



College of Music  
MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

# MSU Symphony Orchestra

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## The Planets

Octavio Más-Arocas, conductor  
Daniel Jaggars, guest conductor  
Zongheng Zhang, guest conductor

Friday, February 6, 2026  
Cobb Great Hall, 7:30 p.m.

# PROGRAM

Bloom\*

Zhengcheng (Momo) He  
(b. 1998)

*The Sam and Mary Austin New Fanfares Project*  
Daniel Jaggars, conductor

Everything Beautiful

Gala Flagello  
(b. 1994)

Zongheng Zhang, conductor

*The Planets, Op. 32*

Mars, the Bringer of War  
Venus, the Bringer of Peace  
Mercury, the Winged Messenger  
Jupiter, the Bringer of Jollity  
Saturn, the Bringer of Old Age  
Uranus, the Magician  
Neptune, the Mystic

Gustav Holst  
(1874–1934)

Octavio Más-Arocas, conductor

*\*world premiere*

# PROGRAM NOTES

## **The Sam and Mary Austin New Fanfares Project**

MSU Symphony Orchestra concerts will open with a newly written fanfare composed by a current composition student. The selected students are assigned to write short works for a diverse group of players giving them the opportunity to present their work with the Symphony Orchestra audience. For their continuing support of new music at MSU, we are honored to name the fanfare project after Sam and Mary Austin.

**Bloom** is a brisk concert opener that evokes a sense of awakening and expansion. The music begins playfully, highlighting different sections of the orchestra through a simple motif. As the piece unfolds, the motif grows in scale, reaching a grand, full-orchestra conclusion—like flowers bursting into bloom.

As the first drops of rain sink into the earth, something stirs beneath. Drawn to the moisture, slimy bodies writhe and wriggle, reaching upward, churning soil.

Petrichor rises into the air. Breaching the surface, the sky opens up from trickle to roar, pelting leaves, grass, tress, pooling in puddles and rushing through ravines.

The ripples give way to steady rhythm, thrumming faster, wilder, louder.

And the worms begin to dance.

- Zhengcheng (Momo) He

***Everything Beautiful*** sonically explores the following quote by Herman Melville: "Real strength never impairs beauty or harmony, but it often bestows it, and in everything imposingly beautiful, strength has much to do with the magic." The work seeks beautiful moments in the small and intimate as well as the intense and bombastic, demonstrating that beauty manifests in myriad forms. Tender solo passages contrast with tutti grandeur in a conversation of strength versus power, what it might mean to impose beauty, and how we can illuminate the magic that bestows it in our everyday lives. *Everything Beautiful* was commissioned by the Contemporary Youth Orchestra in celebration of their 30th season. Many thanks to Kris Morron, Kim Deichler, the CYO team, and CYO's intrepid players for their steadfast belief in the power of new music and for premiering this work.

## PROGRAM NOTES (cont.)

Holst began composing *The Planets* in 1914. Despite the opening title, “Mars, the Bringer of War,” the suite is not a wartime statement: Holst’s interest predated World War I. A composer of broad curiosity, he sought music wherever ideas sparked sound. “As a rule,” he said, “I only study things that suggest music to me. That’s why I worried at Sanskrit.” When Hindu literature drew him in through translations, he learned Sanskrit to read the originals and wrote several Hindu-inspired works, including two operas. “And then,” he concluded, “recently the character of each planet suggested lots to me.”

In his preface, Holst cautioned that there is no fixed program; the subtitles should be enough to set the listener’s imagination in motion. His own imagination was shaped by English folk song (encouraged by his lifelong friend Ralph Vaughan Williams) and by Stravinsky, whose bold orchestration and rhythmic drive left an audible mark. Yet Holst keeps the suite tightly shaped: each movement is a character-study, not astronomy, and the sequence balances force, lyricism, wit, and mystery. In *The Planets*, one hears large, colorful instrumental forces, insistent pulses, and quick, striding shifts of meter—music less “cosmic” in a literal sense than brilliantly dramatic and pictorial.

“Mars” opens in ominous quiet, then hardens into martial menace, with brass and timpani driving an implacable rhythm. “Venus” answers with calm: cool flute colors, an austere solo violin, and a gentle warmth that swells, then dissipates. “Mercury,” a dazzling scherzo, flashes harps and celesta as the solo violin dances through fleeting motifs, its texture often tinged with French Impressionism. “Jupiter” is the most English: a broad, buoyant tune radiates high spirits, then yields to a stately processional before returning. “Saturn” traces time’s weight, from solemn tread to clanging unrest, finally resolving into transfigured peace. “Uranus” unleashes diabolical energy, recalling earlier sorcerers—Dukas, Saint-Saëns, and Mussorgsky. “Neptune” closes in other-worldly transparency, crowned by a distant, wordless women’s chorus fading into silence.

