

*University of Maryland School of Music Presents*

**ELGAR, BRAHMS AND RAVEL**

**University of Maryland Symphony Orchestra**



**Saturday, May 10, 2025 • 8PM**

**DEKÉLBOUM CONCERT HALL**

**AT THE CLARICE SMITH PERFORMING ARTS CENTER**



**SCHOOL OF  
MUSIC**

*University of Maryland School of Music*  
*Presents*

## **ELGAR, BRAHMS AND RAVEL**

**University of Maryland Symphony Orchestra**  
David Neely, *Music Director*

Symphony No. 3 in F Major, Op. 90..... Johannes Brahms  
(1833–1897)

- I. Allegro con brio
- II. Andante
- III. Poco allegretto
- IV. Allegro

### **INTERMISSION**

*La Valse* ..... Maurice Ravel  
(1875–1937)

*Pomp and Circumstance March No. 1* ..... Edward Elgar  
(1857–1934)



Described by Opera News as “a ninja warrior with a baton,” **DAVID NEELY** maintains an active career as a conductor of opera and symphonic music in both professional and educational settings.

Neely is director of orchestras and professor of conducting at the University of Maryland School of Music. He previously served on the faculties of the Indiana University Jacobs School of Music, the University of Kansas and the University of Texas. Neely remains a regular guest conductor at the Jacobs School.

As music director and principal conductor of Des Moines Metro Opera, a position he has held since 2012, Neely has played a key role in elevating the company to a position of international standing among summer music festivals. He has led critically-acclaimed performances of a broad range of new and traditional repertoire that includes the recent world premieres of Damien Geter and Lila Palmer’s *American Apollo* and Kristin Kuster and Mark Campbell’s *A Thousand Acres*, regional Emmy award-winning productions of *Manon* and *Billy Budd* for Iowa Public Television and more than 30 other works including *Salome*, *Elektra*, *Wozzeck*, *The Love for Three Oranges*, *Bluebeard’s Castle*, *Pikovaya Dama*, *Yevkeny Onegin*, *Rusalka*, *Jenůfa*, *Falstaff*, *Peter Grimes*, *Dead Man Walking*, *Flight*, *Macbeth*, *Don Giovanni*, *Candide*, *La Fanciulla Del West* and *Turandot*. DMMO is a 2024 nominee for the International Opera Award in the category of Best Festival.

He has led productions with Atlanta Opera and Sarasota Opera as well as numerous European opera houses including Bonn, Dortmund, Halle, St. Gallen and Saarbrücken. His performances have been praised in Opera News, Opera Today, Gramophone UK, The Guardian, Opernwelt, the Chicago Tribune and the Wall Street Journal. Neely has led concerts with the Memphis Symphony Orchestra, Portland Symphony Orchestra, Dortmund Philharmonic, Bochumer Philharmoniker, Eutin Festival Orchestra and Bregenz Symphony Orchestra. His 2023 concert with the National Orchestra Institute was featured on NPR’s Performance Today.

Concerto soloists with whom he has collaborated include Benjamin Beilman, David Chan, Roberto Diaz, Nicholas Daniel, Eric Kutz, Rainer Honeck, Bella Hristova, Delfeayo Marsalis, Ricardo Morales, Hai-Ye Ni, Ben Lulich and Joshua Roman. He has appeared as a collaborative pianist with numerous vocalists, including a recent recital with Joyce Castle and Schubert’s *Winterreise* with David Adam Moore. He is a guest teacher of conducting for Washington National Opera’s Cafritz Young Artist program, and was selected as conductor for WNO’s 2021 American Opera Initiative. He is a member of the Artistic and Awards Committee of the Solti Foundation U.S.

**Symphony No. 3 in F Major, Op. 90**

JOHANNES BRAHMS

Born May 7, 1833, Hamburg, Germany | Died April 3, 1897, Vienna, Austria

Premiered December 2, 1883, in Vienna, Austria | Published in May of 1884

Johannes Brahms avoided the symphony for many years. He famously said, “I shall never write a symphony...You have no idea how the lives of us feel when we hear the tramp of a giant behind us.” This giant was, of course, Ludwig van Beethoven. Brahms feared his compositions would always live in Beethoven’s shadow. Brahms began composing his first symphony in 1855 and worked on it for 21 years. Brahms was 43 when the piece was finally premiered in 1876. His Symphony No. 1, Op. 68, was met with much acclaim, coined “Beethoven’s Tenth” by the prominent conductor and pianist Hans von Bülow. Brahms began to walk in the giant’s footsteps, premiering his second symphony one year later in 1877.

Symphony No. 3 was written six years after the second. By the time Brahms began the work, he had come to be regarded with great respect as a composer. He composed much of Op. 90 while visiting the Rhine in Wiesbaden; the Rhine’s landscape inspired much of this symphony. The symphony was very well received at its 1883 premiere, so much so that in the year of its publication, 1884, it was performed in Cambridge, Berlin, Cologne, Leipzig, Meiningen, Boston and New York. A few miles away, the Library of Congress is home to an 1884 manuscript of Op. 90 that belonged to Hans von Bülow.

