THE UNIVERSITY OF MEMPHIS
Rudi E. Scheidt School of Music

presents

The University of Memphis Chamber Orchestra

Pu-Qi Jiang, Music Director
Nadezda Potemkina, Assistant Conductor

Friday, November 18, 2011
Harris Concert Hall
7:30 p.m.
College of Communication and Fine Arts
PROGRAM

Adagio for Strings from String Quartet, Op. 11
Samuel Barber
(1910-1981)
arranged by the composer

Siegfried Idyll
Richard Wagner
(1813-1883)

INTERMISSION

Symphony No. 40 in G minor, K. 550
Wolfgang A. Mozart
(1756-1791)

I. Molto allegro
II. Andante
III. Allegretto
IV. Allegro assai

Nadezda Potemkina, conductor

Please turn off all cell phones, pagers, and other electronic devices.
Violin I
Ruta Vendelskyte*, concertmaster
Pierce Martin
Annette Ostwald
Kristy Rhodes
Matthew Suitt

Violin II
Jamie Madera, principal
Ionut Cosarca*
Chelsea Subick

Viola
Enrique Olvera, principal
Bergen Christensen, assist. principal
Mario Williams
Andrea Schooley

Cello
Laura Azuaje*, principal
Anthony Lu
Paul Vest**
Kaitlyn Vest**

Bass
Phil Njoroge, principal
Alex Uhlmann
Rashid Lawal

Flute
Anna Wilkens-Reed

Oboe
Sky Macklay
Nathan Nix**

Clarinet
Andrew Clark, principal
Stephanie Kendrick**

Bassoon
Jeff Tiigihman
Franklin Smith**

Horn
Joseph Stevens
Rebecca Butler**

Trumpet
Andrew Lang

Orchestra Librarian
Yan Mao*

Orchestra Assistant
Arthella Williams

*Denotes foreign students from China, Lithuania, Romania, Russia, and Venezuela.
** Denotes UM orch. alumni and/or guest musicians who have kindly volunteered their time and talents to make this concert possible.

PROGRAM NOTES
In 1930s, the American musical community, both professional and amateur, was absolutely mesmerized by charismatic personality of Arturo Toscanini and his fiery interpretations of the great classics. Samuel Barber was no exception; in 1933, the 23-year-old composer, being a nephew of one of Toscanini's favorite singers, used this family connection to pay a visit to the maestro's summer house. The two men struck up an immediate friendship; moreover, Toscanini, who generally avoided contemporary music at all costs, expressed interest in premiering one of Barber's works. The composer's unique lyrical and expressive creative voice, rooted in the late 19th-century's harmonic language, was able to touch even a heart as conservative as that of Arturo Toscanini.
It took Barber several years to come up with two works that he found worthy of Toscanini's attention: in 1938, he sent the maestro his newly completed "First Essay for Orchestra" and *Adagio* for string orchestra—an orchestrated slow movement of his String Quartet of 1936. Toscanini returned the scores without a single comment. However, Barber soon found out that the maestro was so impressed that he had made a decision to premiere both pieces on his fall radio broadcasts with the newly formed NBC Symphony Orchestra. The November 5, 1938 broadcast remained Barber's most favorite performance of the Adagio—and was regarded one of Toscanini's best performances by the orchestra's principal cellist Alfred Wallenstein (must not forget, William Primrose was principal violist).

From the diary of Cosima Wagner: "When I woke up I heard a sound, it grew louder and louder, I could no longer imagine myself in a dream, music was sounding, and what music! After it had died away, Richard came to me with the five children and put into my hands the score of his "symphonic birthday greeting." I was in tears, but so, too, was the whole household."

This "symphonic birthday greeting" that awakened Cosima Wagner in the morning of December 25, 1870, was what we now know as *Siegfried Idyll*, though it was presented to Cosima under a different name. The piece was originally entitled *Tribschen Idyll*, to commemorate the name of the house—Tribschen—where the family happily resided. Richard Wagner changed the name of the piece to *Siegfried Idyll* a few years later, when selling the piece to a publisher. "The secret treasure is to become public property," Cosima bitterly complained in her diary.

This remarkable gift (from a man who was not always known for his generosity) was orchestrated for and premiered by a group of 13 musicians (one on a part). The size and instrumentation of the ensemble was dictated largely by the size of the staircase on which this "serenade" was to be performed. Conductor Hans Richter helped to rehearse the piece in secret, but for the performance surrendered the baton to Wagner, and instead learned to play the trumpet especially for this occasion, since the trumpet part is only 12 bars long. Rumor has it that he had to row to the middle of the Lake Lucerne to practice it, so no one can hear him; though most likely it is one of those musicological fairytales that are not true but too good to reject.

