

University of Maryland School of Music Presents

FABLES & FANTASIES

University of Maryland Symphony Orchestra



Saturday, December 9, 2023 • 8PM

DEKELBOUM CONCERT HALL

AT THE CLARICE SMITH PERFORMING ARTS CENTER



**SCHOOL OF
MUSIC**

University of Maryland School of Music
Presents

Fables & Fantasies

University of Maryland Symphony Orchestra

David Neely, conductor

Music Director

The Unanswered Question..... Charles Ives
(1874-1954)

The Pure Lotus..... Mark Edwards Wilson
(b. 1950)

Teri Bickham, *soprano*
world premiere

INTERMISSION

Scheherazade, Op. 35..... Nikolay Rimsky-Korsakov
(1844-1908)

- I. The Sea and Sinbad's Ship
- II. The Tale of Prince Kalandar
- III. The Young Prince and the Princess
- IV. The Festival at Baghdad—The Sea—The Ship Breaks on a Rock Surmounted by a Bronze Horseman—Conclusion



Born in Dayton, Ohio, conductor David Neely has been described by Opera News as “a ninja warrior with a baton” (Opera News). He maintains an active career in symphonic, opera, ballet, and educational settings.

As Music Director and Principal Conductor of Des Moines Metro Opera, a position he has held since 2012, Neely has elevated the company’s musical profile and developed one of the nation’s finest opera orchestras. He has led critically-acclaimed performances of a broad range of new and traditional repertoire that includes the recent world premiere of Kristin Kuster and Mark Campbell’s *A Thousand Acres*, the in-person premiere of Damien Geter and Lila Palmer’s *American Apollo*, regional Emmy award-winning productions of *Manon* and *Billy Budd* for Iowa Public Television, and approximately 30 other works including *Wozzeck*, *Pikovaya Dama*, *Yevkeny Onegin*, *Rusalka*, *Jenůfa*, *Falstaff*, *Elektra*, *Peter Grimes*, *Dead Man Walking*, *Flight*, *Macbeth*, *Don Giovanni*, *Candide*, *La Fanciulla Del West*, *Turandot*, and most recently *Bluebeard’s Castle* and *The Love for Three Oranges*. He has led productions with Atlanta Opera, Sarasota Opera, Intermountain Opera, and numerous European opera houses including Bonn and Dortmund. His performances have been praised in Opera News, Opera Today, Opernwelt, the Chicago Tribune, and the Wall Street Journal.

Neely has led concerts with the Memphis Symphony Orchestra, Portland Symphony Orchestra, Dortmund Philharmonic, Bochumer Philharmoniker, Eutin Festival Orchestra, Bregenz Symphony Orchestra, and is a regular conductor with the D.C. area’s Apollo Orchestra.

He has led ballets with Dortmund Opera and the Indiana University Ballet Theater.

Neely is Director of Orchestras at the University of Maryland School of Music, where recent highlights include Bartók’s Concerto for Orchestra, Mahler’s Symphony No. 2, Valerie Coleman’s *Umoja*, Carlos Simon’s *The Block*, Prokofiev’s Symphony No. 5, Emilie Mayer’s Symphony in F minor, and world premieres of Erich Stem’s *Kayak* and Maria Newman’s *Our Rights and Nothing Less*. He is a regular guest conductor and guest conducting teacher at the Indiana University Jacobs School of Music, where he recently conducted Osvaldo Golijov’s Flamenco opera *Ainadamar*.

Concerto soloists with whom he has collaborated include Hai-Ye Ni, David Chan, Eric Kutz, Roberto Diaz, Joshua Roman, Bella Hristova, Benjamin Beilman, Delfeayo Marsalis, Ricardo Morales, Ben Lulich, Phillippe Cuper, Nicholas Daniel, and Rainer Honeck. He has appeared as a collaborative pianist with numerous vocalists, including a recent recital with Joyce Castle and Schubert’s *Winterreise* with David Adam Moore. He serves as a guest teacher with Washington National Opera’s Cafritz Young Artist program, and was the conductor for WNO’s American Opera Initiative in 2021. He recently appeared with the American Lyric Theater in New York and with the National Orchestra Institute + Festival.



