

Spring 2026 Small Ensemble Concert

THE GAMER SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

at the University of Maryland



Gildenhorn Recital Hall

Saturday April 18th, 2026
2:00 PM

umd.gamersymphony.org

About the Gamer Symphony Orchestra

In Fall 2005, student violist Michelle Eng sought to create an orchestral group that played the music of video games. With a half-dozen others who shared a love of video game music, she founded the Gamer Symphony Orchestra to achieve that dream. By the ensemble's first public performance in Spring 2006, its size had quadrupled.

Today, the Gamer Symphony Orchestra provides a musical and social outlet to 100+ members. It is the world's first college-level ensemble to draw its repertoire exclusively from the soundtracks of video games. The ensemble is entirely student-run, which includes conducting and musical arranging.

In addition to semesterly concerts at the University of Maryland campus, the GSO has performed in a number of special concerts throughout the years. In February 2011, the GSO's arrangement of "Korobeiniki" from Tetris was performed in collaboration with Video Games Live and the National Philharmonic to two sold-out houses at the Strathmore in Bethesda, MD. In May 2012 and 2015, as a part of the Art of Video Games Exhibit, the GSO performed at the American Art Museum in Washington, D.C. in the central atrium. Most recently, in March 2018, the GSO performed on the Millennium Stage of the Kennedy Center in a concert titled "From Bits to Brass: A Symphonic Adventure Through Video Game Music," as a part of the Kennedy Center's "Direct Current" event. The concert was played to a packed house, and served as a celebration of musical masterpieces across the video game repertoire for gamers, musicians, and enthusiasts alike.

Aside from its concerts, the GSO also holds the charity gaming tournament "Gaming 4 Life" twice a year. All proceeds from this multi-hour long video game tournament and social event benefit the Children's National Medical Center in Washington, D.C.

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Havana

Overwatch

Arr. Jay Rana

Simon Bailey, Alex Powers, Silas Rager, Eric Zhang, Christopher Assiryani, Xavier Bornhorst, Victor Esan, Adam Martinson, Minsi Hu, Jay Rana

Based on the city of the same name, the *Overwatch* map “Havana” is most notably the location used for the popular “Storm Rising” story event. Elements of Cuban culture are present throughout the city, including architecture, murals, and vintage car bodies. Hovering wheels and glowing distillery machines also weave the futuristic technology of *Overwatch*’s setting into the map. This is echoed in the map’s music: classic Afro-Cuban rhythms and instruments are blended with a more symphonic style present in many songs from the game. The result is an upbeat and heroic theme which features trumpet, violin, and piano solos over bass lines from the cello and bass guitar, all backed by congas, güiro, shakers, and cowbell.



Roxas

Kingdom Hearts

Arr. Nicholas DeGraba

Garrett Peters, Nicholas DeGraba, Ian Jackson, Adam Martinson, Alan Whitman, Christopher Assiryani

In the opening prologue of *Kingdom Hearts II*, you play as a character you’ve never encountered before: Roxas. You aren’t sure who he is—and neither is he. The story of Roxas unfolds like a scattered dream: memories that don’t quite belong, friendships that feel just out of reach, and a fate that cannot be escaped. Though his time is brief, Roxas’s journey leaves a lasting emotional impact, carried through some of the game’s most poignant music. This arrangement weaves together “Roxas,” “The Other Promise,” and “Vector to the Heavens,” tracing the arc of his story, from introspection and uncertainty to resolve and sacrifice. Each theme reflects a different facet of his character, blending together to form a portrait of identity, connection, and loss. Please enjoy this rendition of “Roxas,” performed by the Doots, the Gamer Symphony Orchestra’s best recorder ensemble, as they bring to life the somber lament and enduring legacy of one of the series’ most beloved characters. Never forget who you are, the anguish you’ve faced, and the promises you fight to keep.



