



**GRAND VALLEY  
STATE UNIVERSITY®**

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**DEPARTMENT OF MUSIC,  
THEATRE, AND DANCE**

**Symphony Orchestra Concert**  
Dr. Joel Schut, conductor

Wednesday, November 19, 2025 at 7:30 PM  
Louis Armstrong Theatre  
Haas Center for Performing Arts  
GVSU Allendale Campus

# Program

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Academic Festival Overture (1880)

Johannes Brahms (1833-1397)

Orchids (2025-Premiere)

Adam West (b. 2006)

El Amor Brujo (1924)

Manuel De Falla (1876-1946)

*Corie Auger, mezzo-soprano*

*-Intermission-*

Symphonic Dances, Op. 64 (1896)

Edvard Grieg (1843-1907)

I. Dance No. 1, G Major, Allegro moderato e marcato

II. Dance No. 2, A Major, Allegretto grazioso

III. Dance No. 3, D Major, Allegro giocoso

IV. Dance No. 4, A Minor, Andante – Allegro risoluto

*Reception in lobby following performance in collaboration with the College of Education and Community Innovation (CECI) benefitting the Replenish Basic Needs Center*

## Soloist Biography

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### **Corie Auger, voice**

Corie Auger, mezzo-soprano, enjoys bringing characters to life on the operatic and musical theater stage. She has sung with the Jacksonville Symphony Orchestra, Utah Festival Opera & Musical Theater, Opera Grand Rapids, Cedar Rapids Opera, West Michigan Opera Project, Toledo Opera, Minneapolis Summer Opera, New Moon Opera, Main Street Opera, and Portland Summer Opera. Favorite roles include La Muse (*Les Contes d'Hoffmann*), Despina (*Così fan tutte*), and Musetta (*La Bohème*).

Corie teaches as an adjunct professor at Grand Valley State University, and is a co-founder of the Grand Rapids Voice Collective, a collaborative training collective for young musical theater artists. Her students are currently performing in national Broadway tours, Disney cruise lines, off-Broadway productions, and have been accepted to programs like Interlochen School of the Arts, University of Michigan, Shenandoah Conservatory, Boston Conservatory, University of Oklahoma, and Ithaca College.

### **Adam West, composer**

Adam West is a sophomore at Grand Valley State University pursuing a B.A. in Music with an emphasis in composition. He has studied piano with Dr. Sookkyung Cho since beginning the instrument at age 17 and has been composing since 16. Adam's works have received recognition in competitions, including first place in OST Jam Crunchtime #3 and the 2025 GVSU Art Gallery Composing Competition. He is also a co-founder of Isochron Studio LLC, a music production studio specializing in music for games and film. Outside of music, Adam enjoys chess, rock climbing, video games, and movies.

# Program Notes

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## **Brahms – Academic Festival Overture**

Johannes Brahms never went to college. When he was 20, however, he had the opportunity to indulge in the perks of student life for several weeks, without having to do a stitch of academic work. This serendipitous state of affairs resulted after he got “laid off” while on tour with the flamboyant 25-year-old Hungarian violinist, Eduard Reményi. Early in July of 1853, Reményi and Brahms were guests at the home of Franz Liszt during an extended stopover in Weimar. Reményi worshipped at the shrine of Liszt, but Brahms wanted nothing to do with their host’s artistic goals and the “New German School.” Incensed that his reticent accompanist wasn’t according the great master proper respect, Reményi sent Brahms on his way.

A few weeks earlier, at the end of May, Reményi had introduced Brahms to violinist-composer Joseph Joachim during a concert stop in Hanover. Foreseeing a personality clash between the ill-matched duo, Joachim had invited Brahms – if the opportunity arose – to join him at Göttingen, where he would be taking some summer courses in philosophy and history at the local university. For two glorious months that summer, Brahms hung out with Joachim and his circle, enjoying reading, debates, pleasant walks, beer-drinking sessions and song fests at the local beer-halls, and general student camaraderie. By doing a recital with Joachim, he raised enough money to finance a long-held dream to take a walking tour of the Rhineland. Thus, the young composer packed his knapsack and bid peripheral university life adieu.

Brahms’ next brush with academe occurred 23 years later, in 1876. Cambridge University offered him an honorary Doctorate in Music, which required his presence at the ceremony – but Brahms had a paralyzing distaste for sea travel. Then, he learned that Londoners were hatching lavish plans to celebrate his sojourn in England. Harboring an innate horror of fuss and lionization, and unwilling to face the Channel crossing, the composer stayed home and relinquished the honor.

