

The University of Maryland's
Gamer Symphony Orchestra

<http://umd.gamersymphony.org/>



Fifth Anniversary Concert

Saturday, May 7, 2011, 3 p.m.

Dekelbom Concert Hall
Clarice Smith Performing Arts Center

Peter Fontana, conductor
Kira Levitzky, conductress
Jeff Nickerson, choral director

About the Gamer Symphony Orchestra and Chorus

In the fall of 2005, student violist Michelle Eng sought to create an orchestral group that played video game music. With a half-dozen others from the University of Maryland Repertoire Orchestra, she founded GSO to achieve that dream. By the time of the ensemble's first public performance in spring 2006, its size had quadrupled.

Today GSO provides a musical and social outlet to 120 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 February GSO had a special role at the Video Games Live performances at the Strathmore in Bethesda, Md. The National Philharmonic performed GSO's arrangement of "Korobeiniki" from *Tetris* to two sold-out houses.

Aside from its concerts, GSO also holds the "Deathmatch for Charity" every spring. All proceeds from this video game tournament benefit Children's National Medical Center in Washington, D.C.

GSO has also fostered the creation of two similar high school-level ensembles in Rockville, Md., and Damascus, Md. The Magruder High School GSO was founded late in 2008 and the Damascus High School GSO began rehearsals this February.

Follow GSO on  at @GamerSymphony!

GSO merchandise available online at: <http://www.zazzle.com/umdgso>

About the Magruder High School GSO

In December 2008 two students from Magruder High School in Rockville, Md., founded the Magruder Gamer Symphony Orchestra. Elliott Coleman and Joel Guttman had been inspired by the UM Gamer Symphony Orchestra, which provided administrative guidance and music to the new group. Completely student-run, the Magruder GSO performs regularly at Magruder High School music concerts as the school's only non-classroom ensemble. <http://magrudergso.org/>

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Gamer Symphony Orchestra Roster

Violin 1

Eric Borrero
Jack Chen
Matt Costales
Shirin Majidi
Melissa Ou
Laura Stayman**
Alexa Stott
James Wissman
Diane Ye

Violin 2

Nicole Anderson
Christina deGraft-Johnson
Jess Gonzales
Julie Heffernan
Christopher Lee*
Curtis Mitchell
Katie Noble
Patrick O'Donnell
Rebecca Parker
Jonathan Poplawski

Viola

Chia-Min Chen
Stephanie Cross
Adrian Francisco
Greg Kappelman
Tacy Lambiasse*
Sonya Lu
Victor Ontiveros

Cello

Alan Eng*
Carli Follett
Jessica Jones

Contrabass

Grant Dambach
Amelia Li

Flute

Mary Beck
Samantha Kretschmer*
Jingyou Xu

Piccolo

Michelle Rosen

Clarinet

Andrew Bishop*
Scott Miller
Greg Steffensen
Michael Wellen

Oboe

Kristi Engel
Jake Coppage-Gross*

Alto Saxophone

Michael Powers
Joseph Wang

Tenor Saxophone

Hyeou "Matt" Kim
Philip Mastandrea*

Bass Clarinet

Erin Grand
Nathan Cloeter

Baritone Saxophone

Tim Williams

Bassoon

Randall Perrine*
Douglas Eber

Trumpet

Mike Charles
Jesse Cummings
Matthew Phipps*
Alex Ryan

Flugelhorn

Robert Garner

French Horn

Anna Costello*
Joe Cross
Sam Deschenaux

Trombone

Bill Campbell
Peter English
Joel Guttman
Drew Starr

Euphonium

Dvir Kafri*

Tuba

David Scherr

Guitar

Maryann Moses

Bass Guitar

Darrell Schaefer
Gerald Tangunicar

Piano

Andrew Baer
Jasmin Hottle*
Xin Huang
Julius Verzosa

Percussion

Sterling Huber
Sean Robert
Zara Simpson

** concertmistress

* section leader



Gamer Symphony Chorus Roster

Soprano

Judy Al-Ahmary
Diana Bestul-Taylor*
Jamine Bestul-Taylor
Ayla Hurley
Christa Lee
Rebecca Ogle
Christi Rajnes
Jelila Walker

Alto

May Abrom
Denise Cross
Meg Eden
Rifah Huq
Farah Khan
Fiona McNabb
Sasha Petersen
Laura Peregoy*
Holly Wu
Cynthia Xu

Tenor

Chris Apple
Connor Davis
Kevin Hencke
Kyle Jamolin*
Tony McMannis
Xiaobo "Michael"
Tang
Ben Walker
Benjamyn Ward

Bass

Ravaughn Green
Brandon Hauk*
Michael Ohr
Peter Shi
Carlton Smith
Hark Tagunicar
Tevis Tsai

* section leader

Gamer Symphony Officers

President:	Robert Garner
Vice President:	Alex Ryan
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Secretary (acting):	Christina deGraft-Johnson
Conductor:	Peter Fontana
Conductress:	Kira Levitzky
Choral Dir.:	Jeff Nickerson
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Social Director:	Samantha Kretschmer
Webmaster:	Brandon Hauk

