Atlanta Symphony Orchestra

Robert Spano, Music Director
Donald Runnicles, Principal Guest Conductor

Delta Classical Series Concerts
Thursday, Friday and Saturday, February 24, 25 and 26, 2011, at 8 p.m.

Juanjo Mena, Conductor
Nadja Salerno-Sonnenberg, Violin

OSVALDO GOLIJOV (b. 1960)
  Last Round, for string ensemble (1996)
  I. Movido, urgente
  II. Lentissimo

ASTOR PIAZZOLLA (1921-1992)
  Las Cuatro Estaciones Porteñas (The Four Seasons of Buenos Aires)
  (1965-70) (arr. Leonid Desyatnikov)
  I. Primavera Porteña (Buenos Aires Spring)
  II. Verano Porteño (Buenos Aires Summer)
  III. Invierno Porteño (Buenos Aires Winter)
  IV. Otoño Porteño (Buenos Aires Autumn)
  Nadja Salerno-Sonnenberg, Violin

INTERMISSION

PETER ILYICH TCHAIKOVSKY (1840-1893)
  Symphony No. 4 in F minor, Opus 36 (1878)
  I. Andante sostenuto — Moderato con anima—Moderato assai, quasi Andante — Allegro vivo
  II. Andantino in modo di canzona
  III. Scherzo. Pizzicato ostinato — Allegro
  IV. Finale. Allegro con fuoco

“INSIDE THE MUSIC” preview of the concert, Thursday at 7 p.m., presented by Ken Meltzer, Atlanta Symphony Orchestra Insider and Program Annotator.

The use of cameras or recording devices during the concert is strictly prohibited.
is proud to sponsor the Delta Classical Series of the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra.

Delta is proud to be celebrating our 70th anniversary as Atlanta’s hometown airline. Delta’s community spirit worldwide continues to be a cornerstone of our organization. As a force for global good, our mission is to continuously create value through an inclusive culture by leveraging partnerships and serving communities where we live and work. It includes not only valuing individual differences of race, religion, gender, nationality and lifestyle, but also managing and valuing the diversity of work teams, intracompany teams and business partnerships.

Delta is an active, giving corporate citizen in the communities it serves. Delta’s community engagement efforts are driven by our desire to build long-term partnerships in a way that enables nonprofits to utilize many aspects of Delta’s currency — our employees time and talent, our free and discounted air travel, as well as our surplus donations. Together, we believe we can take our worldwide communities to new heights!

The Atlanta Symphony Orchestra’s special artistic initiatives surrounding The Atlanta School of Composers is generously funded in part by Turner Voices. Turner Voices is Turner Broadcasting’s philanthropic initiative that focuses on building the next generation of storytellers in the arts and high school education arenas.

Major funding for the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra is provided by the Fulton County Board of Commissioners under the guidance of the Fulton County Arts Council.

Solo pianos used by the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra are gifts of the Atlanta Steinway Society and in memory of David Goldwasser. The Hamburg Steinway piano is a gift received by the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra in honor of Rosi Fiedotin. The Yamaha custom six-quarter tuba is a gift received by the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra in honor of Principal Tuba player Michael Moore from The Antinori Foundation.

This performance is being recorded for broadcast at a later time. Atlanta Symphony concert broadcasts are heard each week on Atlanta’s WABE FM-90.1 and Georgia Public Broadcasting’s statewide network.

The Atlanta Symphony records for ASO Media. Other recordings of the Orchestra are available on the Argo, Deutsche Grammophon, New World, Nonesuch, Philips, Telarc and Sony Classical labels.

Media sponsors: Atlanta Journal-Constitution and WSB 750 AM.

Trucks provided by Ryder Truck Rental Inc.
Notes on the Program

By Ken Meltzer

Last Round, for string ensemble (1996)

OSVALDO GOLIJOV was born in La Plata, Argentina, on December 5, 1960. The premiere of Last Round took place at Sir Adrian Boult Hall in Birmingham, England, on October 25, 1996, with Stefan Asbury conducting the Birmingham Contemporary Music Group. Last Round is scored for strings (see, below). Approximate performance time is fourteen minutes.