It was in 1879 that the University of Breslau conferred upon him the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. Brahms was flattered and sent a postcard of thanks to the faculty. However, a subsequent letter from his friend Bernhard Scholz, Director of Music in Breslau, made it clear that the university expected him to express his gratitude in musical form. While vacationing at Bad Ischl during the summer of 1880, Brahms penned his musical “thank you” – the Academic Festival Overture.

With a masterful balance of serious and light-hearted elements, the emphasis is on the “festival” rather than the “academic” in an overture that brims with an irrepressible sense of fun. The work also sports the most extravagant orchestral forces the composer ever employed. Brahms himself described the piece as “a very boisterous potpourri of student songs.” Indeed, excerpts from four student beer-hall tunes play a significant role in the orchestral texture in what is, perhaps, a fond backward look to the carefree summer days of 1853.

A hushed, but urgent statement launches the Overture, followed by a dramatic succession of contrasting ideas and dynamics. The principal idea here is an adaptation of the Rakóczy March, a favorite tune with the composer since his youth. Following a soft drumroll, three trumpets then present the first of the traditional students’ songs: “Wir hatten gebauet ein stattliches Haus” (We have built a stately house). Its roots lie in a Thuringian folk song, which had been transformed into a defiant protest song in the East German town of Jena when the students’ association there was disbanded in 1819. After Brahms develops and mixes this song with the earlier Rakóczy adaptation, the melody of “Der Landesvater” (The father of our country) appears in a sweeping, lyrical rendition introduced by violins and violas.

The tempo shifts to *animato* for the freshman’s song known as The Fox-Ride (“Was komm dort von der Höh’ ” – What comes from afar). Bassoons, accompanied by off-the-beat violas and cellos, add a touch of humor that must have raised a faculty eyebrow or two at the premiere. Not forgetting to stir in his original material, Brahms then plays the three student songs off one another in a light-handed development. For the grand finale, a rambunctious version of the imposing “Gaudeamus igitur” (Therefore, let us be merry) makes a joyful noise and provides a rousing conclusion with its blazing brass and full orchestral forces.

The Overture has been one of Brahms’ most often played works ever since the composer himself conducted the premiere in Breslau on January 4, 1881.

-Note by Kathy Henkel

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## West – Orchids

“Orchids” is based on the dual nature of love and loss. The piece begins with an expression of love first melodic and sincere. It then takes a vibrant and playful form, symbolized by the joyful main theme carried by the bouncing clarinets trumpets, and flute lines. The chimes, evocative of a celebratory church bell being hit twelve times, which should suggest a wedding or an emblem of union and life’s joyful beginnings.

As the music unfolds, however, the tone gradually shifts. What began as lighthearted and whimsical begins to take on a more serious, reflective quality. The rhythm becomes more pronounced, and the brass section grows

in prominence, signaling a subtle transition from the celebration of life to a deeper, more introspective mood.

In the final section, the main theme returns, but what was once joyful and carefree becomes engulfed with loss. The same bells from before hit twelve times, but now are representative of a funeral or a passing bell. The theme of the piece is still familiar, but now it carries with it the full spectrum of emotions that come with the loss of love - anger, regret, shock, sadness, fear, and even guilt. These conflicting emotions are woven into the music, creating a texture that grows in intensity as the piece builds towards its conclusion. By the end, the music reflects the deep turmoil of loss, as it evolves from sorrow and disbelief to a sense of unresolved, lingering pain.

-Note by Matt West

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### **De Falla – El Amor Brujo**

Although Falla owed much to a formative sojourn in Paris, where he learned from colleagues such as Debussy, Ravel, and Dukas, his music remained firmly rooted in Spanish arts, both folk and classical. Moreover, the majority of his most important scores are music for the theater — zarzuelas, ballets, operas, incidental music. It was the two-act opera *La vida breve* that served as his introduction in Paris, and the sounds of his homeland were never long out of Falla's creative imagination; the principal work of his Paris years was the *Siete canciones populares españolas*.

Falla left Paris at the beginning of World War I. His first work back in Madrid was *El amor brujo*, in its original form a gitanería of dances, songs, and spoken texts. ("Love, the Magician" is how the work is usually translated into English, but *brujo* can be an adjective as well as a noun, and "Love Bewitched" might be a closer idea.) The work was requested by the great dancer Pastora Imperio, whose mother, Rosario la Mejorana, suggested an old Andalusian legend for the subject. Gregorio Martínez Sierra and María Lejárraga, with whom Falla was involved in several projects, wrote the scenario and texts, and the piece had its premiere at the Teatro Lara in Madrid in April 1915.

