





FORBES CENTER FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS  
**JAMES MADISON UNIVERSITY®**  
School of Music  
*presents*  
**JMU SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA**

**THE JAMES MADISON UNIVERSITY SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA**  
**HONORS CONCERT**  
SUNDAY, APRIL 27TH, 2025 | 2:00 PM  
THE FORBES CENTER FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS | CONCERT HALL  
Pre-Concert Discussion with Competition Winners | 1:00 - 1:30 PM | Grand Lobby

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| Mihir Borah, Composer   | Jondra Harmon, Voice  | Dylan Royal, Saxophone  |



**Kira Omelchenko, *conductor***

Sunday, April 27, 2025  
2 pm  
Concert Hall

(Pre-concert talk 1:00-1:30pm in the Grand Lobby  
with concerto/aria and composition winners)



There will be one 15-minute intermission.

# Program

*sparklers* (2024)

Mihir Borah ('25)

*JMU Student Composition Winner*

Cinco Canciones Negras

Xavier Montsalvatge (1912-2002)

Jondra Harmon, *mezzo soprano*

*JMU Student Concerto/Aria Winner*

Cuba dentro de un piano

Punto de Habañera (Siglo XVIII)

Chévere

Canción de Cuna para dormir a un negrito

Canto negro

Concertino da Camera

Jacques Ibert (1890-1962)

Dylan Royal, *alto saxophone*

*JMU Student Concerto/Aria Winner*

I. Allegro con moto

II. Larghetto - Animato molto

## Presentation of Awards followed by a 15-Minute Intermission

Pictures at an Exhibition

Modest Mussorgsky (1839-1881)

Digital Artwork by Dr. SangJun Yoo

orch. Ravel (1875-1937)

Promenade

Gnomes

Promenade

Il vecchio castello (The Old Castle)

Promenade

Tuileries (Children's Quarrel after Games)

Bydlo (The Ox Cart)

Promenade

Ballet of the Unhatched Chicks

Samuel Goldberg and Schmuyle

The Marketplace at Limoges

Catacombs

Cum mortis in lingua mortua

Babayaga (The Hut on Hen's Legs)

Great Gate of Kiev

"Nimrod" from Enigma Variations

Edward Elgar (1857-1934)

Daniel Esperante, *student conductor*

# Program Notes

## *sparklers* (2024) | Mihir Borah

Sparklers, or *phuljhadi* in Hindi, are small handheld fireworks that burn slowly but extremely brightly and are popularly used during Diwali festivals. The celebrations that I grew up with here in the United States were smaller, and we didn't use real fireworks, so the light we used came mostly from tealights and these sparklers. This piece was inspired by nostalgia and memories of celebrating Diwali, hence the heavy use of finger cymbals, commonly used in temple, and the recurrence of the "*Hare Krishna*" mantra as a melody, first introduced in the cellos. The harmonies I used are intended to evoke the warmth and comfort I find in these memories, especially as I've been away from family at college during the holiday the past few years.

— *program note by Mihir Borah*

## Cinco Canciones Negras | Xavier Montsalvatge

Composer Xavier Montsalvatge's first foray into vocal music produced the song cycle *Cinco Canciones Negras*. The songs in this collection are settings of five poems by four Spanish and Latin American poets; Rafael Alberti, Néstor Luján, Nicolás Guillén, and Ildefonso Pereda Valdés. The pieces were commissioned by Catalan soprano Mercedes Plantada. The first piece composed and performed was the lullaby, *Canción de cuna para dormir a un negrito* and was intended to be an independent song; however, it's popularity spurred Montsalvatge to compose a full cycle. The complete work was composed within the span of two months in 1945.

Text Translation:

Cuba dentro de un piano (Cuba inside a piano)

When my mother wore a strawberry-sherbet for a hat,  
And the smoke from the ships was still smoke from cigars,  
From dark Vuelta Abajo leaves,  
Cadiz went to sleep between fandangos and habaneras,  
And a little parrot at the piano tried to sing tenor.  
Tell me where the flower is that man so intently worships.  
My uncle Anthony returned with his insurrectionist air.  
The Cabaña and the Principe resounded through the patios near the harbor.  
No more shines the blue pearl of the Antillean sea; it's gone out, it's died on us.  
I ran into beautiful Trinidad: Cuba had been lost, and now it was true,  
Quite true; it was no lie.  
A fleeing gunboat came in singing the tale in guajiras,  
Havana was already lost; money was to blame.  
The gunboat fell silent.  
But it was later, ah, later  
When they took "sí" and turned it into "yes."

