Strauss, Beethoven and beer

Orchestra presents its annual Oktoberfest concerts

By Paul Hyde
Arts Writer
phyde@greenvilleonline.com

The Greenville Symphony Chamber Orchestra features one of its own stars, principal oboist Virginia Metzger, at next weekend's Oktoberfest concerts.

Metzger, a member of orchestra for the past 27 seasons, will perform the Oboe Concerto by Richard Strauss.

"It's something I've always wanted to perform," Metzger says. "Of all the oboe concertos, I think it's the most beautiful and the most accessible piece for the audience."

The symphony's popular Oktoberfest concerts celebrate the music of Germany and end with free beer offered to all.

Greenville's Thomas Creek Brewery will once again supply the beer, and Cabot Creamery will provide complimentary cheeses.

"This has become a very successful show, inspired by the beer festival in Munich," says



Greenville Symphony conductor Edvard Tchivzhel says the orchestra's Oktoberfest concerts are among its most popular of the season. STAFF/FILE

music director and conductor Edvard Tchivzhel. "The festival in Germany is celebrating its 200th anniversary, so maybe that calls for an extra portion of beer."

Also on tap for the concerts, which run Friday through Sunday, will be Bach's popular Brandenburg Concerto No. 3 and Beethoven's Symphony No. 8.

The Strauss concerto, with its lyric melodies, makes significant demands on a soloist, Metzger says.

"Strauss writes as if the oboe is a solo violin, but violin players don't have to pause for breath," Metzger quips.

She says the concerto contains its full share of pyrotechnics as well.

In addition to performing with the orchestra, Metzger works in information technology for IBM Insurance Services — a career that nicely complements her musical activities, she says.

Tchivzhel says Beethoven's Symphony No. 8 underscores a general rule about the German composer's works: The odd-numbered symphonies tend to be big and dramatic, while the even-numbered symphonies lean toward classical grace and symmetry.

"In the even-numbered symphonies Beethoven relaxed a bit

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and wrote more intimate pieces," Tchivzhel says. "The Symphony No. 8 is a great masterpiece in terms of proportion and great melodies. It's an optimistic and joyous work."

(Later in the season, in May, the Greenville Symphony features Beethoven's larger-scaled Symphony No. 9, in collaboration with the Greenville Chorale.)

Tchivzhel just returned to Greenville after conducting orchestras in Australia for the past month. He directed Brisbane's Queensland Symphony Orchestra in an international piano concerto competition and finished with a Sept. 17 public concert with the same orchestra. Works on that last program included Rachmaninoff's Symphony No. 2 and Prokofiev's Piano Concerto No. 2, with soloist Nikolai Demidenko.



Ginny Metzger will be soloist in the Greenville Symphony Oktoberfest concerts. COURTESY PHOTO

YOU CAN GO

What: The Greenville Symphony's Oktoberfest concerts
When: 8 p.m. Friday and Saturday; also 3 p.m. Sunday, Oct. 2
Where: Peace Center Gunter Theatre
Tickets: $39
Information: 864-467-3000 or www.peacecenter.org