Baba Yetu

Civilization IV

Arr. Robert Morris

Robert Morris, Angus Pulkka, Sunil Pateel, Arthur You, Christopher Assiryani

It is no doubt that Sid Meier's *Civilization* series created a genre of 4X strategic world building that reigns to this day. With a start in 1991 on MS-DOS PC's, this series continues to see new titles to this day with the 2025 release of *Civilization VII*. However, for today we'd like to harken back to *Civilization IV*, released in 2005. This title garnered numerous awards, but the most notable award came from the game's soundtrack. Composer Christopher Tin burst onto the scene, writing the title theme "Baba Yetu" ("Our Father" in Swahili) to serve as the title track for the game. This composition received a Grammy, becoming the first video game music to ever win the award. The original is boosted by a large orchestra with a full choir, but here, the arrangement is simplified down to a horn quintet, focused principally on the idea that anyone can achieve greatness, no matter the foundation. Stay tuned for the large ensemble concert this Spring to hear another Tin composition from the aforementioned *Civilization VII*.



Dandelion Depths

Mario Kart World

Arr. Vincent Jung

Esther Yu, Minsi Hu, Vincent Jung, Ian Jackson, Michael Maroney, Evangeline Chen, Alexandro Wong, Quinn Taylor



When someone remembers iconic Mario Kart tracks, they might think of Mario Circuit, or Bowser's Castle, or even Rainbow Road... but tucked inside a small corner of *Mario Kart World's* map, surrounded by wilderness, overgrown by bronze rust and green moss lies the final construction project of the Para-Biddybud Construction company: Dandelion Depths. Built into the entrance of a crystalline turquoise cave, this track evokes a similar energy to Super Mario Odyssey's iconic Wooded Kingdom: it's odd, run-down, and strangely beautiful. And it also has a really bangin' song attached to it.

Radio

Dispatch

Arr. & Performed by Elizabeth Sanford, Theresa Menna, Archita Naik, Grace Min

Robert Robertson III (yes, that's his real name) is one of the world's greatest heroes, Mecha Man. He followed in the footsteps of his father, Robbie and grandfather, Bobby, until his mechsuit was destroyed by a super villain, Shroud. Now, Robert works as a dispatcher for a group of ex-villains turned superheroes. While Robert works to build these ex-villains into superheroes, they teach him how to have fun. So, they throw him a house party and Robert starts to feel liberated from the weight of Mecha Man's legacy as he dances to the song, "Radio."



Great Fairy Fountain

The Legend of Zelda

Arr. Shiham Siddiqui

Eric Zhang, Adam Martinson, Claire Huang, Shiham Siddiqui, Silas Rager, Taira Nonami

After countless quests, crawling through perilous dungeons and encountering viscous foes, you are lucky enough to stumble upon a tranquil spring inhabited by magical fairies, where you can finally heal your wounds. *The Legend of Zelda's* Great Fairy Fountain has become a staple within the franchise, not only for its atmosphere and function, but also due to its iconic theme, characterized by arpeggios that evoke feelings of serenity and nostalgia. This arrangement offers a new interpretation to the piece, involving a fusion of genres performed by a jazz combo. Sit back and feel your heart containers replenish one by one.

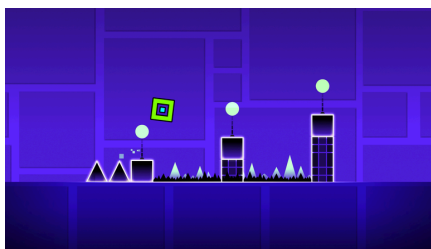


Stereo Madness

Geometry Dash

Arr. Jack Wethington

Jack Wethington, Ella Valentine, Shiham Siddiqui, Adam Martinson, Eric Zhang



Stereo Madness is the first level in the hit side-scrolling platform *Geometry Dash*. While the level itself is quite simple, the accompanying soundtrack engrained itself in many players' memories in all its electronic pop catchiness. In this rendition, the synths are replaced with rock instrumentation to create a sound inspired by pop punk and emo bands of the 90's/2000's, including the likes of Blink-182 and Fall Out Boy, complete with original lyrics written especially for this arrangement.

