



College of Music
MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

MSU Symphony Orchestra

Rhythms in Motion: A Celebration of Dance

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

Thursday, April 23, 2026
Cobb Great Hall, Wharton Center, 7:30 p.m.

PROGRAM

Fanfare to Portraits of Labor Evan Gedert
The Sam and Mary Austin New Fanfares Project

Der Rosenkavalier Suite Richard Strauss
Prelude (1864–1949)
Presentation of the Silver Rose
Baron Ochs’s Waltz
Iste in Traum
Waltz

Mariachitlán Juan Pablo Contreras
(b. 1987)
Daniel Jaggars, conductor

Hellfighters’ Blues Carlos Simon
(b. 1986)
Zongheng Zhang, conductor

Boléro Maurice Ravel
(1875–1937)

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.

Der Rosenkavalier – When Richard Strauss sought local color for his opera *Der Rosenkavalier* (The Cavalier of the Rose), set in Vienna, he turned to the waltz. The choice was deliberately anachronistic: the opera takes place in the 18th century, nearly a hundred years before Johann Strauss, Jr., made the waltz synonymous with Vienna's 19th-century golden age. Yet by the time Strauss composed the opera in 1909-1910, that era was already fading, and the waltz served as a potent symbol of elegance, nostalgia, and lost grandeur.

The opera unfolds in aristocratic old-regime Europe. Octavian, a young nobleman sung by a mezzo-soprano in one of opera's most celebrated trouser roles, is romantically involved with the Marschallin, a married noblewoman. When her boorish cousin, Baron Ochs, seeks to marry the innocent Sophie, the Marschallin suggests Octavian as the intermediary. Complications ensue when Octavian and Sophie fall genuinely in love, and in the end the Marschallin gracefully relinquishes Octavian so that the young lovers may be united.

Strauss' richly textured score, filled with sweeping lyricism and intoxicating waltzes, was an immediate success. He later extracted two Waltz Sequences for the concert hall, but these selections omit much of the opera's emotional subtlety. A more expansive orchestral version emerged in the mid-20th century as the *Rosenkavalier Suite*, likely arranged by conductor Artur Rodziński, who led its premiere with the New York Philharmonic on October 5, 1944. Strauss, facing financial hardship after World War II, approved its publication the following year.

PROGRAM NOTES (cont.)

The Suite opens with the opera's blazing horn calls and lush strings, depicting the aftermath of Octavian and the Marschallin's love affair. This is followed by the famous Presentation of the Silver Rose, rendered in shimmering textures of flutes, solo violins, harp, and celesta. Boisterous waltzes associated with Baron Ochs lead to the opera's transcendent closing music, including the radiant trio and duet in which the Marschallin steps aside. A final waltz crowns the Suite, a fitting tribute to Vienna's opulence, charm, and vanished splendor.

- John Mangum (edited)

Mariachitlán (Mariachiland) is an orchestral homage to my birthplace, the Mexican state of Jalisco, where mariachi music originated. The work recounts my experience visiting the Plaza de los Mariachis in Guadalajara, the capital of Jalisco, a place where mariachis play their songs in every corner and interrupt each other to win over the crowd. In *Mariachitlán*, traditional rhythms such as the canción ranchera (ranchera song) in 2/4 time (choontah choontah), the vals romántico (romantic waltz) in 3/4 time (choon-tah-tah), and the son jalisciense (Jalisco song) that alternates between 6/8 and 3/4 time, accompany original melodies inspired by the beautiful landscapes of Jalisco. Mariachi instruments such as the trumpet, harp, and violin are featured as soloists in this work. Furthermore, the strings emulate the strumming patterns of vihuelas, while the contrabasses growl like guitarrones. Near the end of the piece, a policeman blows his whistle in an attempt to stop the party. However, the crowd chants, "Mariachitlán!", gradually increasing in intensity, and is rewarded with more vibrant music that ends the work with great brilliance. The original version of *Mariachitlán* (2016), scored for symphony orchestra, won the 2016 Jalisco Orchestral Composition Contest and was nominated for a 2019 Latin Grammy Award for Best Arrangement. The Wind Ensemble version of *Mariachitlán* was commissioned by the Dartmouth College Wind Ensemble, in memory of Scott G. Smedinghoff GR '17, and a consortium of wind bands.

- Juan Pablo Contreras

PROGRAM NOTES (cont.)

Hellfighters' Blues – James Reese Europe (1880-1919) was considered to be the leading figure on the Black American music scene in New York City at the beginning of 20th century. He was known as the bandleader for the Harlem Hellfighters, the 369th Infantry Regiment made up primarily of Black Americans during World War I. The band would be the first Black Americans known for bringing Jazz to Europe in 1919. The first concert in France included a syncopated arrangement of *Stars and Stripes Forever* as well as the well-known ragtime piece written by W.C. Handy called *Memphis Blues*. To honor the legacy of James Reese Europe and the Hellfighters, I have used the melodic material from Handy's *Memphis Blues*, as well the harmonic structure from the twelve-bar blues. *Hellfighters' Blues* features the brass with solos written in the style of those early ragtime players with jubilant blues riffs and jazz shakes. Using counterpoint in the woodwinds and strings, the piece comes to a whimsical close with the strings playing the highest notes possible followed by an answer in the percussion.