Punto de Habañera (Habañera strain)

The creole girl goes by in her white crinoline.  
How white it is!  
Hey! The crepe of your foam.  
Sailors, get a look at her!  
She walks, moist from the droplets on her dusky skin.  
Little girl don't fret, all alone this evening.  
I'd like to order the water  
Not to escape too soon from the prison of your skirt.  
Your body encloses, this evening, the murmur of a dahlia opening.  
Little girl, don't fret.  
Your body is fruit asleep in the embroidered breeze.  
Your waist quivers finely with the nobility of a whip.  
All your skin smells joyfully of lemon and orange trees.  
The sailors look at you and they keep looking at you.  
The creole girl goes by with her white crinoline.  
How white it is!

## Program Notes - *continued*

Chévere (The man with a knife)

Chevere of the knife thrust  
Turns himself into a knife.  
He cuts the moon up in slices,  
But he runs out of moon;  
He cuts shadows in slices,  
But he runs out of shadows;  
He cuts songs up in slices  
But he runs out of songs;  
And then he slashes away  
At the flesh of his bad black woman!

Canción de cuna para dormir a un negrito (Cradle song for a little black boy)

Ninghe, little tiny one,  
Little black child who doesn't want to sleep.  
Coconut head, coffee bean, with pretty freckles,  
With eyes wide open like two windows overlooking the sea.  
Close your little eyes frightened little black boy;  
The white boogey-man is going to come and eat you up!  
You're not a slave anymore!  
And if you sleep a lot the master of the house  
Promises to buy you a suit with buttons  
So you can be a groom.  
Ninghe, sleep little black one  
Coconut head, coffee bean.

Canto negro (Black song)

Yambambó, yambambé!  
The Congo solongo struts by,  
The very black man struts by.  
The Congo solongo from Songo  
Dances the yambó on one foot.  
Yambambó, yambambé!  
Mamatomba serembé cuserembá  
The black man sings and gets drunk  
Mamatomba serembé cuserembá  
The black man gets drunk and sings.  
Mamatomba serembé cuserembá  
The black man sings and goes.  
Acuememe serembó  
Tamba, tamba, tamba, tamba,  
The black man staggers  
The black man staggers, caramba  
The black man falls  
Yambambó, yambambé!  
He dances the yambo on one foot!

— *program note by Jondra Harmon*

### **Concertino da Camera | Jacques Ibert**

Written in 1935 for the German-American saxophonist Sigurd Rascher, Concertino da Camera consists of two movements though in fact, the second movement is made up of a slow and a fast section, effectively giving the Concertino a traditional three-movement form.

The movement begins with a brief introduction; the soloist then presents the rhythmic main theme, which incorporates many whole tone and chromatic scales and rapid melodic fragments, combining to produce a brisk “percolating” effect. The music slows and the solo becomes lyrical as the string accompaniment maintains an underlying pulse. The solo and the accompaniment then trade roles with the melody assumed by the violins as the saxophone plays a complex rhythmic

## Program Notes - *continued*

counter melody all supported by the pulsating rhythm of the winds. A short development ends with a downward chromatic scale and the returning primary theme is introduced by the bassoon and echoed in turn by the clarinet, oboe and strings before being taken up again by the soloist for a satisfying, exhilarating and fiery dash to the conclusion.

The second movement is an expansive lyrical movement by the soloist alone, before the orchestra joins with a very modest accompaniment. This movement illustrates the remarkable lyrical quality of the instrument. The orchestra bursts into a full-fledged song before transitioning to the final movement. The final movement recalls the mood of the first movement with its fast-synco-pated lines and colorful scoring. A virtuosic cadenza brings this brilliant concerto to a lively ending.

— *program note by Dylan Royal*

### **Pictures at an Exhibition | Modest Mussorgsky**

After the sudden death of the architect and artist Viktor Hartmann at the age of 39, an exhibition of 400 of his works was held in the Academy of Fine Arts in St. Petersburg, Russia. Modest Mussorgsky (1839-1881), a close friend to the Russian Nationalist, visited the exhibit and became inspired to write a piano suite based on a collection of Hartmann's artworks. The musical work is now most often performed as the orchestration by the French composer Maurice Ravel created in 1922.