Mark Edwards Wilson began his productive career as a musician in his native California. He studied with Henri Lazarof and Leon Kirchner at the University of California at Los Angeles, where he received a Ph.D. in Composition at the age of 25. He has received many prizes, awards and other honors for his orchestral and vocal works, his chamber music works and electro-acoustic compositions, many of which have been commissioned and performed by major performing organizations. Most of Wilson's recent works reflect an emphasis on compositions for orchestra employing a new approach that he characterizes as "dramatic narrative."

The three-movement work *The Phoenix* (2010) quickly became one of Wilson's most successful efforts, taking the Grand Prize in the Realize Music Challenge, an international competition held under the joint sponsorship of Notion Music, Inc., and the London Symphony Orchestra. His fellow composer John Corigliano, who headed the jury for that event, wrote of *The Phoenix* in a press release: "Excellent piece. It really develops its materials and has a fine large shape. I felt a true symphonic mind at work. Beautiful orchestration, too. Bravo!" As part of the prize, *The Phoenix* was recorded at Abbey Road Studios by the London Symphony Orchestra. Wilson has received numerous other awards for his compositions including the BMI Award, two Maryland State Arts Fellowships and no fewer than seven Creative and Performing Arts Awards from the University of Maryland. Wilson's orchestral work, *Meteora* was awarded first prize in the New Orchestral Repertoire Project, an international competition to foster new music for orchestra sponsored by the Minneapolis Pops Orchestra.

In addition to performances and recordings by the London Symphony Orchestra, and the Minneapolis Pops Orchestra, Wilson's symphonic works have been performed by numerous orchestras including, to name a few: the Long Beach Symphony Orchestra, the Austin Symphony Orchestra, the Little Symphony of Saint Louis, the Lansing Symphony Orchestra, the United States Air Force Symphony Orchestra, the Chautauqua Music Festival Orchestra, and the Kiev Philharmonic.

Recordings of Wilson's compositions include *Windows*, on the Neuma label, and on Parma Recording's Ravello label, a collection of his works including *Time Variations* (a string quartet), and *Ancient Ways*, with the Hollywood Chamber Players conducted by the composer. In 2023 a recording and video by the Sirius Quartet of *Dream-Crossed Twilight* was released on Parma Recording's Navona label. *Dream-Crossed Twilight*, commissioned by the Music Teachers' National Association, was premiered by the Left Bank Quartet. Many of Wilson's recent works are also available on YouTube.

Wilson's creative emphasis on the orchestra is by no means a matter of chance, but is motivated by his enthusiasm for the medium and his concern for its survival. This concern, one might say, has become a stimulus and empowerment for him, as he has stated clearly and frequently: "Although not all conductors readily perform new works, composers nevertheless must not give up on the orchestra as a medium that is both vital and relevant to a living culture. It would be a tragic loss if the role of the symphony orchestra were to be restricted solely to the musical equivalent of a museum. The talented creative artists who constitute a symphony orchestra should have a purpose beyond that of being curators of the great art of another era. I propose a renaissance in the field of music for symphony orchestra—a music that will capture the imagination of audiences—and, in this endeavor, American composers can lead the way."

—Richard Freed



Soprano **Theresa “Teri” Bickham** has been praised for her “expressive legato line” and “fine piano nuances.” She made her European debut singing scenes from *La Traviata* under the direction of Maestro Eduardo Müller. Dr. Bickham has performed with opera companies throughout the United States including Houston Grand Opera, Opera New Jersey, Opera in the Heights, Loudoun Lyric Opera, and Opera Camerata of Washington.

She has performed a diverse repertory of operatic roles that include a specialization in Mozart heroines (*Donna Anna*, *La Contessa*, *Fiordiligi*), Italian opera (*Adina*, *Violetta*, *Musetta*), German operetta (*Rosalinde*), and contemporary American opera (*A Bird in Your Ear*, *The Beautiful Bridegroom*.)