The music was generally well received, some grumblings about French influence notwithstanding, but the production was not notably successful. Falla then rearranged the work, expanding the instrumentation and revising the scenario for performance in 1916 (on the program with the premiere of *Nights in the Gardens of Spain*). Later still, the larger orchestration served as the basis for another ballet version, first played in concert in Paris in 1923, then given as a ballet in 1925.

The tale in its final version concerns Candelas, a young widowed gypsy haunted by the ghost of her jealous husband. To free her from his unwanted attention, Candelas and Carmelo, her new lover, must exchange a kiss of perfect love. In a

series of dances the ghost first frightens the couple (Dance of Terror), Candelas tries to exorcise it (Ritual Fire Dance), and then her friend Lucia seduces it. While the ghost is distracted by Lucia, Candelas and Carmelo kiss, and then mock the ghost in the final dance (Dance of the Game of Love).

In telling the story from a flamenco perspective, choreographer/director Siudy Garrido has added a prologue in which the four principal characters are introduced by dancers, as well as a new sung character, a witch-like shaman. (There was a similar role in the original gitanería.) The guitarist José Luis Rodríguez created the music for this, as well as for a few transitions between scenes. "This is a great opportunity to embrace Falla's initial vision, to bring these dancers and musicians together," Garrido says.

Falla was studying cante jondo, the deep song of Andalusia, at the time of *El amor brujo*, and every musical aspect of the work reveals the influence of that study. Falla did not quote actual folk songs, relying instead on his knowledge of the idiom to create original "folk art" stunning in its power and authenticity.

"Falla was able to bring flamenco into a classical context, establishing a roadmap for orchestral flamenco," Garrido says. "This has been a wonderful challenge, to dive inside Falla's music, in its layers and details, for six months, identifying true Spanish elements."

Perhaps the best-known example of this is the oft-transcribed "Ritual Fire Dance," the fierce central component of Candelas' midnight ritual. Equally impressive, however, are the songs and other dances. This is not the prettified orchestral Iberiana of many famous French and Russian "Spanish" scores, but rather an earthy distillation of native impulses. Although a vivid work of theater, *El amor brujo* is as much a series of intense musical reflections on the power of love as it is sheer story telling. As the composer Charles Koechlin wrote in a review, "Purity of line in the writing, simplicity amid richness, and unexaggerated originality simply leap forth from this work."

-Note by John Henken

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## Greig – Symphonic Dances

Grieg found the inspiration for his Symphonic Dances from a collection of folk songs assembled by Norwegian composer Ludvig M. Lindemann (1812-1887). A more appropriate title would have been Norwegian Folk Dances and he did append the title with the phrase after Norwegian Themes. Although it may be thought of as a symphonic work, the treatment of the melodies is more akin to a fantasia or even programmatic in its scope. Originally written for piano four hands, that version offers no comparison to all the colors and power of a full orchestra.

The opening dance (Allegretto moderato e marcato) has a celebratory and lively character in the outer sections with a middle section that is more subdued and exotic. It evokes the vigorous Halling, a Norwegian country dance for couples where the men do a lot of leaping, kicking and other acrobatic stunts to show off for their partners. The second dance (Allegretto grazioso) is also a Halling but is relaxed and serene with a confident and joyful atmosphere. A spring dance melody from the Åmot region in Hedmark County is the basis for the third dance (Allegro giocoso). The initial subdued manner turns festive and vigorous before entering into a relaxed middle section. The final movement's opening march is similar to Sibelius' tone poem En Saga (purely coincidental), and the middle section features the melody from a wedding song of the Valdres region.

There is a quality in Grieg's music that touches us in a more familiar manner than that of other composers. Perhaps it is because he expresses the feelings we all easily recognize, or that it simply is comfortable and we can trust that he will lift our spirits at the end. Tchaikovsky wrote in his Autobiographical Description of a Trip Abroad in 1888 after meeting Grieg:

*It is possible that Grieg's genius is considerably less than Brahms' ... In return, he is closer to us, he is more understandable for us, more kindred, precisely because he is deeply human. When we listen to Grieg, we instinctively recognize that this music has been written by a person driven by an irresistible pull, by using music, to express a deeply poetical flow from nature of emotions and moods ... how unfalteringly stimulating, new, original!*

With this setting of dances Grieg depicts the values of human fellowship. In his words, "When alone, one cannot enjoy nature past a certain dimension without melancholy knocking at your door, but in fellowship with a friend, it is infinite, without limits."