Une vie à t'aimer

Clair Obscur: Expedition 33

Arr. Victor Esan, Theresa Menna, Quinn Taylor

Claire Huang, Theresa Menna, Archita Naik, Rebeccah Chambers, Logan Swaisgood, Kevin Zhang, Anna Phan, Michael Maroney, Quinn Taylor, Victor Esan, Shiham Siddiqui, Xavier Bornhorst, Eric Zhang

In a fantasy world inspired by Belle Époque France, the Paintress awakens every year and erases all those of a certain age from existence. *Clair Obscur: Expedition 33* follows a group of survivors who attempt to stop her, on a journey that is almost certainly a death sentence. As they progress, they must come to terms with grief and duty, learning how to carry on despite the losses over the years. "Un vie a t'aimer", translated as "A life to love", plays during the climactic battle, when you are forced to confront what is the "correct" way to grieve: letting someone go versus keeping their memory alive.



Intermission!

Casino Night Zone

Sonic the Hedgehog

Arr. Ryan Goldsmith

Ryan Goldsmith, Rhett Brega, Lixin Zheng, Serena Alamina, Annika Vallurupalli, Michael Wang, Nick Curtis, Peter Mortensen, Quinlan Ngo, Connor Chaplain, Patrick Ford, Ethan Hawkes, Silas Rager, Jesse Ehrenreich, Claire Huang, Victor Esan, Shiham Siddiqui, Ishaan Antani, Robert Morris

Picture this: Massive buildings standing tall in the sky with bright neon lights on every wall, bumpers and springs prepared to send you flying through the starlit sky, and massive roulette machines just begging you to take a spin; welcome to Casino Night Zone. Originally composed by Masato Nakamura for *Sonic the Hedgehog 2*, Casino Night Zone is one of the many levels that Sonic and his new pal Tails have to traverse on their way to defeat the evil Dr. Robotnik, but even heroes sometimes have to have some fun, and who knows? You might even hit the Jackpot!

Casino Night Zone would later return in *Sonic Generations*, remastered by Jun Senoue and Atushi Kosugi, featuring a jazzy feel to tap your toes to while you try your luck at the slots. So come take a trip with the GSO Big Band to this grungy casino and let's see if we can win big.



Cruel World

Red Dead Redemption II

Arr. & Performed by Logan Swaisgood, Jack Wethington, Ella Valentine

From Lemoyne to New Austin and the Heartlands in between, it's a big, cruel world out there. 8 years after the events of *Red Dead Redemption II*'s main story, we find John Marston in his attempt to return to an honest life in wake of the Van der Linde Gang's demise. The scars of his past still loom in the distance, but John's sights are now set on a prosperous future with his wife and son. Still, his old life has a habit of finding him all over again. In this world, a happy ending is a hard thing to come by.



Elysium, in the Blue Sky

Xenoblade Chronicles 2

Arr. Brooke Guo

Brooke Guo, Michael Wang, Lixin Zheng, Amy Wang, Andrew Guo

“Elysium, in the Blue Sky” from *Xenoblade Chronicles 2* appears in the game’s opening cutscene, as Rex recounts the legend of a paradise said to exist high above the Cloud Sea, a place where humanity once lived alongside its creator in peace. Players are introduced to a world sustained by Titans that are slowly dying, where the promise of Elysium endures as one of the last hopes for a better future. This moment presents Elysium not as a certainty, but as a story shaped by longing and faith, setting the foundation for the journey ahead. As the narrative unfolds, the truth behind that dream begins to shift, forcing both the characters and the audience to question what Elysium really is and what it means to keep moving forward in a world that may never reach it. Please enjoy “Elysium, in the Blue Sky”.



I Want to Live

Baldur's Gate III

Arr. Brooke Guo, Theresa Menna

Brooke Guo, Aileen Wiswakarma, Jack Wethington, Theresa Menna

"I Want to Live" is the emotional heart of the *Baldur's Gate III* soundtrack. While the game is a sprawling epic of magic and monsters, this song is a deeply personal look at what it means to finally step into the light after a lifetime of shadows. It is most closely tied to the character Astarion, a vampire who has spent two centuries as a puppet for a cruel master, and it captures the exact moment his survival instinct turns into a genuine spark of hope.

The song begins with a ghostly, fragile energy, carrying a heavy sense of weariness and the ache of things lost. The atmosphere soon shifts from a somber reflection into a defiant celebration of existence. By the end, the music has shed its initial darkness to embrace a newfound sense of purpose. This song is ultimately a tribute to the messy, beautiful act of reclaiming one’s own identity and the courage it takes to step into the light and choose life.