The foundation of Symphony No. 3 is built on three notes: F-A-F. This three-note motif serves as Brahms’s musical signature and is known as the “frei aber froh” (free but happy) motif. This “free but happy” motif was inspired by Brahms’s dear friend Joseph Joachim, who used a similar signature of his own: F-A-E, “frei aber einsam” (free but lonely).

Three chords open the first movement, outlining the “free but happy” motif. The second note, A, constantly shifts between A-natural and A-flat, creating a sense of ambiguity in the opening, as it is unclear whether we are in F major or minor. This ambiguity in keys is maintained throughout the entire work, fostering a sense of unease. This work is rich with melodic material. Brahms introduces many notable melodic ideas in the opening, which he recycles throughout the symphony. As you listen, you can seek out the familiar melodies from earlier in the piece as they reappear across the four movements. A contrast exists between the familiarity Brahms evokes through recurring themes and the ambiguity introduced by the shifts between major and minor keys.

One of the most notable moments in this symphony is its conclusion. Unlike the majority of late 19th-century symphonies that finish with a loud, triumphant grand finale, Brahms takes a risk with his third symphony. The final movement of Op. 90 starts with a fanfare and ends in a whisper. In its final pages, the “free but happy” theme returns as it does at the opening of the symphony; however, this time, there is no doubt we are in the key of F major. As you listen to this finale, you’ll notice there is no remaining uncertainty or further questions. Brahms confidently concludes his third symphony with calm and certainty.

**La Valse**

MAURICE RAVEL

Born March 7, 1875, Ciboure, Basses-Pyrenees, France | Died December 28, 1937, Paris, France  
 Composed in 1919 | Premiered December 12, 1920, in Paris, France | Published in 1921

On August 12, 1914, one month after the start of World War I, France declared war on Austria-Hungary. A 39-year-old Joseph Maurice Ravel went to enlist in the Air Force but was turned away due to his age and health. As the war progressed, Ravel lost many close friends in combat. He persistently sought to join the fight and continued to visit the recruiter for 18 months until he was finally allowed to serve as an ambulance driver.

Ravel composed less as the war broke out, setting aside a piece entitled *Wien* ("Vienna"). He envisioned the work as a tribute to Johann Strauss II, a champion of the Viennese Waltz. In 1919, Ravel used his pre-war sketches to compose a commission for Sergei Diaghilev, the founder of Ballets Russes. He changed the title of the work to *La Valse* ("The Waltz"). Diaghilev loved the work, even going so far as to call it a "masterpiece;" however, it never saw the ballet stage. After hearing the work on piano, Diaghilev said, "It is not a ballet, but a portrait of a ballet."

The story of *La Valse* leaves us with the question: Why, after years of suffering caused by the war with Austria-Hungary, did Ravel choose to follow through with his symphonic Viennese Waltz?

The single-movement symphonic work opens with an unstable rumbling in the double basses. There are scraps of a waltz-like theme thrown around the orchestra. But the tune is murky, too faint and distant to be sure. On this opening, Ravel writes,

"Through whirling clouds, waltzing couples may be faintly distinguished. The clouds gradually scatter: one sees... an immense hall peopled with a whirling crowd. The scene is gradually illuminated. The light of the chandeliers bursts forth..."

After the opening, the piece is very distinctly a waltz. As you listen to the Strauss-ian theme, you can envision all of the jumps, spins, and turns of the ballroom. As the piece progresses, Ravel's clouds from the opening begin to come back, and the mood becomes unsettling. Ravel begins to color the music with dissonance and polytonality, deconstructing the previous waltz themes. The light from the ballroom begins to dim as the music becomes increasingly violent. You'll find recognizable themes from the first half, but the overall tone of the piece is much darker. By the end, all that's left are the bones of a waltz; Ravel keeps all of the gestures and structure of a dance, but removes all levity and joy.

The deconstruction of the Viennese waltz in *La Valse* has been interpreted by many as a depiction of the First World War. The waltz symbolizes a relic of a bygone era, which the conflict destroyed. To people's surprise, when asked about the piece's meaning, Ravel contested the idea that it had anything to do with the war. Despite these statements, many today find it difficult to believe that, given the impact the war had on Ravel, it bears no influence on this piece.

***Pomp and Circumstance March No. 1***

EDWARD ELGAR

Born June 2, 1857, Broadheath, England | Died February 23, 1934, Worcester, England

Composed in 1901 | Premiered March 2, 1901, Liverpool, United Kingdom

On June 28, 1905, 48-year-old Edward Elgar was the honored guest at Yale University's commencement ceremony. Elgar was there to accept an honorary doctorate for "leadership in the arts," having been invited by his close friend, Yale professor and pianist Samuel Sanford. Elgar was one of 14 honorees, but Sanford ensured that everyone recognized his friend Elgar as the star of the honorees. The guests processed into the ceremony to Felix Mendelssohn's *Ruy Blas Overture*, and at the end of the ceremony, they recessed from Woolsey Hall to the tune of "Pomp and Circumstance."