- Orrin Howard, LA Phil

## ARTIST-FACULTY BIOS

**Octavio Más-Arocas** is Director of Orchestras at MSU. He is the Music Director and Conductor of the Mansfield Symphony in Ohio, the Marquette Symphony in Michigan, the Clinton Symphony in New York, and Conductor-in-Residence at the Cabrillo Festival of Contemporary Music, California. Previous positions include Principal Conductor of the Green Bay Symphony Orchestra, Resident Conductor of the Unicamp Symphony Orchestra in Brazil, Director of Orchestras at Ithaca College, Lawrence University, Baldwin Wallace University, and at Interlochen Arts Academy. He has also been Resident-Conductor of the Sewanee Summer Music Festival and Assistant Conductor of the National Repertory Orchestra. An award-winning conductor, Más-Arocas was chosen by Kurt Masur for the Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy Award working as Maestro Masur's assistant with the Leipzig Gewandhaus and Helsinki Radio orchestras. Más-Arocas is the winner of the Robert J. Harth Conducting Prize at the American Academy of Conducting at Aspen, Thelma A. Robinson Award from the Conductors Guild, Prize Winner of the Third European Conductors Competition, and winner of the National Youth Orchestra of Spain Conductors Competition. He has appeared with orchestras and taught masterclasses throughout the world.

## STUDENT BIOS

**Zhengcheng (Momo) He** is a composer, producer, and interaction artist currently pursuing a DMA in Composition at Michigan State University. Her work explores the creative potential of sound through experimental electronic music and technology, bridging artistic complexity and audience accessibility. Alongside her experimental practice, she is also active in commercial music and sound design, working in film, media, and applied music contexts. She combines technical precision with emotional sensitivity to create immersive soundscapes shaped by texture, energy, and presence.

**Daniel Jaggars** is a Master degree student in Orchestral Conducting at Michigan State University. A student of Professors Octavio Más-Arocas and Katherine Kilburn, Daniel serves as Assistant Conductor for the MSU Symphony Orchestra and MSU Concert Orchestra. He holds a Bachelor degree in music from the University of Nebraska, Omaha where he studied conducting with Miguel Harth-Bedoya. Additionally, Daniel studied clarinet at Ithaca College with Dr. Richard Faria. He has attended several workshops with renowned conductors and performers, studying symphonic, operatic, and chamber repertoire. He is immensely grateful for the numerous people who have made his journey in music possible.

**Zongheng Zheng** is a second-year Doctoral student in Orchestral Conducting at Michigan State University, studying under Professors Octavio Mas-Arocas and Kathrine Kilburn. He holds a Master degree in Orchestral Conducting from UT Austin, where he served as Assistant Conductor for the UT Symphony Orchestra and Music Director of the UT University Orchestra. With the passion of opera music, Zhang has worked with Austin Opera, Butler Opera Center, and Berlin Opera Academy. He has conducted operas like *La Bohème* and *Carmen* and premiered *Le Falcon* by Dmitry Bortniansky in 2024. From 2016 to 2021, Zhang was Concertmaster for The Orchestra Now and Bard Conservatory, collaborating with renowned conductors.

# PERSONNEL

## Violin I

Diya Dong \*\*  
Qingzhuo Li  
Runqi Weng  
Alirna Korieva  
Endi Chen  
Amy Chang  
Yulin Zhou  
Wang Liang  
Layang Ka  
Zenan Li  
Fanhong Jiang  
Wenjin Zhang  
Kieran Venugopal  
Selin Samsar  
Lin Heng Ping  
Chenghong Yin  
Lyudmila Gofurova  
Noah Walter

## Violin II

Farangiz Takhirova \*  
Daniella Greene  
Chonghua Zuo  
Hannah Hsu  
Thomas Shahbaghyan  
Sarah Munson  
Min-Han Tsa  
Arianna Argentieri  
Hsin-Jen Yang  
Tadan Baartz-Bowman  
You-Jung Hsu  
Xinying Hu  
Yueyu Liu  
Jungmin Lee  
Dana Hardy  
Mabel Ciske  
Ashwin Innuganti  
Alison Birmingham

## Viola

Tirian Cooper \*  
Yifei Wang  
Jian Xiong  
Jiajing Fang  
Qiongwen Zhang  
Xinye Xu  
Mengyuan Song  
Zongheng Zhang