Most Recent ASO Classical Subscription Performances: November 11, 12 and 13, 2004, Robert Spano, Conductor.

Last Round, by “Atlanta School” composer Osvaldo Golijov, was commissioned by the Birmingham Contemporary Music Group, who premiered the work at Sir Adrian Boult Hall on October 25, 1996, with Stefan Asbury conducting. Last Round, composed for strings, may, according to a preface in the score, be performed in three different ways, “depending on the size of the string ensemble”: (1) 9 players (two string quartets and a double-bass), (2) small string orchestra, or (3) large string orchestra.

The composer provided the following commentary on Last Round:

Astor Piazzolla, the last great Tango composer, was at the peak of his creativity when a stroke killed him in 1992. He left us, in the words of the old tango, “without saying good bye”, and that day the musical face of Buenos Aires was abruptly frozen. The creation of that face had started a hundred years earlier from the unlikely combination of African rhythms underlying gauchos’ couplets, sung in the style of Sicilian canzonettas over an accompanying Andalucian guitar. As the years passed all converged towards the bandoneon: a small accordion-like instrument without keyboard that was invented in Germany in the 19th century to serve as a portable church organ and which, after finding its true home in the bordellos of Buenos Aires’ slums in the 1920’s, went back to Europe to conquer Paris’ high society in the 1930’s. Since then it reigned as the essential instrument for any Tango ensemble.

Piazzolla’s bandoneon was able to condense all the symbols of tango. The eroticism of legs and torsos in the dance was reduced to the intricate patterns of his virtuoso fingers (a simple C major scale in the bandoneon zigzags so much as to leave an inexperienced player’s fingers tangled). The melancholy of the singer’s voice was transposed to the breathing of the bandoneon’s continuous opening and closing. The macho attitude of the tangueros was
reflected in his pose on stage: standing upright, chest forward, right leg on a stool, the bandoneon on top of it, being by turns raised, battered, caressed.

I composed *Last Round* in 1996, prompted by Geoff Nuttall and Barry Shiffman. They heard a sketch of the second movement, which I had written in 1991 upon hearing the news of Piazzolla’s stroke, and encouraged me to finish it and write another movement to complement it. The title is borrowed from a short story on boxing by Julio Cortázar, the metaphor for an imaginary chance for Piazzolla’s spirit to fight one more time (he used to get into fistfights throughout his life). The piece is conceived as an idealized bandoneon. The first movement represents the act of a violent compression of the instrument and the second a final, seemingly endless opening sigh (it is actually a fantasy over the refrain of the song “My Beloved Buenos Aires”, composed by the legendary Carlos Gardel in the 1930’s). But *Last Round* is also a sublimated tango dance. Two quartets confront each other, separated by the focal bass, with violins and violas standing up as in the traditional tango orchestras. The bows fly in the air as inverted legs in crisscrossed choreography, always attracting and repelling each other, always in danger of clashing, always avoiding it with the immutability that can only be acquired by transforming hot passion into pure pattern.

— Osvaldo Golijov

I. *Movido, urgente*

II. *Lentissimo*

*Las Cuatro Estaciones Porteñas (The Four Seasons of Buenos Aires)* (1965-70) (arr. Leonid Desyatnikov)

**ASTOR PIAZZOLLA** was born in Mar del Plata, Argentina, on March 11, 1921, and died in Buenos Aires, Argentina, on July 4, 1992. The Leonid Desyatnikov arrangement of *Four Seasons in Buenos Aires* is scored for solo violin and strings. Approximate performance time is twenty-nine minutes.

*These are the first ASO Classical Subscription Performances.*

“**This is Piazzolla!”**

Astor Piazzolla, father of the “Tango Nuevo” (“New Tango”), was born in Mar del Plata, Argentina, on March 11, 1921. Four years later, the Piazzolla family moved to New York City’s Little Italy. There, a neighbor who was a classical pianist introduced the young Astor Piazzolla to the music of Bach and other great composers. Jazz also played an important role in the young Astor Piazzolla’s music life. And of course, the tango had a major presence in the Piazzolla household, most notably through the recordings of the great singer and songwriter, Carlos Gardel. As a young boy, Astor Piazzolla mastered the bandoneon, a square-build button accordion prominently featured in tango ensembles.
Before the close of Piazzolla’s teenage years, he returned to Argentina, where he worked in various tango clubs. In 1944, Piazzolla began musical studies in Buenos Aires with the Argentine classical composer Alberto Ginastera.