Though we know this tune today as the "graduation theme," this was not the case in 1905. In fact, this commencement ceremony at Yale was the first time "Pomp and Circumstance" served this purpose. Elgar's *March in D Major, Op. 39, No. 1*: "Pomp and Circumstance," was initially composed in 1901. The recognizable melody of the march's trio was used in Elgar's coronation ode for King Edward VII as a song, "Land of Hope and Glory." Sanford used this same theme at the end of Yale's commencement to further honor his friend Elgar. The grand and hopeful tune fit so well at Yale's commencement that other schools began to adopt it as well. Princeton, University of Chicago and Columbia used it at their graduations, and eventually, more universities followed suit. Elgar's march took on a new life as the "song you graduate to," becoming the standard processional in the United States.

The title of the work, "Pomp and Circumstance," was derived from Shakespeare's *Othello*. The passage is from Act 3, Scene 3, when Othello states,

Farewell the plumèd troops and the big wars That makes ambition virtue!  
O, farewell! Farewell the neighing steed and the shrill trump,  
The spirit-stirring drum, th' ear-piercing fife,  
The royal banner, and all quality,  
Pride, pomp, and circumstance of glorious war!

When the piece begins, you may be surprised to not recognize it right away. This is because the melody you're familiar with is the "trio" of the march, which traditionally comes after the march theme.

The piece begins with a lively and strident theme in the strings, confidently backed by the militaristic sounds of the bass drum, cymbals and glockenspiel. This section is the march, and is repeated before transitioning into the trio. As we transition into the trio, you will immediately recognize the melody as the "graduation theme." This lyrical and reflective melody is played by the violins and is in stark contrast to the previous section. The piece concludes with Elgar revisiting the march from the opening, concluding the piece with an upbeat, joyful finale.

– Program notes by Noah Steele

## UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

David Neely, *Music Director*Mark Wakefield, *Manager of Instrumental Ensembles***Violin**

Melody Flores,  
*Concertmaster* \*†  
Yuanju Liu,  
*Concertmaster* ‡  
Evan Ducreay,  
*Principal Second* \*†  
Zoe Kushubar,  
*Principal Second* ‡  
Navin Davoodi  
Anton Doan  
Jing Fan  
Alexandra Fitzgerald  
Riley Hart  
Clare Hofheinz  
Anthony Holc  
Kiran Kaur  
Anna Kelleher  
Ellie Kim  
Elsa Kinnear  
Miriam Koby  
Rachel Lee  
Yu-Shin Lee  
Yiyang Li  
Mykenna Magnusen  
Hoclin Molina  
Manuel Ordoñez  
Felipe Rodas  
Camden Stohl  
Eleanor Sturm  
Jeffrey Tan  
Anna Weiksner  
Alan Whitman  
Jessica Zhu  
Abijah Zimmerman

**Viola**

Fabio Dantas,  
*Principal* \*†  
Xach Lee-Llacer,  
*Principal* ‡  
Emily Blake  
Emily Bussa  
Yu-Hsuan Chen  
Kimi Harris  
Anna Lee  
John Ross  
Nicholas Wilbur  
Carolyn Wong  
Kara Woolcock

**Cello**

Rory Gallo,  
*Principal* \*  
Henry Bushnell,  
*Principal* ††  
David Agia  
Jenna Bachmann  
Hannah Choi  
Leigha Daniels  
Ethan Gullo  
Noah Hamermesh  
Nailah Harris  
Eva Houlton  
John Keane  
Katherine Ruiz  
Quinn Taylor

**Bass**

Britney Hansford,  
*Principal* \*††  
Jonathan Alonzo  
Mark Devale  
Teddy Hersey  
Benjamin Knight

**Flute**

Andrew Hui  
Daniel Lopez  
Ksenia Mezheny  
Kennedy Wallace

**Piccolo**

Daniel Lopez  
Kennedy Wallace

**Oboe**

Jonathan Alonzo  
Zander Barrow  
Aaron Emerson

**English Horn**

Zander Barrow

**Clarinet**

Lexi Deifallah  
Jackson Lasher  
Gracie Morgan

**Bass Clarinet**

Jackson Lasher  
Gracie Morgan

**Bassoon**

Temon Birch  
Will Duis

**Contrabassoon**

Alex Wiedman

\* *Elgar*† *Ravel*‡ *Brahms*

**Horn**

Nick Gonzalez  
Elijah Kee  
Owen Miller  
Catherine Robinson  
Josh Sharp

**Trumpet**

Theresa Bickler  
Allison Braatz  
Alex Wu

**Cornet**

Theresa Bickler  
Allison Braatz

**Trombone**

Colton Wilson  
David Wilson

**Bass Trombone**

Anthony Roldan

**Tuba**

Justin Mitch

**Timpani**

Noah Dengler  
Sam Goecke  
Trey Perry

**Percussion**

Patrick Bain  
Noah Dengler  
Sam Goecke  
Trey Perry  
Thomas Glowacki

**Harp**

Eric Sabatino  
Andrew Samlal

**Operations Assistant**

Thomas Glowacki

**Orchestral Librarian**

Sasha Kandybin