

BY GREG WAXBERG

Special to Northeast Ledger

As it continues a season filled with beloved works from the Romantic era, the Mississippi Symphony Orchestra will present a program of French and Russian pieces on Saturday.

"Bravo III: A Dazzling Night on the Town" begins at 7:30 p.m. at Thalia Mara Hall, conducted by Music Director Crafton Beck with pianist Stewart Goodyear.

The opening work on the program will be a discovery for music lovers who know Georges Bizet as the composer of "Carmen." Also recognized for his "Symphony in C" and "Children's Games," he wrote incidental music for Alphonse Daudet's play "L'Arlesienne" (The Girl from Arles), from which two suites are derived, just like "Carmen." The four suites appear together on many recordings, and, if I were to hum a couple of selections from "L'Arlesienne," you probably would recognize them. Or, as Maestro Beck puts it: "The music is very well known to most of us, even when we cannot really say what it's from."

As a result of reading the play and exploring Bizet's score last summer, Beck will conduct a suite of six pieces that he arranged from "L'Arlesienne." The setting is rustic and rural, and quite a bit of the music is based on folk dances. The pieces are charming, rousing and memorable.

Another French suite will follow: the "Suite No. 2" from Maurice Ravel's richly-orchestrated ballet "Daphnis and Chloe." The second suite is arranged from the finale of the ballet, characterized by a radiant depiction of dawn and exciting, rhythmic dancing with lots of percussion. It is, literally and figuratively, impressionism with a "bang."

Along with Principal Timpanist Sherwood Berthold, who plays the kettle-drums, five percussionists will play

almost 10 parts, including snare drum, bass drum, cymbals, triangle, castanets, tambourine and bells (the glockenspiel). Some instruments are played more than others, so those requirements and the instruments' placement on stage will help determine who plays what.

"The percussion section adds a multitude of colorful effects and surprises, working in perfect harmony with the winds and strings to create some amazing sound images. It can get intense at times," said Greg Mitchell, a percussionist in the orchestra.

The piece also is difficult because of its time period, according to Principal Percussionist Anne Berthold. "Impressionistic pieces are harder to do because they require so much finesse, like in 'La Mer,' having just the right cymbal with the right mallet. While there are some technical things in 'Daphnis and Chloe' that are hard, it's kind of a combination of technical stuff plus the finesse," she said.

After intermission, the orchestra will

be joined by Toronto native Stewart Goodyear for Tchaikovsky's beloved "Piano Concerto No. 1," which Beck describes as a challenging piece because the soloist has control and freedom from the beginning.

"It is very difficult ... to keep the orchestra lined up with the soloist. My goal is to really make sure we are on top of our game and will be ready for anything which comes our way from Stewart," he said.

Goodyear's approach to the concerto is influenced by recordings of Tchaikovsky's operas. "Usually, when I learn a concerto by a particular composer, I want to know how the composer would write for voice, and how he or she would set the words to music," he said.

His career began partially because of the media.

"I started improvising on the piano when I was three years old, transcribing by ear what I heard on the radio, television and LPs," Goodyear said. Formal training began at age 7, and he gave his

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# Symphony presents 'A Dazzling Night'

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first professional concert at age 11 — Gershwin's "Concerto in F," with the National Arts Centre Orchestra, conducted by Boris Brott.

This is the first time Beck and Goodyear are performing together, but Beck has fond memories of this pianist's rendition of another concerto.

"I was at the Cincinnati Symphony (in 1992) when we recorded ... the Leroy Anderson Piano Concerto. Besides his talent, Stewart was surprisingly poised, focused and professional. I was impressed with this centeredness from such a young man," he said.

That performance, conducted by Erich Kunzel with the Cincinnati Pops, is on CD as a world-premiere recording.