

UCSD CHAMBER ORCHESTRA

Matus Telgarsky, violin soloist

Geoffrey Gartner, conductor

December 1, 2008

Mandeville Auditorium

8pm

Program

Overture to *Coriolanus*, Op.62

Ludwig van Beethoven

Poème for violin and orchestra, Op.25

Ernest Chausson

Danza Criolla

Astor Piazzolla

*Please note that there will be no interval in this concert.

Program Notes

Ludwig van BEETHOVEN (1770-1827)

Overture to *Coriolanus*, Op.62

In 1802, Beethoven attended a production of the play, *Coriolan* by the Viennese poet Heinrich Joseph von Collin, a writer much admired by the composer. Beethoven, in fact, considered (but dropped) the idea of writing an opera on Collin's adaptation of Shakespeare's *Macbeth*. So affected was he by Collin's treatment of the character of Coriolanus, derived through Shakespeare from Plutarch, that he was moved to write this Overture without any likelihood of using it as incidental music to the play. No doubt the protagonist's temperament—iron-willed, passionate, uncompromising and moved to reckless bravery—resonated deeply in Beethoven's psyche; he saw in Coriolanus a mirror of himself. Even for Beethoven, this overture bristles with urgent energy and outright storminess.

A musical gesture of vehement defiance opens the piece, as if the composer were thrusting his fist into the air. Aggressive unisons played by the strings are answered by angry chords from the full orchestra. The emerging main theme is a model of restless unease and dread, rendered even more intense by a lyrical countersubject. The dramatic mood heightens during the development as the hero's inner turmoil is stirred up by doubt. The recap finds the music in F minor rather than in the "correct" home key of C minor, to which it returns only with the re-appearance of the second theme. A lengthy coda counterpoises the two themes, and the overture ends in resignation and virtual silence.

Steven Lowe

Ernest CHAUSSON (1855-1899)

Poème for Violin and Orchestra, Op. 25

We are blessed to have the small but uniquely meaningful contribution of Ernest Chausson to music literature. It is also safe to say that had he not tragically crashed into a pole while riding his bicycle at the age of 44, we would have even more enchanting and scintillating examples of his colorful work.

Chausson was inspired to write *Poème* after reading a short story by Ivan Turgenev (1818-1883), entitled *The Song of Triumphant Love*. The story is of Italian origin, and tells of two young men, best of friends, who fall hopelessly in love with the same woman. Of the two, one is taller, artistically inclined, while the other is more musical, and both physically appealing to women in their own ways. Fabio, the artist, becomes the husband of the coveted Valeria, and Muzio, the music-oriented best friend, vows to leave the city, never to return until his passion for the woman has run completely dry. Fabio and Valeria live happily for five years when, surprisingly, Muzio returns, having journeyed throughout the far-east. Over dinner, he tells his old friends of his journeys through Persia, Arabia, and India, displaying artifacts, jewels, spices and exotic wines. He insists that they all partake of a certain sweet and aromatic wine, and he mysteriously invokes some incantation over the glasses. Valeria then asks him of his musical endeavors, and here I quote Turgenev, Chausson's inspiration:

"He ordered the Malay to bring him his Indian violin. It resembled present-day ones, except that instead of four strings it had three, the top of it was covered in bluish snakeskin and the delicate reed bow had a semi-circular appearance, and on the end of it glittered a pointed diamond. First of all Muzio played several melancholy—as he called them—folk songs, strange and even savage to Italian ears; the sound of the metallic strings was mournful and feeble. But when Muzio began the final song, the very sound suddenly grew stronger and quivered resonantly and powerfully; a passionate melody poured out from beneath the broad

sweeps of the bow, poured out in beautiful sinuous coils like that very snake whose skin covered the top of the violin; and the melody burned with such fire, was radiant with such triumphant joy, that both Fabio and Valeria were pieced to their very hearts and tears came into their eyes; and Muzio, with his head bent forward, pressed over the violin, his cheeks grown pale and his brows drawn together in one straight line, seemed even more concentrated and solemn—and the diamond on the end of the violin bow shed sparkling rays as it moved, as if it had also been ignited by the fire of the wondrous song...."What is it? It's a melody I heard once on the isle of Ceylon. The song is considered by the people there to be a song of happy and satisfied love..." [and] on saying goodbye, he pressed her hand ever so firmly, pushing his fingers into her palm and looking her so insistently in the face that she, though she did not raise her eyes, nonetheless felt the look on her suddenly burning cheeks."