In 1954, Piazzolla moved to Paris, where he studied with the legendary teacher, Nadia Boulanger. Piazzolla’s classical works failed to impress Boulanger. “This music is well written,” Boulanger observed, “but it lacks feeling.” But when Piazzolla performed one of his tangos, Boulanger exclaimed: “This is Piazzolla! Don’t ever leave it!” This marked a turning point for Piazzolla. As he later recalled, Boulanger “helped me find myself.”

Piazzolla “threw away all the other music and, in 1954, started working on my New Tango.” This “New Tango” infused the seductive Latin American dance with elements of jazz and modern classical music.

Piazzolla encountered considerable initial resistance to his “New Tango,” particularly in his native Argentina. However, by the time of his death in 1992, Piazzolla was recognized and mourned as a national hero. The admiration for Astor Piazzolla extended far beyond his native land. He earned the acclaim of some of the world’s greatest musicians, including such classical artists as Gidon Kremer, Mstislav Rostropovich, Yo-Yo Ma and the Kronos String Quartet.

**The Four Seasons of Buenos Aires**

Astor Piazzolla’s *Las Cuatro Estaciones Porteñas* (*The Four Seasons of Buenos Aires*) is a superb example of the composer’s blending of tango, jazz and classical elements. In 1965, Piazzolla composed *Verano Porteño* (*Buenos Aires Summer*) as part of music for a play by Alberto Rodriguez Muñoz, entitled *Melenita de oro*. Piazzolla wrote *Buenos Aires Summer* for his Quinteto Nuevo Tango, an ensemble of bandoneon, violin, electric guitar, piano and string bass. Over the next several years, Piazzolla composed the three remaining *Seasons*, scored for the same Quinteto ensemble. Piazzolla also fashioned other instrumental arrangements of *The Four Seasons of Buenos Aires*.

After Piazzolla’s death, violinist Gidon Kremer commissioned Russian composer Leonid Desyatnikov (b. 1955) to create a version of Piazzolla’s *The Four Seasons of Buenos Aires* for solo violin and string orchestra. Kremer paired Desyatnikov’s arrangement of Piazzolla’s work with Antonio Vivaldi’s baroque masterpiece, scored for the same combination of instruments, *Le quattro stagioni* (*The Four Seasons*) (ca. 1725). And indeed, the Desyatnikov arrangement includes several delightful allusions to the Vivaldi (here, it should be noted that seasons in the Southern Hemisphere are the opposite of those in the Northern Hemisphere).

As in the case of its famous baroque counterpart, the Desyatnikov arrangement of Piazzolla’s *The Four Seasons of Buenos Aires* is a vibrant and thrilling virtuoso tour-de-force.

I. **Primavera Porteña** (*Buenos Aires Spring*)
II. **Verano Porteño** (*Buenos Aires Summer*)
III. **Invierno Porteño** (*Buenos Aires Winter*)
IV. **Otoño Porteño** (*Buenos Aires Autumn*)
Symphony No. 4 in F minor, Opus 36 (1878)

PETER ILYICH TCHAIKOVSKY was born in Kamsko-Votkinsk, Russia, on May 7, 1840, and died in St. Petersburg, Russia, on November 6, 1893. The first performance of the Symphony No. 4 took place in Moscow on February 22, 1878, with Nikolai Rubinstein conducting. The Symphony No. 4 is scored for piccolo, two flutes, two oboes, two clarinets, two bassoons, four horns, two trumpets, three trombones, tuba, timpani, triangle, bass drum, cymbals and strings. Approximate performance time is forty-five minutes.

First ASO Classical Subscription Performance: January 30, 1949, Henry Sopkin, Conductor.