Dr. Bickham is a frequent guest artist in the United States and Europe. Recent concert appearances include works by Vivaldi, Bach, Mozart, Handel, Brahms, Rossini, Orff, Vaughn Williams, numerous orchestral pops performances and a number of world premiere orchestral and chamber works. In competition, Dr. Bickham was an international semi-finalist in the Concorso Lirico Internazionale per Cantanti lirici Rosa Ponselle in Caiazzo, Italy. She has also been the winner of national and regional competitions including: The Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions-Mid-Atlantic Regional Finalist, Palm Beach Opera Semi-Finalist, Shreveport Opera Singer of the Year Finalist, MD/DC National Association of Teachers of Singing, and the Gilbert and Sullivan Society of Houston.

An avid recitalist, Dr. Bickham has performed recital tours in California, Maryland, Mississippi, North Carolina, Ohio, South Carolina, Texas, Virginia, Washington, and Washington DC. Her passion for art song has led to diverse programs specializing in music by underrepresented composers and poets, repertoire written for specific voices, and the exploration of the performer’s role in the creation of music. These programs led to the release of her first album, *The Human Heart*, by Albany Records in 2021.

Dr. Bickham’s performance experience has culminated in her passion for training young professionals. Her students have been recognized for their polished performances and exemplary teaching. Former students have attended prestigious schools that include The Juilliard School, Indiana University, the University of Maryland, the University of Tennessee, the University of Denver Lamont School of Music, Bard College Conservatory of Music, Ithaca College, Boston Conservatory, and Roosevelt University. In addition, they have won prizes with the Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions, Annapolis Opera, the National Society of Arts and Letters, National Association of Teachers of Singing, and the Classical Singer competitions. Many students are performing professionally with such companies as The Metropolitan Opera, Opera Theater of St. Louis, Marilyn Horne: The Song Continues Masterclass Series at Carnegie Hall, Annapolis Opera, Knoxville Opera, New York Lyric Opera, Disney Cruise Lines, and Creativiva Entertainment.

Dr. Bickham is proud of the many music educators that she has taught. Her former students are passionate, respected, and impactful educators throughout Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Texas, and other areas in the United States.

Dr. Bickham holds degrees from the University of Maryland College Park (DMA), the University of Houston (MM), and Towson University (BM) and received additional training as a young artist at Opera New Jersey and AIMS in Graz. She had the privilege to teach at Towson University and University of North Carolina Greensboro before joining the faculty of The University of Maryland College Park School of Music in 2023 and will join the faculty of the International Summer Opera Institute of Morelia in June 2023.

The Unanswered Question

CHARLES IVES

Born Oct. 20, 1874, Danbury

Died May 19, 1954, New York

Charles Ives grew up in Connecticut and his oeuvre is famously inspired by the musical and literary history of New England. His strong association with the area has also allowed him and his music, which frequently borrows snippets of melodies from common hymns, popular tunes, American marches, etc., to be held up as a quintessential symbol of the United States. Ives's eclectic influences are possible because of the variety of musical experiences he had. His father was a band leader in Danbury and Ives played drums in his father's ensemble. Ives also studied harmony and composition with his father and took piano and organ lessons. He began a professional career as an organist at just age fourteen, working as a church organist until 1902. Ives's career and skill as an organist influenced his compositions: we can trace his interest in improvisation, contrasting timbres, use of drones or pedal points, multi-line textures, and interest in spatial effect to the organ.

Ives continued working as an organist—which also required him to compose music for services—while completing his degree at Yale University, where he also took organ and composition lessons with Horatio Parker. Even so, Ives moved to New York after graduation in 1898 and entered the world of business, becoming an insurance salesman. While at first he continued to compose, overwork and stress caused him to almost cease writing music in 1905, beginning again after his marriage to Harmony Twichell in June 1908. *The Unanswered Question*, most likely inspired by a line in Ralph Waldo Emerson's 1847 poem *The Sphinx*, was first written in 1908, and then revised 1930–1935. Ives stopped writing new music in 1927 and retired from insurance at the start of 1930. From then on—as his public career as a composer began—Ives focused on revising previous works, often preparing them for public performance or publication.