- Carlos Simon

Boléro grew out of an abortive project to orchestrate piano pieces from Spanish composer Isaac Albéniz's *Iberia* to create a ballet, *Fandango*, for dancer Ida Rubinstein. Another composer had already secured the rights to orchestrate the Albéniz works, and Ravel did not have time to compose something new. During his summer holiday in Saint-Jean-de-Luz, Ravel hit on the ingeniously simple idea of *Boléro*. He created a single theme, introduced by the flute over a simple rhythmic pattern, and repeated it over and over, in different—and brilliant—instrumental combinations, gradually increasing the dynamic level from pianissimo to fortissimo over the work's fifteen-minute span. With the task of composition drastically minimized, Ravel completed the work in time for the ballet's November 1928 premiere at the Paris Opera, featuring Rubinstein in the main role of a Spanish dancer. Spain was not the only inspiration; Ravel hinted to his pupil and biographer Alexis Roland-Manuel that the relentless rhythm was inspired by the factory, putting the score into the context of other industrial compositions of the period, including Prokofiev's *The Steel Step* (which Ravel had seen in Paris in 1927) and Arthur Honegger's locomotive-inspired *Pacific 231* (which premiered at the opera in 1924). Ravel expressed his dissatisfaction with the "picturesque" Rubinstein production—which featured her dancing on a table in a bar—to his brother Édouard, who oversaw a factory-inspired production, also staged at the Paris Opera, in 1941, four years after Ravel's death.

- John Mangum

ARTIST-FACULTY BIO

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

Evan Gedert is a composer whose works are steeped in reverence for the national world. Evan's music is energetic, with intricate rhythmic patterns that defy the constraints of the barline. Covering many issues, social equity, the fight against climate change, and economic inequality are central to his artistic philosophy. Evan's experience as a performing percussionist and educator informs his composition, with influences such as the free jazz movement, progressive metal, and the percussion ensemble repertoire.

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 faucon* 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

Qingzhuo Li **
Diya Dong
Runqi Weng
Thomas Shahbaghyan
Arianna Argentieri
Farangiz Takhirova
Chonghua Zuo
Zenan Li
Hsin-Jen Yang
Hannah Hsu
Amy Chang
Tadan Baartz-Bowman
You-Jung Hsu
Yulin Zhou
Kieran Venugopal
Lyudmila Gofurova
Ashwin Innuganti

Violin II

Leonid Tsoy *
Endi Chen
Sarah Munson
Wang Liang
Min-Han Tsai
Layang Ka
Fanhong Jiang
Xinying Hu
Wenjin Zhang
Yueyu Liu
Lin Heng Ping
Jungmin Lee
Chenghong Yin
Dana Hardy
Mabel Ciske
Noah Walter
Alison Birmingham

Viola

Yifei Wang *
Tirian Cooper
Yu-Chieh Lin
Jian Xiong
Qiongwen Zhang
Xinye Xu
Aidan Chapman-Anderson
Mengyuan Song
Zongheng Zhang

Cello

Tung-An Chien *
Cheng-Lin Yu
Weian Gu
Aaron Longuski
Cheng-Hung Chung
Ruiyang Xie
Nolan Wiebenga
Jingyuan Zhang
Shaniah Cooper
Jiayu Bai

Bass

Grant Phillips *
Parker Duncan
Samuel Stove
Ariel LeBlanc
Manyi Zhang
Otto Krueger
Grace Kovacs

Flute

Ivana Chacon
Adam Gulley
Lizzy Meendering
Morgan Page

PERSONNEL (cont.)

Oboe

Brett Boyer
Caitlyn Falbe
Geoffrey Madge
Ari VanderLaan

Clarinet

Jake Basil
Max Okagaki
Hourun Qu
Chang Shu
Tingrui Zhang

Bassoon

Megan Frederick
Rosalie Truback
Madeline Wilks

Horn

Alexander Delperdang
Reed Fitzpatrick
Evelyn Irrer
Alden Leonard
Keith Pepper

Trumpet

Calvin Pfund
Kaley Rodriguez
Evelyn Szilagyi
Natalia Vela

Trombone

Jordan Dove
David Grimes
Adam Duffy

Bass Trombone

John Danziger

Tuba

Brian Wiik

Percussion

Colin Chandler
Kayla Mears
Cadence Miller
Margaret Parker
Taryn Parry
Jonah Schertz

Harp

Serenity Flores
Iris Ho Lin

Piano/Celesta

Youlim Chung

Assistant Conductors

Daniel Jaggars
Zongheng Zhang

Librarians

Aaron Longuski
Tadan Baartz-Bowman

*** Denotes Concert
Master*

** Denotes Principal*

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- **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)
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- Merritt Lutz (Celebrating the Spectrum)
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- 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)
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UPCOMING EVENTS

4/24 Friday

African Diaspora Percussion Ensemble

Murray Hall, 7:30 p.m. \$

4/25 Saturday

Wind Symphony and Choirs

Cobb Great Hall, 7:30 p.m. \$

4/26 Sunday

Symphony Band & SYWS

Cobb Great Hall, 3:00 p.m. \$

4/30 Thursday

Artist-Faculty Recital Series sponsored by WKAR

Sergei Kvitko, piano

Cook Recital Hall, 7:30 p.m.

5/3 Sunday

MSUFCU Showcase Series

Piano Monster

Fairchild Theatre, 3:00 p.m. \$\$\$

6/7 Sunday

Music in the Garden

Beal Botanical Gardens

1:00 p.m. Activity | 2:00 p.m. Concert, free

6/28 Sunday

Music in the Garden

Beal Botanical Gardens

1:00 p.m. Activity | 2:00 p.m. Concert, free

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\$ \$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.*