

FORBES CENTER FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS

JAMES MADISON UNIVERSITY®

School of Music

presents

From the New World



(Robert S. Duncanson, *Landscape with Rainbow*, 1859, oil on canvas, Smithsonian American Art Museum, this media is in the public domain)

JMU Symphony Orchestra

Dr. Kira Omelchenko, *director and conductor*
Dalton Guin and Noelle Singleton,
graduate conductors

Tuesday, September 30, 2025

7:30 pm

Concert Hall

(Pre-concert talk 6:30-7:00 pm in the Grand Lobby)



There will be one 15-minute intermission.

Program

Overture to Poet and Peasant (“Dichter und Bauer”) Franz von Suppé
(1819-1895)

Rainphase Salina Fisher
(b. 1993)

Selections from Carmen Suite nos. 1 and 2 Georges Bizet
(1838-1875)

Los Toréadors

Intermezzo

Aragonaise

Habanera

Danse Bohême

Noelle Singleton and Dalton Guin
graduate conductors

15-Minute Intermission

Symphony No. 9, Op. 95 (“From the New World”) Antonín Dvořák
(1841-1904)

I. *Adagio-Allegro molto*

II. *Largo*

III. *Scherzo: Molto vivace*

IV. *Finale: Allegro con fuoco*

This performance is dedicated to my father, Paul Horel, who passed away on September 15 from brain cancer. I love you very much dad and will miss you so much. It's going to be a strange 'New World' without you, a world that's scary and full of unknowns. Yet it's a beautiful world full of hope, kindness, and love.

— Kira Omelchenko

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personal computers, and any other electronic devices.

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Program Notes

***Poet and Peasant Overture* by Franz von Suppé (1819 – 1895)**

Franz von Suppé was an Austrian-born composer best known for his light operas, ballets, and other stage works. A pioneer of the Viennese operetta, Suppé brought a unique voice to 19th-century music, blending charm, drama, and humor in equal measure. Musicologist Robert Letellier described him as a master of stylistic synthesis, noting that “he knew how to blend [Italian, French, and German styles] irresistibly.”

Due to their dramatic flair and playful energy, many of Suppé’s overtures have found a second life in popular culture, particularly in classic cartoons such as *Looney Tunes* and *Popeye the Sailor*, where their theatricality and humor perfectly match the animated antics on screen.

The Poet and Peasant Overture comes from Suppé’s three-act operetta of the same name. It opens with a noble brass chorale, which gives way to a romantic, lyrical cello solo. A stormy section soon follows, featuring fast, syncopated rhythms and powerful crescendos. The overture then transitions into a lively Viennese waltz, showcasing Suppé’s gift for melodic invention. As the piece unfolds, it moves through a variety of moods—playful one moment, fiery the next—before culminating in an exuberant and spirited finale.

— *Program note by Noelle Singleton*

***Rainphase* (2015) by Salina Fisher**

Salina Fisher (b.1993) is an award-winning New Zealand composer whose works are frequently performed worldwide. Drawing from her background as a multi-instrumentalist of mixed Japanese heritage, her highly evocative music often involves collaborations, notably with taonga pūoro practitioners. Her works have been programmed by New Zealand Symphony Orchestra, New York Philharmonic, Auckland Philharmonia, Tanglewood Music Festival, Helsinki Philharmonic, A Far Cry, Brodsky Quartet, and Symphony Orchestras of Seattle, Atlanta, Dallas, Melbourne, and Shanghai, including with conductors Gemma New and Tianyi Lu. She became the youngest-ever recipient of the SOUNZ Contemporary Award in 2016 and 2017, and has received awards from Fulbright, The Arts Foundation, Creative NZ, and CANZ. She is a graduate of Manhattan School of Music, New York, and New Zealand School of Music – Te Kōkī, Victoria University of Wellington, where she was appointed Composer-in-Residence (2019-2020) and Teaching Fellow in Composition.

<https://www.salinafisher.com>

***Rainphase* Programme Note**

For quite some time, the beauty and chaos of Wellington rain has inspired me to respond musically. My latest orchestral work ‘Rainphase’ draws on characteristics of water as rain: its shape and shapelessness, transparency and density, energy and calm, and its capacity for reflection in both a literal and emotional sense.

Structurally, it flows through various stages of this “phase” in the water cycle: last rays diminishing as grey clouds form; droplets released; a frenzy of water and wind; all collecting in streams. I’m particularly fascinated by the variation in sound and movement of raindrops depending on the material upon which they fall, and the texture created when these countless individual timbres and rhythms happen all at once.

Program Notes - *continued*

The ending evokes a memorable moment of obscure beauty that I experienced on a still night last winter. Heavy rain had transformed empty streets into blurry mirrors, reflecting warm glows of street and traffic lights.