In this piece the composer wove together musical references to his paternal and romantic love in a tender and touching way. The opening theme, which became the opening of Act III of Wagner's opera Siegfried, a love duet between Siegfried and Brunnhilde, unmistakably refers to the composer's love for his wife. The second theme, presented by the oboe, is a lullaby, which expresses the composer's adoration of his son Siegfried. It is the most personal of all Wagner's works; the title page of the published score was subtitled "Fidi-Birdsong and Orange Sunrise"—Fidi was little Siegfried's family nickname, and the orange sunrise could be observed in Cosima Wagner's bedroom, where the orange wallpaper produced "incredibly beautiful, fiery glow" when struck by the first rays of sun.

*Siegfried Idyll* remains Wagner's only instrumental work that is regularly performed.

The G minor Symphony, K. 550, which Mozart entered into his catalogue on July 25th, 1788, is often referred to as "The Great"; possibly, to distinguish it from the other G minor symphony ("Little," K. 183), or, perhaps, to indicate its statue. The work's intensity, unconventionality, chromaticism, thematic working-out, abundance of ideas, and ambiguity—all
of these brought this piece to the center of the early nineteenth-century critics’ and musicians’ attention. There was never an agreement about the “meaning” of this symphony; some people find it filled with “regrets of an unhappy love and the agitation of passions,” while others point out its “Grecian lightness and grace.” Nevertheless, the work has been widely known, performed, and imitated. By beginning the first movement of a symphony with a quiet murmur, Mozart had ignored one of the most respected norms of symphonic writing of that time: a symphony was supposed to open with an “attention-getting” “ta-da” exclamation. K. 550 begins with a piano accompaniment, which is simply waiting for the tune to come in. This astonishing gesture reverberated through the nineteenth century, and can be found at the openings of Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony, Schubert’s string quartet in A minor, and Mendelssohn’s Violin Concerto, among others.

The opening of the first movement is as famous as it is simple; pulsating repetitive accompaniment in violas and hesitant, seemingly unmelodious, narrative of the violins, present to us one of unforgettable musical textures. The development finds the listeners unprepared for the sudden harmonic jolts that it incorporates; it serves as our first warning about all the chromatic “surprises” there are to come in the second movement and in the finale. Poignant and touching Andante in a major key is followed by a minuet, so powerful, that it may suggest anything, but certainly not dancing – even though it follows all the rules of form and structure. Turbulent finale shocks us with the eight measures of unison at the beginning of the development, but ultimately restores the order.

BIOGRAPHY

Nadezda Potemkina is currently pursuing a doctoral degree in orchestral conducting at the University of Memphis under the direction of Pu-Qi Jiang. A native of St. Petersburg, Russia, she began her music studies at the age of five as a violinist. In 1997 she entered the Herzen Pedagogical University majoring in viola and choral conducting. While in college, she was employed by the St. Petersburg State Young People’s Theater, the St. Petersburg Conservatory Symphony Orchestra, and the St. Petersburg State Theater of Opera and Ballet as an orchestra violist. In 2003 Nadya began to study instrumental conducting at the University of Northern Iowa with Rebecca Burkhardt, while working on her Master degree in viola performance there. To further her education as a conductor, she entered a graduate conducting program at Ball State University, studying with Kirk Trevor. In the United States, Ms. Potemkina has been a prizewinner in student conducting competitions and attended several Conductors Guild and College Orchestra Directors Association conducting workshops and master-classes under mentorship of Daniel Sommerville, Charles Gambeta, Viktor Yampolsky, Erin Freeman, Gustav Meier, and Marin Alsop. In July of 2010 she was awarded a Young Conductor citation by The American Prize. Nadezda Potemkina has recently completed her two-year tenure as a conductor of the Mid-South Young People’s Chamber Ensemble and Wind Ensemble in Memphis, TN. Recently, Ms. Potemkina became one of the four conductors selected to participate in the final round of “4x4 Prizes” Competition for Composers and Conductors, which is going to take place in February of 2012 on campus of the University of Oklahoma. Currently, Nadezda is looking forward to her first guest conducting appearance with Starkville Symphony Orchestra in Starkville, MS in January 2012.
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