In preparation for the premiere of *The Unanswered Question* (revised version) in May 1946, Ives wrote his own program note that describes the piece, excerpted here:

The strings play ppp throughout with no change in tempo. They are to represent “The Silences of the Druids—who Know, See, and Hear Nothing.” The trumpet intones “The Perennial Question of Existence,” and states it in the same tone of voice each time. But the hunt for “The Invisible Answer,” undertaken by the flutes and other human beings, becomes gradually more active, faster and louder through an *animando* to a *con fuco*. This part need not be played in the exact time position indicated. It is played in somewhat of an *impromptu* way; if there be no conductor, one of the flute players may direct their playing. “The Fighting Answerers,” as the time goes on, and after a “secret conference,” seem to realize the futility, and began to mock “The Question” —the strife is over for the moment. After they disappear, “The Question” is asked for the last time, and “The Silences” are heard beyond in “Undisturbed Solitude.”

This description sets up the three main groups of instruments in the piece: strings, trumpet, and flutes. The strings indeed remain static and quietly muted the entire piece, creating a tonal atmosphere underneath the more chromatic and dissonant winds. The trumpet's recurring statements of "The Question" are answered each time (except for the end) by the flutes, which are marked with a separate tempo than the other instruments, posing a challenge for the performers. The notated rhythms for the flutes get faster and faster, while the tempo and volume also increase. Ives employs his quintessential "wedge" technique in the flutes, with the individual lines in contrary motion to each other. His interest in spatial effects and timbre is also seen in the full 1946 program note, which gives suggestions as to instrument placement, techniques, and possible substitutions. Ives helps to make his modernist compositional style more accessible for listeners by providing a narrative through which we are invited to understand his music.

– Program note by Elizabeth Massey, Ph.D.

The Pure Lotus

Mark Edward Wilson

Born 1950, Long Beach, CA

The seed for *The Pure Lotus* was planted years ago when I was a child. My grandfather, Louis Wilson, in addition to his career in engineering, was fascinated by archaeology and ancient history and he had a large collection of books in his library on those subjects. As a child I can remember being impressed by the seemingly towering walls of bookshelves at my grandfather's place. He died when I was eight—my first experience with death in our family. It seemed to me that his books were a kind of memorial to the man and, when they went into storage, I helped myself to a number of them. I have them still along with my own more extensive collection of first additions from important pioneers in the field of archaeology.

One of his books stood out in my imagination more than any of the others. It was an anthology of ancient literature. As a child it seemed magical to me that poetry and other writing could be passed down to us from such distant times. Reading works from the remote past became for me a kind of time travel. One of the sets of poems in the book was a group of excerpts from the "Chapters of Coming Forth by Day," translated from ancient Egyptian by the English Egyptologist E. A. Wallis Budge and poetized by Robert Hillyer. The original text was taken from a papyrus dating from about 1250 BC, but its true origins were probably much earlier, likely more than five thousand years ago. For *The Pure Lotus* I have chosen excerpts from Hillyer's work that represent the soul singing out in paradise.

The music for *The Pure Lotus* is a continuously evolving series of variations on the opening theme and its musical language is one that creates strong pitch centers, but does so without using traditional tonal methods. The first half of the work, for orchestra alone, represents the ancient Egyptian vision of the soul's night voyage to the afterlife: a dramatic narrative of a journey through darkness into divine light. The piece ends with a "Benediction of Eternal Bliss."

From *The Chapters of Coming Forth by Day* (Adapted by Robert Hillyer from the A. E. Wallis Budge translation of the ancient Egyptian text)

I am the pure lotus.
I am the pure one,
That blossoms in the field.
Springing up in splendor,
Fed by the breath of God,
Out of the darkness,
Into the sunlight,
I rise, I rise, I rise!