-Note by Vincent Osborn

# Personnel

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## Violin 1

Noah Abdelkader  
Rebekah Doody  
Maggie Fisher  
Andrew Kales\*  
Danielle Meyers  
Jocelynn Pierce  
Aveline Schienke\*  
Avery Trimble  
Kenneth Walker

## Violin 2

Esther Bard  
Vera Bresser  
Willow Davidson  
Daniel Lesinski  
Priscilla Martin  
Danny Parker  
Claire Pohl  
Kayla Shook\*  
Aiden Zemaitis

## Viola

Sam Bryant\*  
Emma Cornish  
Sarah Johncox  
Braedyn MacKeller  
Cruz Peña\*  
Xavaier Williams

## Cello

Seamus Adams  
Giselle Balivet  
Maria Benitez-Salano  
Jake Doctor\*  
Megan Ferenczhalmy  
Grace Jenkins  
Nyx Johnson  
Aiden Mack  
Gabrielle Peck  
Tyleur Wright

## Double Bass

Cullen DeCou\*  
Iris Eppinga  
Jovany Hernandez  
Andrew Lunn  
Samantha Rometty  
Adam Zdarsky

## Piccolo

Julia Meyer

## Flute

Brittlyn Keller  
Grace Morrison\*

## Oboe

Kayla Hieb  
Elisa Skinner\*

## English Horn

Kayla Hieb

## Clarinet

Lilly Childers  
Maddox Lewis\*

## Bass Clarinet

Maddie Sanborn

## Bassoon

Simon Furton  
Daken VanDusen\*

## Horn

Eli Gibson  
Brendan Reed\*  
Michael Scoby+  
Evan Supplee+

## Trumpet

Donovan Ford  
Andy Lasceski  
Mia Kolhoff\*

## Trombone

Micah Babinski  
Matt Keith  
Dylan Schoolcraft\*

## Tuba

Jorge Gonzalez

## Timpani

Zachary Haverkamp

## Percussion

Ramses Arispe  
Thomas Cordes  
Maria Potrero

## Piano

Lydia Wyn+

**\*Section Principal  
+Guest Artist**

*Names are listed in  
alphabetical order to  
emphasize the  
contribution of each player*



# GVSU Music Faculty

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Corie Auger	Patricia Gordon	Danny Phipps
Christopher Belland	Samuel Gould	Bill Ryan
Rachael Bergan	Adam Graham	Joel Schut
Colin Bianchi	Dan Graser	Greg Secor
Mark Buchner	Gary June	Kathryn Stieler
Arthur Campbell	Olivia Kieffer	Paul Swantek
Paul Carlson	Andrew Lenhart	James Thompson
Sookkyung Cho	Pablo Mahave-Veglia	Kevin Tutt
Ryan Christianson	Helen Marlais	Marlen Vavříková
Greg Crowell	Barry Martin	Mark Williams
Michael Drost	John Martin	Alex Wilson
Lisa Feurzeig	Chuck Norris	Yu Xin
Beth Gibbs	Victoria Olson	Molly York
	Christopher Petersmark	

## Upcoming MTD Events

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Nov. 20 @ 7:30 p.m. in LAT	Wind Symphony Concert
Nov. 21 @ 7:00 p.m. in 1600	Senior Dance Concert
Nov. 23 @ 5:00 p.m. in SVS	Early Music Ensemble
Nov. 23 @ 2/7:00 p.m. in 1600	Senior Dance Concert
Nov. 23 @ 7:30 p.m. in SVS	Saxophone Soloists
Nov. 24 @ 7:30 p.m. in LAT	Choral Ensemble Concert
Dec. 1 @ 7:30 p.m. in SVS	Dr. Cho's Piano Studio Recital
Dec. 3 @ 7:30 p.m. in SVS	Cello Class Recital
Dec. 4 @ 7:30 p.m. in SVS	Collaborative Piano Class Recital
Dec. 5 @ 7:30 p.m. in SVS	Chamber Music Class Recital
Dec. 6 @ 5:00 p.m. in SVS	Free Play 52: Sinta Quartet
Dec. 6 @ 7:00 p.m. in LAT	Fall Dance Concert
Dec. 7 @ 2:00 p.m. in LAT	Fall Dance Concert

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