The Legend of Zelda

The Legend of Zelda, The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time

Arr. Robert Morris, Alex Morris

Robert Morris, Sunil Pateel, Angus Pulkka, Silas Rager, Jesse Ehrenreich, Alex Powers, Carlos Chen, Christopher Assiryani, Nicholas Curtis, Peter Mortensen, Quinlan Ngo, Connor Chaplain

The GSO Brass Ensemble is back and bigger than ever, this time exploring the world of Hyrule from all the way back in 1986. *The Legend of Zelda* was created as a humble action adventure game by a team at Nintendo and no one could have fathomed the widespread success of the spawned franchise across the world. Indeed, even the greedy Hollywood overlords have acknowledged its appeal, with a movie set to release in 2027. The title opens with a very famous opening cutscene crawl with a classic musical theme before transitioning into the main descending chord progression that everyone recognizes as the Zelda theme. This arrangement combines these two motifs into one principal small ensemble arrangement that showcases all the brass sections at their best with a special leitmotif joining the party originally heard in Ocarina of Time.

Widow Lords

Hollow Knight, Hollow Knight: Silksong

Arr. Robert Morris, Minsi Hu

Cynthia Xi, Minsi Hu, Claire Huang, Kevin Zhang, Lauren Rabe, Morgan Altier, Victor Esan, Jay Rana, Evangeline Chen, Michael Maroney, Quinn Taylor, Iden Han

Team Cherry has struck again with the release of *Hollow Knight: Silksong*, with more amazing boss themes featuring whirling aggressive strings with no supporting instruments. One of the first major roadblocks in the game players stumble across is Widow, the one responsible for haunting the town of Bellhart, ensnaring citizens with thread and capturing their minds. This fight relies on a lot of choreography from the player and harkens back to another boss with a decently similar theme from the original *Hollow Knight*. In this arrangement, the mighty “Mantis Lords” theme is combined with Widow’s theme to paint the picture of Christopher Larkin’s composition style.



Choral Chambers

Hollow Knight: Silksong

Arr. Robert Morris

Lily Omron, Simon Bailey, Eric Zhang, Xavier Bornhorst, Kevin Zhang, Garrett Peters, Theresa Menna, Victor Esan, Archita Naik, Mikayla Durr, Madeline Kamprath, Ella Valentine, Nathaniel Unnikumaran, Robert Morris, Ryan Goldsmith, Benny Vanderham, Max Khatchadourian

Hollow Knight: Silksong needs no introduction, crashing the Steam page upon release. Players were astonished to discover a new progression system relative to the first title, divided into two main acts after players defeat a major boss that allows them to enter the cursed Citadel. The Citadel is overseen by several factions that are long lost, but music plays a theme in every room you enter. The Choral Chambers are a haunting introduction that leads you to the first major boss of Act 2, allowing listeners to wallow in the somber waves of the curse that entraps every bug that enters. This arrangement, very faithful to the original, features a piano ostinato that is slowly built by a SATB choir, strings, and featured woodwind soloists. We invite you to succumb to the thread. Please enjoy “Choral Chambers”.

Party of Your Lifetime

Warframe: 1999

Arr. Joseph Kleinman

Joseph Kleinman, Ella Valentine, Alex Miller, Jack Wethington, Nathaniel Unnikumaran, Tommy Chuss, Philip Wang, Ren Bombuwala

In the far future, the Solar System is split between various tyrannical human factions, with only one, the Tenno, standing for the good of humanity. In 2024, never a game to shy away from plot points that are “completely insane”, Warframe sent its players back in time from the future into the Y2K era in “Warframe: 1999”. Here, the popular boy band “Onlyne” has been overtaken by the Techrot, an infested virus that absorbs flesh and machine alike, and is now broadcasting their hit song “Party of Your Lifetime” to trick people into being absorbed into the Techrot mass. “Party of Your Lifetime” evokes 90s and early 00s boy bands like N Sync and the Backstreet Boys, with the small difference of its purpose being to take over the planet. Break out your Windows XP interface and put on your colorful glasses, because it’s time to party like it’s 1999!



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Thank you!