GSO Founder:	Michelle Eng
Faculty Advisor:	Dr. Derek Richardson, Dept. of Astronomy
GSO Logo:	Matt Maiatico Katie Noble
Program Layout:	Robert Garner

Program art by:

*Meg Eden, Rob Garner, Rifah Huq,
Maryann Moses, Katie Noble,
Sean Robert, Gerald Tagunicar*



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Concert Program

Super Mario Land Medley

Hirokazu Tanaka

Super Mario Land (Game Boy, 1989)

Arrangement by Greg Steffensen

Featured Soloists: M. Beck, flute; G. Steffensen, clarinet; T. Williams, Bari Sax

This medley features four themes from *Super Mario Land*: the main theme, music from the pyramid-dotted landscape of Birabuto Kingdom, the sky realm of the Chai Kingdom, and the game finale.

Super Mario Land is notable in part for its attempt to expand the scope of the Mario formula: Mario takes a break from his usual hobby of rescuing Princess Peach from Bowser and instead sets out to rescue Princess Daisy from the evil clutches of “Mysterious Spaceman” Tatanga.

Final Fantasy Prologue

Nobuo Uematsu

Final Fantasy (various)

Arrangement by Will Buck; adapted by Rob Garner

GSO performed “Prologue” at its very first concert in April 2006. To mark the ensemble’s fifth anniversary, this piece has been adapted to take the audience on a chronological journey from those early months all the way to the present day. The piece begins lightly, relying on the same instrumentation GSO had at its start. As the piece progresses, instruments join in semester sequence.

A viola, bassoon, and flugelhorn trio concludes the piece, paying homage to GSO’s founder, violist Michelle Eng; the ensemble’s only remaining charter member, bassoonist Randall Perrine; and the last remaining member from the spring 2006 semester, flugelhornist Rob Garner.

Warcraft II: Tides of Darkness

Glenn Stafford

Warcraft II: Tides of Darkness (1995)

Arrangement by Rob Garner

“Warcraft II: Tides of Darkness” showcases a medley of themes from the Blizzard game of the same name. This resolved, and occasionally brooding, arrangement mirrors the game’s storyline: Stabilize your colony, repel invaders, and destroy enemy settlements. Will you side with the human Alliance or the orcish Horde?

You Have Died of Dysentery (On the Oregon Trail)

Lon Koenig, Larry Phenow
Oregon Trail Deluxe (1992)
Arrangement by Rob Garner

If you were in grade school after the mid-1970s, you are likely familiar with one of the many versions of MECC's educational classic. This arrangement tells the story of our Oregon-bound wagon party in four parts. An opening fanfare and moderato bridge herald the westward opportunities. A flowing andante cradles the solemn beauty of the prairie. The allegro captures the excitement of the Rockies (and the fun we had with the hunting mini-game!). ... Then the party is beset by drownings, snake bites and cattle rustlers, until, ultimately the forlorn final message appears on the screen: "You have died of dysentery." (That's about the point at which we all gave up and went out to play Four Square at recess.)



This heavily adapted piece expands drastically on only a few measures of the sparse themes from the game's 1992 edition. The song borrows from Aaron Copland's "Fanfare for the Common Man" and "Hoedown." Inspiration also came from *The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly* and *Back to the Future: Part III*.

Objection!

Masakazu Sugimori, Akemi
Kimura, Noriyuki Iwadare
Phoenix Wright (2001-2004)
Arrangement by Alex Ryan

Known originally as *Gyakuten Saiban* ("Turnabout Trial") in Japan, the Ace Attorney series tells the story of Phoenix Wright, a young, upstart defense attorney. Using outside-the-box thinking, supernatural aid, and sometimes just sheer dumb luck, Phoenix tirelessly defends his clients' innocence, often exposing the true criminals in the process. This piece, named after the series' ubiquitous catchphrase, aims to capture the thoughtful, energetic nature of Phoenix's courtroom antics, culminating in a dramatic battle of wits against a witness who knows more than they're letting on.



15-Minute Intermission

Electric De Chocobo

Nobuo Uematsu

Final Fantasy VII (1997)

Arrangement by Brian Berdan

Special Guest Performance by the Magruder High School GSO

The song takes the classic Chocobo theme used throughout the Final Fantasy franchise and mixes in influences from early surf rock staples. The song is fitting for the Magruder GSO as it is a mixture of old and new, a combination that greatly resonates with the group.

Angel's Fear (also known as **Fear of the Heavens**)

Hiroki Kikuta

Secret of Mana (1993)

Arrangement by Greg Cox and Peter Fontana

Featured Soloists: G. Cox, piano; P. Fontana, flute

Piano: Greg Cox

“Angel’s Fear” resonates with solemn reverence for nature and the “Tree of Mana,” the force that balances good and evil in the world (of the game). This arrangement uses the flute and piano orchestration to depict a musical journey through the forest, beginning “down to Earth” and then taking the listener “into the skies” perhaps reminding the listener of the beauty of nature, peace, and other facets of our world that some may take for granted.