Most Recent ASO Classical Subscription Performances: March 6, 7 and 8, 2008, Robert Spano, Conductor.

“This is Fate”

This is Fate, that inexorable force that prevents our aspirations to happiness from reaching their goal…” That is how Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky described the implacable opening bars of his Fourth Symphony. Tchaikovsky composed this great work during one of the most turbulent periods in his life, a time when the power of Fate must have been paramount in his mind.

Tchaikovsky completed the Symphony on January 7, 1878. On July 18 of the previous year, Tchaikovsky wed Antonina Milyukova. Five days before the wedding, Tchaikovsky wrote to his benefactress, Nadezhda von Meck:

My decision was supported by the fact that the sole dream of my 82-year-old father and all my relatives is that I should marry...In a day or two my marriage with her will take place. What will happen after that I do not know...If I am marrying without love, it is because circumstances conspired to make it impossible for me to do otherwise.

After the wedding, Tchaikovsky lapsed into a profound depression, and later attempted suicide. Finally, on October 6 — less than three months after his marriage — Tchaikovsky left his wife forever, rushing to St. Petersburg to meet his brother, Anatoly. Tchaikovsky suffered a nervous breakdown, and doctors stated that a resumption of the marital relationship was out of the question. Tchaikovsky, under doctor’s orders, journeyed to Switzerland for recuperation.

The Tchaikovsky Fourth: In the Composer’s Own Words

It was during the course of this extraordinarily turbulent period that Tchaikovsky composed his Fourth Symphony. He finally completed the work on January 7, 1878. The premiere took place in Moscow on February 22 of that year, under Nikolai Rubinstein’s direction. Tchaikovsky dedicated the Symphony to von Meck, whom the composer described as “my best friend.” And, in a letter to von Meck, Tchaikovsky divulged the meaning of his Fourth Symphony (all of Tchaikovsky’s comments are indented, below):

There is a programme in our symphony, that’s to say it is possible to put into words what it is trying to express. I can and I would like to indicate
the meaning of the separate parts and of the whole, but to you and to you alone. Naturally I can only do this in broad terms.

I. Andante sostenuto — Moderato con anima — Moderato assai, quasi Andante — Allegro vivo —

The introduction is the germ of the whole symphony, unarguably the main idea. This is Fate, that inexorable force that prevents our aspirations to happiness from reaching their goal, that jealously ensures our well-being and peace are not unclouded, that hangs over our heads like the sword of Damocles, that with steadfast persistence poisons our souls. It is invincible, you will never master it. One can only resign oneself to fruitless sorrow.

Tchaikovsky depicts the inexorable power of Fate with stunning fanfares by the brass and winds. It is one of the most arresting and dramatic openings in all of symphonic literature.

The joyless, hopeless feeling becomes more powerful and fierce. Would it not be better to turn away from reality and submerge oneself in dreams?

Oh joy! There is at least a sweet and tender dream appearing! A bright and gracious human form flits by and lures us on somewhere.

How lovely! And how remote the obsessive first allegro theme now sounds! The dreams have gradually taken full possession of the soul. All that was gloomy and joyless is forgotten. Here it is, here is happiness! No! They were dreams and Fate rouses us from them.

So life is a constant alternation between grim reality and evanescent visions and dreams of happiness...There is no haven. Sail upon that ocean until it seizes you and engulfs you in its depths. That is roughly the program of the first movement.

II. Andantino in modo di canzona —

The second movement of the symphony expresses another phase of depression: that melancholy feeling that comes on in the evening, when you are sitting on your own, tired with work, and you take up a book but it falls out of your hands. Memories come flooding in. It is sad that so much has been and gone; it is pleasant to recollect one’s youth. One regrets the passing of time yet there is no wish to begin life anew. Life wears one out. It is pleasant to rest and reflect. There are so many memories! There have been happy moments when young blood coursed through the veins and life was good. There have also been difficult times, irreplaceable losses. But now that is all somewhere in the past. There is a sweet sadness in burying oneself in the past.

