid-afternoon and early evening concerts are an invitation to sip a glass of wine or a cup of coffee with friends and hear great music in the intimate setting of Centre Stage theater. The three concerts feature the GSO's principal musicians.

The first, on Oct. 30, is "Tricks and Treats" and includes Haydn's "The Joke" for string quartet; Arnold's "Suite Bourgeoisie" for flute, oboe and piano; Delécluse's "Drumstec II" for percussion and piano; and Richard Strauss' "Till Eulenspiegel" for winds and strings.

Arts

On Jan. 29, "Three's Company" presents Mozart's "Kegelstatt" for clarinet, piano and viola; Haydn's "Divertimento for Tre" for violin, cello and horn; and Mendelssohn's D minor Piano Trio.

The series concludes with "Panama Nights" on March 5 featuring Foote's "A Night Piece" for flute, and string quartet; Hines' "Yeni Makam 4" for clarinet and percussion; Poulenc's Trio for oboe, bassoon and piano and Grant Still's "Panama Dances" for sting quartet.



Greenville Symphony Orchestra

Greenville Symphony Artistic Director Edvard Tchivzhel and his orchestra have a packed season planned, starting with the Sept. 25-26 concert, "Beethoven's Fifth."

YOU CAN GO

The Greenville Symphony launches its season with its first Masterworks concert Sept. 25 and 26. For ticket information on the Masterworks and Chamber Music series, call the Peace Center box office, 467-3000. For the Spotlight Series, call Centre Stage theater, 233-6733.