## Cello

Cheng-Lin Yu \*  
Cheng-Hung Chung  
Tung-An Chien  
Ruiyang Xie  
Nolan Wiebenga  
Weigen Jiang  
Weian Gu  
Jingyuan Zhang  
Shaniah Cooper  
Yi-Chen Ke  
Jiayu Bai

## Bass

Samuel Stover \*  
Parker Duncan  
Manyi Zhang  
Ariel LeBlanc  
Otto Krueger  
Grace Kovacs  
Kaden Connell

## Flute

Ivana Chacon  
Adam Gulley  
Morgan Page  
Lizzy Meendering

## Oboe

Brett Boyer  
Caitlyn Falbe  
Geoffrey Madge  
Ari VanderLaan

## **PERSONNEL (cont.)**

### **Clarinet**

Hourun Qu  
Chang Shu  
Max Okagaki  
Jake Basil

### **Bassoon**

Madeline Wilks  
Megan Frederick  
Erica Haas  
Rosalie Truback

### **Horn**

Reed Fitzpatrick  
Keith Pepper  
Alexander Delperdang  
Alden Leonard  
Caden Dennie  
Evelyn Irrer

### **Trumpet**

Austin Cruz  
Natalia Vela  
Kaley Rodriguez  
Evelyn Szilagyi

### **Trombone**

David Grimes  
Jordan Dove

### **Bass Trombone**

Jonah Weller

### **Tenor Tuba**

Mollie Weber

### **Tuba**

AJ Johnson

### **Percussion**

Colin Chandler  
Kayla Mears  
Cadence Miller  
Taryn Parry  
Jonah Schertz

### **Harp**

Serenity Flores  
Iris Ho Lin

### **Piano**

Youlim Chung

### **Organ**

Kelly Bohan

### **Assistant Conductors**

Daniel Jaggars  
Zongheng Zhang

### **Librarians**

Aaron Longuski  
Tadan Baartz-Bowman

*\*\*Denotes Concert  
Master*

*\* Denotes Principal*

**PRIVATE GIFTS** play a vital role in our ability to maintain and enhance the quality of the programs we offer. Donations support student scholarships, fellowships, student travel and performance opportunities, instrument acquisitions, guest artists, outreach activities, operations, and other crucial areas that make the College of Music an exemplary place of learning.

## **THANK YOU TO OUR 2025-2026 SPONSORS**

- **Sam and Mary Austin Fund for New Music** (Musique 21 concerts)
- **Ken and Sandy Beall** (Cello Plus Chamber Music Festival Series)
- **James and Susan Bonfiglio** (Symphony Orchestra, Oct. 26; Fall Opera)
- **Jenny Chung and Family for Human Rights Fund** (Rucker, Feb. 15)
- **Joanne and Bill Church** (West Circle Series)
- **April Clobes and Glen Brough** (USA at 250 Years)
- **Trustee Emerita Dee Cook in memory of her husband Byron Cook** (Four Seasons)
- **Susan Davis** (Spring Opera)
- **Dean Transportation** (Celebrating the Spectrum)
- **Alena Fabian, M.D.** (Votapek, Mar. 23; Khristenko, Mar. 30)
- **Jim Forger and Deborah Moriarty** (Lunar New Year Celebration Concert)
- **John and Gretchen Forsyth** (Wagner, Sept. 19)
- **Barbara and Bill Given** (Four Seasons; Alegría Navideña)
- **Anonymous** (Rucker, Feb. 15)
- **Howard and Pam Gourwitz** (Lulloff, Oct. 30)
- **Kevin and Amy Guskiewicz** (Alegría Navideña)
- **Hamilton-Dodson African Diaspora Endowment for the College of Music** (Musekiwa Chingodza, Oct. 2)
- **Lauren Harris** (Symphonic Dialogues; Celebrating the Spectrum)
- **Anne Hiller** (Celebrating the Spectrum)
- **Stanley and Selma Hollander Endowment for Chamber Music** (Gems for Cello)
- **Eileen G. Houston** (Wagner/Johnson/Wang, Sept. 19; Thompkins/Dease/Tang, Oct. 14; Trombone Ensemble, Nov. 8; Kanda, Nov. 18; Tuba/Euphonium, Jan. 28; Huiet, Feb. 24)
- **Taylor Johnston Early Music Series Endowment established by Taylor Johnston** (Taylor Johnston Early Music Series)
- **Mary and Ron Junttonen** (A Celebration of the Beautiful Voice)
- **Hari Kern and the late Ralph R. Edminster, M.D.** (Votapek, Mar. 23)
- **Henry Kopek and Patricia Foreman** (Red Cedar Organ Series)
- **Michael and Paula Koppisch** (Votapek Piano Festival, Aug. 15-17; Sherman/Zuber, Mar. 24)
- **Lansing Chapter of the American Guild of Organists** (Organist Nicole Keller, Sept. 14; Organist Peter Sykes, Mar. 22)
- **Jill Canny and Robert Last** (MSU Federal Credit Union Jazz Artist in Residence, A. Cohen, April 18; Jazz Spectacular Finale Concert)