III. Scherzo. Pizzicato ostinato — Allegro —

In an 1877 letter, Tchaikovsky informed von Meck:

There is a new instrumental effect in the Scherzo of which I have high hopes. First the strings play on their own, pizzicato all the time; the
woodwinds come in the Trio, and also play on their own; their place is taken by a brass group, yet again on their own; at the end of the Scherzo all three groups exchange brief little phrases. I think that this should make an interesting effect of sounds.

And, in the 1878 letter that contains the program of the Fourth Symphony, the composer explained:

The third movement does not express any precise feelings. These are whimsical arabesques, the elusive images that flash across one’s imagination when one has had a little wine to drink and is in the first stage of intoxication. One’s spirits are not happy, but neither are they sad. One does not think about anything: one gives free reign to one’s imagination that, for some reason, sets about painting strange pictures. Amongst them one recalls a picture of some roistering peasants and a street song. Then somewhere in the distance a military parade goes by. There is no connection between these images that are like those which flash through your mind as you are going to sleep. They have nothing to do with reality: they are strange, wild, and incoherent.

IV. Finale. Allegro con fuoco —

The fourth movement. If you find no cause for joy in yourself, look to others. Go amongst the common people and see now they know how to enjoy themselves, abandoning themselves completely to feelings of joy. Picture of a peasant celebration on a holiday. But scarcely have you managed to forget yourself and be distracted by the sight of other people’s pleasures than inexorable Fate appears once more and reminds you of its existence.

Tchaikovsky portrays the “peasant celebration” by quoting a popular Russian folk song, “The Little Birch Tree,” sung by the winds after the Finale’s brief, raucous introduction. Later, the celebration is interrupted by the return of the “Fate” motif that launched the Symphony’s first movement.

Tchaikovsky continues:

But you are no concern of anyone else. They do not even turn round, they do not glance at you, and they have not noticed that you are lonely and sad. Oh! What fun it is for them! They are so lucky that all their feelings are simple and direct. Blame yourself and do not say that all the world is sad. There are simple but potent pleasures. Enjoy other people’s happiness. One can live despite everything.

Tchaikovsky concluded his explanation of his Fourth Symphony by stating to Nadezhda von Meck:

That, my dear friend, is all I can say by way of explaining the symphony. Of course, it is neither clear nor complete. But it is in the nature of instrumental music that it is not amenable to detailed analysis. As (German poet Heinrich) Heine observed: “Where words end, music begins.”
JUANJO MENA, Conductor

Just appointed Chief Conductor of the BBC Philharmonic in Manchester, Juanjo Mena is one of the most distinguished conductors of his generation. Also Principal Guest Conductor of the Bergen (Norway) Philharmonic and Chief Guest Conductor at the Teatro Carlo Felice in Genoa, Italy, he has appeared with most of the principal symphony and chamber orchestras in his native Spain.

Mr. Mena made his North American debut in 2004 with the Baltimore Symphony and has been re-engaged by the orchestra every year since. Other recent and upcoming debuts include symphonies in Atlanta, Boston, Chicago, Cincinnati, Colorado, Houston, Indianapolis, Kansas City and Oregon, as well as the Philadelphia Orchestra.

Worldwide, Juanjo Mena has appeared with the BBC Philharmonic, Bucharest Philharmonic, Orchestra Filarmonica della Scala, Orchestre National de France, Orchestre de la Suisse Romande, Orquesta Filarmónica de Santiago, Orquesta Sinfónica de São Paulo, Oslo Philharmonic, RAI/Torino, RSO/Berlin, RTVE/Madrid and the Tokyo Metropolitan Orchestra, among others. Future engagements include the Danish Radio Symphony, Dresden Philharmonic, Netherlands Radio Philharmonic, New Zealand Symphony, Orchestre National de Lyon, Prague Symphony, and the Real Filharmonía de Galicia. Festival appearances include Grant Park (Chicago), La Folle Journée (Nantes), White Nights Festival (St. Petersburg) and numerous festivals with the Bilbao Symphony.

Also active in opera, Mr. Mena has led productions of Billy Budd, Eugene Onegin, Le Nozze di Figaro, Der Fliegende Holländer, Salome, Elektra, Ariadne auf Naxos, Bluebeard’s Castle and Erwartung. He will conduct Tristan und Isolde in Bilbao in fall 2011.