Written for famed violinist-composer Eugene Ysaÿe, *Poème* is a work about a violinist, for a violinist, and prescribing to the Italian myth of the violin's very lure. It blends the French impressions of the East with the Italian affect of drama, and is a unique masterpiece in the history of music.

Nicholas DiEugenio

Astor PIAZZOLLA (1921-1992)

Danza Criolla

The music of Astor Piazzolla typifies the exciting creative tension between popular dance styles and the intellectual stimulation of the concert hall. From early childhood Piazzolla was a virtuoso on the *bandoneón*, a relative of the accordion with a melancholic tone ideally suited to the mood of the tango, and he was much in demand as a member of tango bands in Buenos Aires from the age of seventeen onwards. His deep identification with the tango was to remain with him for the rest of his life, but in 1941 his interest in classical music led him to seek formal composition lessons from the leading Argentine nationalist composer, Alberto Ginastera.

After studying with Ginastera, Piazzolla increasingly devoted his energies to the composition of concert music, seeking to escape from the limited creative opportunities open to jobbing tango musicians in Argentina. In 1954 he traveled to Paris on a scholarship from the French government to study with Nadia Boulanger. Boulanger immediately perceived that Piazzolla's voluminous output of earnest symphonic music did not reflect his true character, and she urged him to return to his popular roots. Inspired by this unexpected insight, Piazzolla returned to Argentina and applied his ever more sophisticated compositional techniques to this most famous of indigenous dance forms. Piazzolla's deft blend of catchy melodies, unpredictable harmonies and exciting rhythms did much to rescue the genre from incipient stagnation at a crucial juncture in its history. Dubbed *tango nuevo*, this heady modern dance music was at the time highly controversial: staunch adherents of the traditional tango hurled abuse at Piazzolla, and even physically assaulted both him and his family in the streets.

Although Piazzolla had a life-long love affair with the dance music of his own country, his obsession with national dance forms extended to the Pan-Caribbean, as evidenced by his piece for orchestra, *Danza Criolla*. A short work, *Danza Criolla* is a vibrant explosion of orchestral color brimming with rhythmic vitality.

Mervyn Cooke

UCSD Chamber Orchestra Members

Piccolo Minji Cho

Flute Minji Cho, Fatima Cruz, Ryan Hayes

Oboe Lorie Jue, Gene Kang

Clarinet Christopher Chen, Ana Kasirer-Freide, Isaac Lau, Lisa Tulathimutte

Bassoon David Savage

Horn Gordon Bean, Justin Honsinger, Kenny Huang, Sam Lau

Trumpet Bassem Shoucri, Kenneth Villaneva

Trombone Andrew Davis, Kirk Wang

Tuba Jonathon Piper

Percussion/Timpani Brian Archinal, Stephanie Morgan

Piano Brian Nuyen

1st Violin Kimmie Riskas (concertmaster), Kelly Blakely, Spenser Chan, Patricia Dang, Michelle Kong, Angela Ledl, Kristen Lednovich, Jade Lee, Ben Ou, Peter Sun, Emmie Ye

2nd Violin Christopher Kuo, Kaitlen Conner, Jason Fong, Nicolette Lea, Audry L'esperance, Leslie Manjarrez, Lisa Nguyen, Darren Siu, Eva Tseng, Emily Witham, Joyce Yoon

Viola Maria Cardona, Esmeralda Estrada, Mimi Huang, Elizabeth Sibert, Kimberly Verrel, Jasmine Yu

Cello Jesse Alm, Denaly Chen, Robert Dufau, Chia-Chiunn Ho, Stephen Salazar, Ting Shen, Stef von Huben,

Bass Eun Kim