- Eleanor H. and Harold E. Leichenko Opera Endowment established by Lauren Julius Harris (Fall and Spring Opera)
- Ann, John and Abby Lindley (Alegria Navideña)
- Merritt Lutz (Celebrating the Spectrum)
- Joseph and Jeanne Maguire (A Jazzy Little Christmas)
- Marshall Music Co. (Symphonic Dialogues)
- Pat and Mary McPharlin (Jazz Infusion; Jazz: Spirituals Prayer and Protest)
- Friends of Jay D. Meetz (Fall Opera)
- Dr. Roy and Christine Meland (Four Seasons)
- Gordon E. Miracle (Four Seasons; Votapek, Mar. 23)
- MSU Federal Credit Union (Showcase Series; Spartan Spectacular; Celebrating the Spectrum; MSU Music on The Road in Detroit)
- George Orban and Rae Ramsdell (Jang/Moriarty, Feb. 8)
- Liz and Tony Raduazo (Pass a Good Time, Oct. 5; Sensory Friendly Spartan Concerts)
- Charles and Nancy Seebeck (Bagratuni, Mar. 16)
- Leonard and Sharon Tabaka (Jazz Spectacular Finale Concert)
- TechSmith (Celebrating the Spectrum)
- Dr. Robert W. Uphaus and Dr. Lois M. Rosen (Symphonic Dialogues; Four Seasons; Beethoven; Happy Birthday Mozart!; Yehuda/Warren, Jan. 29; Bagratuni, Mar. 16; and Bagratuni, Mar. 31)
- Linn Van Dyne and Mike Knox (Happy Birthday Mozart!)
- Barbara E. Wagner (Wagner Chamber Music Competition)
- Anonymous (Beacon Hill Music Series)
- Richard Witter (A Celebration of the Beautiful Voice)
- Richard and Joan Witter Endowment for MSU Opera Theatre (Fall and Spring Opera)
- WKAR (Artist-Faculty and Guest Recital Series)
- Worthington Family Foundation (Opera Season)
- Andrea L. Wulf (Piano Monster)

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## UPCOMING EVENTS

2/9 Monday

Artist-Faculty and Guest Recital Series sponsored by WKAR  
**Il Bellissimo Suono – Guy Yehuda, clarinet**  
Cook Recital Hall, 7:30 p.m. \$

2/10 Tuesday

Artist-Faculty and Guest Recital Series sponsored by WKAR  
**Latin America and The Harp – Juan Riveros, harp**  
Cook Recital Hall, 7:30 p.m. \$

2/12 Thursday

Artist-Faculty and Guest Recital Series sponsored by WKAR  
**Dmitri Berlinsky, violin – Gleb Ivanov, piano**  
Cook Recital Hall, 7:30 p.m. \$

2/13 Friday

**Jazz Nonets with Jeff Haas, jazz piano**  
Murray Hall, 7:30 p.m. \$\$

2/14 Saturday

Artist-Faculty and Guest Recital Series sponsored by WKAR  
**Nermis Mieses, oboe**  
Cook Recital Hall, 7:30 p.m. \$

2/15 Sunday

Artist-Faculty and Guest Recital Series sponsored by WKAR  
**The Rucker's – Here We Go Again**  
Cook Recital Hall, 3:00 p.m. \$

2/20 Friday

Artist-Faculty and Guest Recital Series sponsored by WKAR  
**Professors of Jazz**  
Murray Hall, 7:30 p.m. \$

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**[music.msu.edu/events](https://music.msu.edu/events)***

*Avoid fraudulent sites by always using this link.*

### **TICKET PRICES**

**\$** \$14 Adults, \$12 Seniors (age 60 and older), Students with ID and anyone under age 18 are free but require a ticket for admission.  
**\$\$** \$19 Adults, \$17 Seniors, \$9 Students with ID and anyone under age 18.  
**\$\$\$** \$24 Adults, \$22 Seniors, \$14 Students and those under age 18.  
Please note: *All events scheduled in Murray Hall are general admission seating.*