— *Salina Fisher*

***Carmen Suite* by George Bizet (1838 - 1875)**

Georges Bizet was born into a musical family in Paris in 1838. His mother, Aimée, was a pianist, while his father was a vocal teacher. Bizet received extensive musical education at home at which he excelled and was accepted into the Conservatoire de Paris before his 10th birthday. Although he showed promise as a young pianist, Bizet abandoned this path in favor of composition. His early keyboard works were relatively unsuccessful, but scholars still debate the quality and success of the later operatic works for which he is best known. Bizet died at the age of 37, believing his most recent opera, *Carmen*, was a failure. In Harold Schonberg's *The lives of the Great Composers, Volume II*, Schonberg notes Bizet's funeral, at which over 4,000 people were in attendance. Fellow composer, Charles Gounod, who had been Bizet's friend and an early advocate of his work, emotionally delivered Bizet's eulogy. In Winton Dean's *Georges Bizet: His Life and Work*, Dean notes that music critics that had rejected *Carmen* three months earlier, had now, on the occasion of Bizet's death, regarded him a master.

Carmen tells the story of Don José, a young soldier, and the young, beguiling Carmen. José becomes entranced by Carmen, and through this affection and circumstance, abandons his fiancé and duty to elope with her. Carmen eventually grows tired of José, instead giving her attentions to the bullfighter Escamillo, abandoning José. When the assembled cast is present at one of Escamillo's fights,

José confronts Carmen as she is about to join Escamillo in the ring to celebrate his victory. When Carmen rejects José again, and attempts to push past him to join Escamillo, José stabs her, morning her death while Escamillo, unaware, celebrates his victory a few feet away.

Although *Carmen* had successes abroad after its French premiere in 1875, the production did not return to Paris until 1883. Ernest Guiraud, a friend of Bizet, compiled two suites based on themes from *Carmen* after the composer's death. Though the suites do not adhere precisely to Bizet's original work, and offers the themes in the reverse order of their chronological appearance within the opera, they do keep with Bizet's style and orchestration practices. Each suite contains six movements and may have contributed to the opera's popularity, offering a musical opportunity to present parts of the work without the resources necessary for a full-scale operatic production.

— *Program note by Dalton Guin*

Symphony no. 9 “From the New World” by Antonín Dvořák (1841-1904)

Czech composer, Antonín Dvořák completed Symphony no. 9 “From the New World” in 1893, the same time as his well-known “American” String Quartet no. 12 and one year after moving to America. During the time the symphony was written, Dvořák was the director of the National Conservatory of Music of American in New York City, a position he held from 1892 to 1895. In writing his symphony, Dvořák was strongly inspired by characteristic and elements of African American and Native American music, particularly the use of pentatonic scales, modal harmonies, and syncopated rhythms.

Program Notes - *continued*

The premiere of the symphony took place on December 16, 1893, and was a huge musical achievement for the composer. Dvořák described the premiere in a letter to his publisher, Simrock, writing: “My dear friend Simrock! The success of the symphony on 15 and 16 December was spectacular; the papers are saying that no composer has ever achieved a triumph such as this. I sat in a box, the auditorium hosted New York’s finest, and people applauded for so long that I had to express my appreciation from my box like a king (don’t laugh!). You know that I prefer to avoid ovations such as this, but I had to do it and make an appearance!” (Dvořák, Antonín. *Letter to Fritz Simrock*, December 1893. Quoted in “Symphony No. 9 in E minor, Op. 95 ‘From the New World’,” Antonín-Dvořák.cz.).

The symphony contains four standard movements including an operatic first movement, a slow and lyrical second movement, a wild *Scherzo* dance-like third movement that echoes the rhythms of the second movement to Beethoven’s

Symphony no. 9 “Chorale”, and a fiery aggressive finale. Elements of the composition includes motifs that reoccur throughout the movements and gives the symphony a unifying expression. Thematic ideas are concise and clear, and rhythms are piercing throughout, especially in the third and last movements.

The second movement (*Largo*) is full of beautiful lyricism. The music brings a deep sense of nostalgia and melancholy, as well as suggestions of a desolate and vast American landscape. It features an expressive melody in the English horn, accompanied by serene chords in the strings. The movement opens with a harmonic succession of chords in a solemn brass chorale, moving from E major to B-flat major, back to E major, to D-flat major, B double-flat major, G-flat minor and finally resolving to the main home key of D-flat major. Indeed, entering a “new world,” Dvořák places these new haunting chord progressions throughout the movement, appearing later in the woodwinds and back to brass, and again in the final fourth movement, presented in different moods from *agitato* to regal and triumphant.

The main theme is in the style of a lament, reflecting homesickness, which leads to a variation of a funeral march in low pizzicato in double basses. The nostalgic and melancholy theme was originally written for clarinet, but Dvořák later changed it to the English horn, since the timbre of the instrument reminded him of the vocal quality of Harry T. Burleigh (1866-1949), a professional classical singer and the first Black composer who helped develop characteristically American music. It was Burleigh who first introduced Dvořák to African American music and spirituals.