With the Bilbao Symphony Orchestra, Mr. Mena has recorded a complete collection of Basque symphonic music (Naxos). A CD of works by Gabriel Pierné with the BBC Philharmonic Orchestra will be released on Chandos in 2011.

Juanjo Mena was born in Vitoria, Spain, and began his musical training at the Vitoria-Gasteiz Conservatory (Basque Country). He studied composition and orchestration with Carmelo Bernaola and conducting with Enrique Garcia-Asensio at the Royal Higher Conservatory of Music in Madrid, where he received the Prize of Honor. Awarded a Guridi-Bernaolo Scholarship, he pursued further conducting studies in Munich with Sergiu Celibidache. In 2002, Mr. Mena was awarded the Ojo Critico Prize by Radio Nacional de España in recognition of his career and dedication to contemporary music.

For more information, please visit juanjomena.com.
One of the leading violinists of our time, Nadja Salerno-Sonnenberg is best known for her exhilarating performances, passionate interpretations, musical depth and unique charisma. After serving for two highly successful seasons as Music Director of the New Century Chamber Orchestra in San Francisco, Nadja leads the 19-member string orchestra into its third season. Performing works by Wolf, Bartók, Piazzolla and Tchaikovsky, Nadja and New Century are traveling to San Francisco Santa Monica, San Diego, Davis and Sonoma, Calif.; Cleveland and Granville, Ohio; Ann Arbor, MI; and Evanston, Ill. New Century’s season also includes four subscription series, two of which highlight 2010-11 featured composer Mark O’Connor. His world premiere commission will be performed in May 2011. In November, Nadja’s record label, NSS Music, released a highly anticipated second recording of Nadja and New Century, *Live: Strauss, Barber, Mahler*, featuring Strauss’ *Metamorphosen*, Barber’s *Adagio for Strings* and Mahler’s Adagietto from Symphony No. 5.

Nadja, a powerful and innovative presence on the recording scene, started NSS Music in 2005. The label continues to grow, with *Schubert’s Echo* featuring the American String Quartet, released in August 2010. In 2009, NSS Music released *Together*, Nadja’s first collaboration with New Century. *Together* includes “Impressions” by Clarice Assad, which was given its world premiere by New Century in 2008; Piazzolla’s “Four Seasons of Buenos Aires”; Gershwin’s “Bess You Is My Woman Now” from *Porgy and Bess*, arranged for string orchestra, both with Nadja as soloist; and Bartók’s “Romanian Dances” arranged for string orchestra. *Together* follows NSS Music’s recording “Originis Live From Brasil,” released in April 2009, a recording that honors Ms. Salerno-Sonnenberg’s Italian heritage and the Brazilian heritage of her collaborators, guitarists Sérgio and Odair Assad. The NSS Music label also features Ms. Salerno-Sonnenberg’s *Merry* (a compilation of Christmas favorites, performed by Nadja and friends), *Nadja* (Tchaikovsky and Assad, violin concertos), *Live* (Ms. Salerno-Sonnenberg and Anne-Marie McDermott), as well as *Love, All That It Is* (NSS Music’s first jazz album featuring The Clarice Assad Trio), Anne-Marie McDermott’s *Bach* and John Cerminaro’s *John Cerminaro, A Life of Music*. Ms. Salerno-Sonnenberg also has more than 20 releases on the EMI and Nonesuch labels.

Ms. Salerno-Sonnenberg’s exceptional artistry is paired with great musical intelligence which, along with her unique personality, have served her well in many environments — on camera, in a commercial for Signet Bank, hosting a “Backstage/Live From Lincoln Center” program for PBS, appearing in the PBS/BBC series “The Mind,” even talking to Big Bird on “Sesame Street.” She was the subject of the 2000 Academy Award-nominated film, *Speaking In Strings*, which premiered at the Sundance Film Festival. The film was released in theaters nationwide and subsequently aired on HBO’s Signatures channel in 1999. It is an intensely personal documentary on her life and is available on VHS and DVD through New Video.