Each movement of *Pictures at an Exhibition* is a musical portrait of a specific artwork. Mussorgsky uses powerful moods, vivid harmonic language, rhythmic variety, and complex musical ideas to evoke the essence of each visual work.

The reoccurring *Promenade* theme is first introduced by a trumpet solo in a regal march-like rhythm. It is often altered in rhythm and harmony to reflect the changing atmosphere of each painting and perhaps depicting Mussorgsky wandering the exhibit while examining the artworks on display. The theme is reprised throughout the piece and appears in a variety of forms, textures and tonalities.

*Gnomus (The Gnome)* depicts a grotesque and menacing gnome who is clumsy and unpredictable. The angular rhythm and dissonant music conjures an image of a twisted, stumbling creature through short staccato notes and irregular meters. *Tuileries (Children at Play)* is bright, playful and bustling, depicting children arguing and playing in the gardens of the Tuileries in Paris. The music is quick-paced and light-hearted, with fast and lively rhythms. The theme is full of exuberant childlike energy, capturing a sense of youthful fun. In contrast, *Bydlo (The Ox Cart)*, is heavy and laborious, portraying a slow-moving ox-drawn cart. The main melody, played by a solo tuba/euphonium, moves slowly but steadily, with deep, resonant chords suggesting the slow, monotonous movement of the cart.

The delightful *Ballet of the Unhatched Chicks* is light, energetic, and whimsical, depicting little chicks still in their eggs, but with their feet sticking out, performing a ballet. *The Market at Limoges (The Women Quarreling)* is bright and noisy, capturing a lively market where women are arguing. The music is percussive and fast, full of the hustle and bustle of a busy market, and sharp accents in the brass mimic impatient honking of cars. *Catacombs* is mournful, eerie, and somber, depicting a scene of an underground crypt or catacombs. The melody is haunting with brass sustaining dark and ominous chords, creating an atmosphere of stillness and death.

*Baba Yaga (The Hut on Fowl's Legs)* is frightening and aggressive, depicting the witch Baba Yaga's hut, which stands on chicken legs. The piece is relentless, with a driving rhythm and jagged melodies. The music is filled with tension, evoking the wild, menacing nature of Baba Yaga. The final movement, *The Great Gate of Kiev*, is majestic, triumphant, and grand, representing a vision of a magnificent gate in Kiev. The piece builds to a colossal, glorious climax, with massive chords and sweeping melodies. The music is celebratory, capturing the grandeur and awe-inspiring might scale of the gate. It ends with a powerful, resounding finale, leaving a lasting impression of golden majesty.

— *program note by John Foley and Kira Omelchenko*

## Program Notes - *continued*

Digital artwork for *Pictures at an Exhibition* created by Dr. SangJun Yoo, Assistant Professor of Graphic Design



My digital artwork features algorithmic compositions that accompany Mussorgsky's "Pictures at an Exhibition." These visual systems display geometric elements—triangular grids, columnar structures, and circular formations—that move according to mathematical principles. Each piece functions as a self-contained system with its own internal logic governing rotation, position, and color relationships. The computational graphics draw inspiration from varied sources—architectural frameworks, natural phenomena, and abstract spatial concepts—creating visual textures that stand alongside

the orchestral experience without demanding focus. These algorithmic systems create a visual atmosphere that exists in parallel to Mussorgsky's musical landscapes, offering audience members an additional dimension to encounter during the performance.

— *program note by Dr. SanJun Yoo*

## Biographies

### Mihir Borah (composer)



Mihir Borah is a fourth-year student at James Madison University studying music composition with Dr. Jason Haney and Dr. Eric Guinivan. They are also in Dr. Beth Chandler Cahill's flute studio and have been a performing member of the Wind Symphony, Symphony Orchestra, Jazz Band, Pep Band, and Marching Royal Dukes during their time at JMU.

### Jondra Harmon (mezzo-soprano)



Jondra Harmon, mezzo-soprano, comes to JMU as a graduate assistant in voice, bringing with her almost two decades of teaching experience. She served most recently as Head of the Vocal Area and Coordinator of Vocal Studies at Gardner-Webb University. Ms. Harmon has performed across America and around the world with the American Spiritual Ensemble, and has been featured in productions with Opera Carolina, Kentucky Opera, Cincinnati Opera, Washington National Opera, and The Lyric Opera of Chicago. An avid recitalist, her oratorio and symphonic credits include Durufle's Requiem, Handel's Messiah, Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, Mozart's Requiem, and Haydn's Mass in Time of War.