The main melody of the *Largo* became so popular that it inspired several instrumental and vocal arrangements such as “*Goin’ Home*” created in 1922 by Dvořák’s American student, William Arms Fisher (1861–1948) (Lewis, S. (2020, November 16). *The story behind the nostalgic melody by Dvořák that became the song “Goin’ Home.”* WRTI Arts Desk. Retrieved September 8, 2025, from WRTI.)

The final movement of the symphony concludes with the entire orchestra striking a powerful E major chord. The reminiscence of the triumphant chord is sustained by woodwinds and slowly softens to a final moment of serenity, hope, beauty, wonder, and awe.

— Program note by Kira Omelchenko

About the Conductors



Dalton M. Guin, a native of Erwin, North Carolina, began his musical life at home, with a family that loved music, and in the choir loft of a Southern Baptist church. He has performed with instrumental and vocal groups across North America and the Pacific as both conductor and hornist. He holds a bachelor's degree in Horn Performance and a master's degree in Instrumental Conducting, both from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. Dalton is currently pursuing a Doctor of Musical Arts degree in Orchestral Conducting, Pedagogy, and Literature from James Madison University in Virginia, where he studies with Dr. Kira Omelchenko.



Noelle Singleton is thrilled to be beginning her doctoral studies at James Madison University in the Orchestral Conducting, Pedagogy, and Literature program. Originally from Salt Lake City, Utah, Noelle holds a bachelor's degree in music education and a master's degree in orchestral conducting. Prior to attending JMU, Noelle held a one-year appointment as a faculty member at Brigham Young University – Idaho, where she conducted their University Orchestra and taught a violin studio. With a deep passion for performing and promoting orchestral works by female composers, Noelle is eager to continue her research here at JMU in bringing their music to light. In addition to conducting JMU's Chamber Orchestra, she looks forward to leading the university's upcoming opera production of Poulenc's *Dialogues of the Carmelites*.



Dr. Kira Omelchenko recently joined the School of Music at James Madison University as the Director of Orchestras and Associate Professor of Orchestral Conducting and the Artistic Director of the annual JMU Spring String Thing Summer Camp. Recent conducting engagements include the Sofia Symphonic Summit with the Sofia Philharmonic Orchestra, Carnegie Hall, the Vienna Opera Academy, Oregon All-State Orchestra, the 2025 ASTA National Conference Director's Orchestra, and residencies in Thailand, South Korea, China, Australia, and New Zealand. Upcoming conducting invitations include the Musicantes Festival with the National Symphony Orchestra of Peru, leading the California and Kansas All-State Orchestras, and guest conducting at the 2026 American Viola Society National Festival.

JMU Symphony Orchestra Personnel

Dr. Kira Omelchenko, Director and Conductor
Noelle Singleton, Orchestra Manager TA, Graduate Conductor
Dalton Guin, Graduate Conductor
Danny Postlethwait and Johnny Park, Librarians
Joshua Brancalone, Poster Design and Logo creative

Violin I

Zike Qi*
Victor Winterstein
Erin Choi
Roman Rousek
Aidan Coleman
Noelle Singleton

Violin II

Johnny Park*
Felicity Banner
Nick Poxon
Alexandra Goodell
Zoe Lovelace
Anthony Parone
Anniah Craun

Viola

Sunny Robertello*
Julia Johnson
Ana Mooney
Thien Phan
Sawyer Degregori
Elliot Dew
Rose Guevara

Cello

John Meshreky*
Danny Postlethwait*
Hailey Hotek
Christopher Hall
Augusta McNulty
Marlie Dela Cruz
Tessa Kuta
Diego Hernandez
Will Hayes
Theron Rath

Bass

Gabriella Bieberich*
Michael Dean
Kiki Protopsaltis
Frankie Sellars
Jolie Prasad
Grey Sheridan
Kaylin Yates

Flute/Piccolo

Joshua Brancalone
Daniel Esperante
Emma Lisson

Oboe/English horn

Cady Litteral
Azaleigh Smith

Clarinet

Geneva Maldonado
David Kriete
Valerie Alvarado

Bass Clarinet

David Kriete

Bassoon

Charlie Andress
Michael Ross

Contrabassoon

Charlie Andress

Horn

Joshua Short
Chloe Starling
Isabel Ricciuto
Kendall Hicks

Trumpet

Allie Woodbury
Taylor Lowry
Charlotte Connolly

Trombone

William Shanahan
Adriana Dryden

Bass Trombone

James Colmie Wilson

Tuba

Ian Wallace

Percussion

Emily Stevens*
Thomas Creighton VI
Logan Douglas
Ryan Secrist
Lizbeth Stephan

Piano

Ryan Walker

Harp

Elsbeth McNulty

*denotes principal/co-principal player

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