Chrono Cross-Trigger Medley

Yasunori Mitsuda

Chrono Cross (1999), Chrono Trigger (1995)

Arrangement by Alex Song

The medley combines four different songs from two of the most popular role-playing games in video game history. The four songs are “Reminiscence,” “Chrono Trigger Theme,” “Scars of Time,” and “To Far Away Times.” Both of these games involved characters using time travel in order to achieve their ultimate goals.



The Promised Land

Nobuo Uematsu

Final Fantasy VII: Advent Children (2005)

Arrangement by Chris Apple

This *a capella* piece was chosen to give a voice to Final Fantasy VII's Lifestream, a torrent of spiritual energy deep within our planet. Unlike the decaying piano melodies of the mortal world, the sustained chords of the Lifestream depict eternal tides of joy and sorrow: raw emotions of the deceased, watching the tragic events of the living characters unfold.

Advent Children is a computer-animated film based on the Final Fantasy realm.

Banjo-Kazooie Medley

Grant Kirkhope

Banjo-Kazooie (1998), *Banjo-Tooie* (2000)

Arrangement by David Scherr

Special Guest Banjoist: Mark Cromer, senior sound designer, Big Huge Games



Rareware's *Banjo-Kazooie* games for the Nintendo 64 are, simply put, charming. The first game in the series follows the banjo-wielding—and aptly named—Banjo the bear and his kazoo-playing friend, Kazooie the bird, on their quest to rescue Banjo's sister from the warty clutches of the evil witch Gruntilda. In the sequel, Banjo and Kazooie enlist the aid of their friends to thwart Gruntilda's designs for revenge.

This medley recounts some of Grant Kirkhope's most memorable themes from the games, in which each stage is about ten times wackier than the last.

Never underestimate a bear and a bird!

Still Alive

Jonathan Coulton

Portal (2007)

Arrangement by Greg Cox

Special Guest Conductor: Greg Cox, GSO conductor emeritus

In *Portal*, the player must escape the Aperture Science research facility, run by GLaDOS, a passive-aggressive artificial intelligence. One important feature of GLaDOS is that she is compartmentalized—divided between a number of distinct personality “cores.” This created an opportunity to use GSO's sonic diversity to explore her multiplicity and create our own unique take on the game's closing theme.

Cake will be available at the conclusion of the performance.

Dämmerung

Yasunori Mitsuda

Xenosaga (2002)

Arrangement by Chris Apple

German for “twilight,” “Dämmerung” explores philosopher Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche’s concept of moral relativism, that no universal “right” or “wrong” exists. In this piece’s first section, a proud people herald their religion. But after the discordant battle in the second section, those same voices cry out in perdition, singing a haunting reprise of their original melody.



About the Conductors

Peter Fontana (conductor)—a flute player for 15 years, a piccolo player for 10, and a singer for 8—has participated in numerous musical groups, including bands, choirs, orchestras, and chamber ensembles. He has a B.S.E. in computer science from the University of Pennsylvania and an M.S. from the University of Maryland in computer science. He is pursuing a Ph.D. in same, during the course of which he was awarded the College of Computer Mathematical and Physical Sciences Outstanding Graduate Teaching Assistant award for 2009. His capstone musical experiences include providing vocal music for Pope Benedict XVI as a member of the 250-person choir at the Washington, D.C., Papal Mass in 2008.

Kira Levitzky (conductress) is a music education major with a focus on instrumental music education. Her primary instrument is the flute, which she has played since age 8. Her secondary instrument is the piano, which she has played since age 4. She loves everything about music, and the GSO has become every bit as part of her life as music has. She began working with the group her freshman year and could not be prouder of the development the group has made over the years. She hopes to incorporate video game music into her curriculum if she finds a job at a public school in the future and maybe help start little baby GSOs in schools. Love you, GSO, and audience members, thanks for coming!

Jeffrey Nickerson (choral director) is a senior at the University of Maryland studying physics. He has performed in several ensembles with the university’s School of Music, including the Maryland Chorus and University Chorale. He has been a member of the Gamer Symphony Chorus for the past three years. This is his second semester as the GSO choral director.

How are we doing?

We love getting feedback from our fans! Please feel free to fill out this form and drop it in the “Question Block” on your way out, or e-mail us at umd@gamersymphony.org.

The GSO is partially funded by the Student Government Association, but most of our operating costs are covered by donations by members and fans. Please consider enclosing a donation with your feedback to help us continue providing our free concerts. Donations can also be made through PayPal at GSO’s website (<http://umd.gamersymphony.org/>).

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How did you hear about the Gamer Symphony Orchestra?

What arrangements would you like to hear from GSO? Do you have other comments about our performance?

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