In addition to singing, Ms. Harmon engages in community music making, having served as music/vocal director for productions with Greater Shelby Community Theater, Kings Mountain Little Theater, and the University of South

## Biographies - *continued*

Carolina Theater Department. She has served as interim music minister at churches in North and South Carolina. She is currently a chorister with Asbury United Methodist Church in Harrisonburg, Virginia and soloist with First Presbyterian Church, Richmond, Virginia.

Ms. Harmon earned a Bachelor of Arts in music education with dual concentrations in voice and bassoon, as well as a Master of Music degree in voice performance from the Peabody Conservatory of the Johns Hopkins University.

When Ms. Harmon isn't touting the importance of breath support and vowel tuning, you may find her riding her bicycle, playing the ukulele, or camping out under the stars.

### **Dylan Royal (alto saxophone)**



Dylan Royal is a 4th-year music performance major at James Madison University; he's under the tutelage of Professor David Pope. Dylan has garnered awards from a wide range of competitions, including placing 2nd in the state round of MTNA; as well as receiving grand prize in the Charleston International Baroque competition.

### **Dr. SangJun Yoo, digital artist, Assistant Professor of Graphic Design, JMU School of Art + Design + Art History, CVPA Integrative Arts Cohort**

Yoo explores the temporal and architectural evolution of screens, where invisibility transforms into visibility, blending image and information. Unveiling the mind's processes amid a visually saturated reality, his work prompts viewers to reveal the process of the mind in perceiving specific things amid a variety of appearances that drive one's perspective to somewhere over physical distance. Rooted in research on screens, digital tools, and user interaction, Yoo's current focus delves into the interplay between technology and perception, unraveling the phenomenology of distance and imagined space.

# JMU Symphony Orchestra Personnel

Dr. Kira Omelchenko, *conductor*

Daniel Esperante, *orchestra manager, DMA graduate assistant*

Danny Postlethwait, *orchestra librarian*

Johnny Park, *orchestra librarian*

Joshua Brancalone, *poster design and logo creative*

Gussie Nafziger, creator of slides and projections operator

## **Violin I**

Madeleine Gabalski\*^

Sierra Rickard^

Johnny Park^

Zike Qi^

Zoe Lovelace

Erin Choi

Ella Patterson

## **Violin II**

Khalil Turner\*^

Evelyn Page^

Alexandra Goodell^

Anthony Parone^

Nathaniel Gordy

Aidan Coleman

Anniah Craun

Luke Barnes

## **Viola**

Micah Lee\*^

Julia Johnson^

Elliot Drew^

Ana Mooney^

Sunny Robertello

Sawyer Degregori

Thien Phan

## **Cello**

John Meshrek\*^

Danny Postlethwait\*^

Hailey HoteK^

Christopher Hall^

Diego Hernandez

Marlie Dela Cruz

Jeniffer Castellon Rivera

Augusta McNulty

Carson Redmon

## **Bass**

John Foley\*^

Frankie Sellars\*^

Gabriella Bieberich^

Kiki Protosaltis

Jack Choi

Grey Sheridan

Michael Dean

## **Flute/Piccolo**

Daniel Esperante\*

Joshua Brancalone^

Megumi Kadarusman

## **Oboe/English Horn**

Will Slopnick\*^

Lynette Salins

## **Clarinet**

Geneva Maldonado\*^

Ian Graff

Jeanette Gilson

## **Bass Clarinet**

Ian Graff

## **Bassoon**

David Kang\*^

Michael Ross

Charlie Address

## **Contrabassoon**

Charlie Address

## **Alto Saxophone**

Dylan Royal

## **Horn**

Gray Smiley\*^

Jacob Taylor\*

Kendall Hicks

Ethan Boswell

## **Trumpet**

Steffi Tetzloff-Judson\*^

Taylor Lowry

Jocelyn Moyer

Owen Brown

## **Trombone**

Nikhil Argade\*

Adriana Dryden

## **Bass Trombone**

James Colmie Wilson

## **Euphonium**

Hannah Caraker

## **Tuba**

Henry Taylor\*

## **Timpani and Percussion**

Josh Sheppard\*

Adelaide Hofmann

Brian Willey

Thomas Creighton III

Logan Douglas

Richard Collister

## **Celesta**

Ryan Walker

## **Harp**

Lea Kung

\*denotes section leader/co-section leader

^performer in Ibert Concertino da Camera