

Mini-Grant Proposal

Fall 2014

MUS-170 Gustavus Symphony Orchestra

Ruth Lin and Esther Wang

In the 2014-2015 school, the Gustavus Symphony Orchestra (MUS-170) will be focusing on learning and performing Russian orchestral repertoire of the early 20th century. In the fall, as part of the Nobel concert in early October, the Symphony Orchestra will study and perform Sergei Rachmaninoff's *Piano Concerto no.2* (composed between 1900-1901) with Esther Wang as soloist. In the spring, the orchestra will study and perform Dimitri Shostakovich's *Symphony no.5* (composed in 1937). While these works were composed only about forty years apart, they are dramatically different, it is not only a reflection of the individual composer's temperament and style, but also a reflection of the aesthetics of the time and the circumstances that they were living and working.

Using the fund provided by the mini-grant, I like to invite Victor Yampolsky, a prominent Russian conductor to campus to work with the symphony orchestra in early fall during the week of September 15th. The orchestra would be at the mid-point of their preparation for the Nobel Concert. Prof. Yampolsky will conduct a rehearsal with the symphony orchestra where he will share his musical insights of Rachmaninoff piano concerto, he will also give a lecture as part of the music colloquium series sharing his musical experiences concerning Russian repertoire specifically that of Rachmaninoff and Shostakovich, and his life experience as a working musician in Soviet Russia, and will collaborate with the Russian classes to give an informal talk concerning soviet culture. The music colloquium series was created by Esther Wang a few years ago with the purpose of offering beyond-performance insights of various musical topics, they range from pre-concert lectures, to guest speakers on music therapy, performance anxiety, and special topics. While the colloquium is open to all Gustavus and community members, music majors are required to attend seven colloquiums and submit a short paper on one of the colloquiums per semester as part of their music major.

Prof. Yampolsky is currently the Director of Orchestral Activities at Northwestern University. He studied violin with David Oistrakh at the Moscow Conservatory, and conducting with Maestro Nicolai Rabinovich at the Leningrad Conservatory. He was a member of the Moscow Philharmonic and served both assistant concertmaster and assistant conductor, under the direction of Maestro Kyrill Kondrashin. A recommendation from the prominent conductor Zubin Mehta led to an audition for Leonard Bernstein, who offered Prof. Yampolsky a scholarship at the Berkshire Music Center in Tanglewood, Massachusetts, which led to his immigration from the Soviet Union to the United States in 1973. Professor Yampolsky soon accepted a position in the violin section of the Boston Symphony and was later appointed the orchestra's principal second violinist. For a more detailed bio, please see

<http://www.music.northwestern.edu/faculty/profiles/victor-yampolsky.html>

One of the constant challenges of teaching music is to convince students not only the correct way to execute the notes on the page, but to encourage them to think/consider deeper the implications of these notes through the lenses of music theory and music history. While musicians often perform music that are generations removed, this specific repertoire and Prof. Yampolsky offers Gustavus students a first-hand glimpse into the history and implications of this music. For example, Shostakovich had written several violin pieces specifically for Prof. Yampolsky's teacher David Oistrakh, and Prof. Yampolsky was part of the first tour of the Moscow Symphony to the west. This kind of musical pedigree and life experience will offer our students a more comprehensive view and approach to this music that is both unique and invaluable. Music majors who are in the orchestra will be asked to write a reflection of their experience in both rehearsal and lecture with Prof. Yampolsky as part of the music colloquium series. I have no doubt that all of the students from the Gustavus Symphony Orchestra will come away from this experience a better musician and a more informed human being about the history of Soviet Russia and its impact on artists and the art produced.