



Western Music

Don Wright Faculty of Music

WESTERN UNIVERSITY SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA CONCERT

Saturday, March 29, 2025
3 p.m., Paul Davenport Theatre
Simone Luti, *conductor*

Academic Festival Overture, Op. 80

Johannes Brahms
(1833-1897)

An American in Paris

George Gershwin
(1898-1937)

Intermission

Pictures at an Exhibition

Promenade I

Gnomus

Promenade II

Il vecchio castello, The Old Castle

Promenade III

Tuileries

Bydlo

Promenade IV

Ballet des poussin dans leurs coques, Ballet of Unhatched Chicks

Samuel Goldenberg and Schmuyle

Limoges, The Market Place

Catacombae. Sepulcrum Romanum

Con mortuis in lingua mortua (Among the dead in the language of the dead)

Baba Yaga

Le grande porte de Kiev, The Great Gate of Kiev

Modest Mussorgsky
(1839-1881)

Orchestrated by Maurice Ravel
(1875-1937)

PROGRAM NOTES

Composed in 1880 as a thank-you for an honorary doctorate from the University of Breslau, Brahms' *Academic Festival Overture* is a lively and somewhat playful work that departs from the typical formal nature of academic celebrations. Rather than a solemn tribute, Brahms infuses the overture with exuberance, using several well-known student songs to convey a sense of joy and festivity.

The piece opens with a grand, ceremonial introduction, setting a dignified tone, but quickly shifts to a more vibrant and spirited character as Brahms introduces the traditional student anthem "*Gaudeamus igitur*". Other student songs follow, each treated with Brahms' skillful orchestration, which blends humor with moments of lyrical beauty. The music alternates between lively, dance-like passages and more reflective, tender sections.

The overture builds to a triumphant conclusion, with a final, joyful return to "*Gaudeamus igitur*". While written as a lighthearted thank-you, *Academic Festival Overture* is a masterful blend of wit, celebration, and Brahms' impeccable craftsmanship, making it a beloved and enduring piece in the concert repertoire.

Composed in 1928, *An American in Paris* is one of Gershwin's most famous orchestral works, inspired by his trip to Paris. A symphonic tone poem, the piece captures the energy, excitement, and contrasts of a young American's experience in the French capital.

The work opens with the sound of a taxi horn, setting the stage for a musical journey through the bustling streets of Paris. Gershwin blends jazz rhythms and classical orchestration to evoke the lively atmosphere of the city, while moments of introspection suggest the traveler's occasional loneliness and longing.

The music builds to a lively, joyful conclusion, mirroring the American's growing immersion in Parisian life. With its memorable melodies and rhythmic vitality, *An American in Paris* remains a vibrant celebration of both American spirit and the charm of Paris.

Originally composed in 1874 for piano, *Pictures at an Exhibition* by Modest Mussorgsky was inspired by an art exhibition in St. Petersburg, showcasing the works of his late friend, the artist Viktor Hartmann. The piece presents a musical journey through ten of Hartmann's paintings, each represented by a vivid and imaginative musical tableau.

In 1922, French composer Maurice Ravel orchestrated Mussorgsky's piano work, enhancing its rich textures and dramatic impact. Ravel's arrangement preserves Mussorgsky's unique character and vivid imagery while expanding the color palette through the full symphonic orchestra.

The suite opens with the famous *Promenade*, representing the viewer's stroll through the gallery. Each movement that follows portrays a different artwork, from the whimsical *Gnomus* (depicting a grotesque gnome) to the majestic *The Great Gate of Kiev*, a grand finale symbolizing a towering architectural design. Ravel's orchestration brings out the full emotional range of Mussorgsky's composition, transforming the piano pieces into a dynamic orchestral experience.

Together, Mussorgsky's original brilliance and Ravel's masterful orchestration make *Pictures at an Exhibition* a powerful and unforgettable musical depiction of art, imagination, and creativity.

Program notes by Tasman Tantasawat

WESTERN UNIVERSITY SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

Flutes

Ethan Nolin*
Grace Zhu*
Angela Lee
Rachel Chang

Oboes

Biz Tucker*
Erin Lenhart*
Tinson Lee
(also as English horn)

Clarinets

Finn Inglis*
Yiyuan Da*
Amy Dimitrov
(also as Bass Clarinet)

Saxophones

Shah Kamal*
Dani McAfee
Liam Bird

Bassoons

Oskar Martinez*
(also as Contrabassoon)
Andrea Ferencova*
Yaron Felter-Gonen

Horns

Ryan Duffy*
Eric Phong*
Jeffrey Vezina-Goodwin*
Lela Burt

Trumpets

Matthew Usher*
Michael Meilleur
Rex Mulder

Trombones

Amy Jordaan*
Will Cavanagh*
Andrew Brooks

Tuba

Daniel Montaseri

Percussion

Liam Fisher *
Cora Peters
Evan Simcoe
Joey Cantarutti
Alana Yabis
Ziyun Peng
Kiran Steele

Harp

Naomi Clarke

Keyboard

Tung Xuan Ngo

1st Violins

Vera Sherwood**
Helen Faucher
Elinor Smallman
Mary Gonsalves
Julian Trippel
Chia-Hsuan Chen
Erin Van Dyke
Eden Silverberg
Cordelia Poon
Yitong Han
Khloe Wang
Frank Su
Theodore Chow

2nd Violins

Yanet Campbell*
Feiyang Gao
Alex Matwijiw
Zisen Zhou
Brett Trampleasure
Maren Peddle
Clara Martin
Julian Kwon
Charlotte Usprich
Tammy Tran
Kate Roberge
Lerissa Mowat
Kierin Barnum

Violas

Tasman Tantasawat*
Cian Diamond*
Lexi White
Olivia Cardillo
Stella Shin
Grace Wright
Liam Martin
Maria Camila Lopez

Celli

Sarah Cupit*
Eve Thompson
Abigail Greenland
Felicity Ngo
Nicholas Lago
Kara Lim
Jason Too
Monica Znamenacek

Double Bass

Iris Leck*
Adela Montgomery
Islay Thibodeau

**Concert master
*Principles

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