O my heart,
If there be not a parting between us,
Our name shall be one with tomorrow.
Millions of years have passed.
Millions of years shall be.
You are above the years.

“Benediction of Eternal Bliss”

Take wings to climb the zenith,
Or sleep in fields of peace;
By day the sun shall keep you,
By night the rising star.

– Program note by Mark Wilson

Scheherazade, op. 35

NIKOLAY RIMSKY-KORSAKOV

Born Mar. 18 (O.S. Mar. 6), 1844, Tikhvin

Died Jun. 21 (O.S. Jun. 8), 1908, Lyubensk

Born east of St. Petersburg, Nikolay Rimsky-Korsakov is now famous for representing a Russian style of composition. In the late nineteenth century, there was a burgeoning interest in Russian music culture to create a national style of classical music in the effort to put Russia on par with Western European nations. While a student at the Naval College training for his intended (and first) career, Rimsky-Korsakov attended the opera in St. Petersburg and developed a deeper interest in music, having taken piano lessons and even composed as a young child. In 1861, Rimsky-Korsakov met composer Mily Balakirev (1837–1910) who in turn introduced him to Modest Mussorgsky (1839–1881) and César Cui (1835–1918). Together with Alexander Borodin (1833–1887), these composers would be “The Five” known for their dedication to creating a uniquely Russian national style. Rimsky-Korsakov began teaching at the St. Petersburg Conservatory in 1871 and was dedicated to encouraging Russian music throughout his musical career.

Like most of Rimsky-Korsakov’s orchestral works, the symphonic suite *Scheherazade* is programmatic. The work is based on *One Thousand and One Nights*, a collection of thirteenth century (and before) folktales from the Middle East. While the Persian source material might at first seem odd for a composer devoted to Russian nationalism, it is logical when we remember the Russian Empire’s geographic proximity to and cultural exchange with the Persian Empire, as well as the contemporaneous European fascination with the Middle East, Asia, and North Africa. The individual stories in *One Thousand and One Nights* are only related due to the overarching frame; they are told by the narrator Scheherazade, wife of the Persian ruler Shahryar. Upon discovering that his first wife was unfaithful to him, Shahryar ordered her death. From then on, he took a new bride each day, having her killed in the morning. Scheherazade, the daughter of Shahryar’s advisor, offers herself as a bride when her father can find no more. But Scheherazade has a clever plan; on her wedding night, she tells a story to Shahryar and leaves it unfinished. In anticipation of hearing the ending the next evening, he does not execute her. Scheherazade does this for 1,001 nights—hence the collection’s name—until Shahryar falls in love.

Rimsky-Korsakov’s piece, composed 1888, mimics the structure of *One Thousand and One Nights*, with each movement serving as a different story. The work begins with a *fortissimo* descending motive that represents Shahryar, the low register and sharp timbre of the trombones and tuba threatening execution. The solo violin, representing Scheherazade, quickly takes the spotlight to tell the tale. Heard in all four movements, Scheherazade’s motive is based on a melody from Balakirev’s symphonic poem *Tamara* (1882), which paints a picture of medieval queen Tamar of Georgia, a region that was a constant source of conflict between the Russian and Persian empires. Sheherazade’s melody avoids a rising leading tone, a method Rimsky-Korsakov used when writing a “folk” melody. The harp accompanying the

solo violin is also a typical feature of Rimsky-Korsakov, who often used the harp to imitate the Slavic gulsi zither, traditionally used to accompany bards.

In the first movement, *The Sea and Sinbad's Ship*, rocking arpeggios in the cellos evoke the sea, its undulating motion continuous even under woodwind solos and the recurring Shahryar theme. The second movement, *The Story of the Kalandar Prince*, references the stories of three different Kalandars in *One Thousand and One Nights*. In the Persian stories, each of the three men has an adventure and becomes a Kalandar (or, Qalandar), a Sufi dervish. Dervishes practice Sama, a meditative form of prayer and dance. The whirling, circular movements of the Sama are heard especially in the clarinet and bassoon solos, each of which has three parts in what is perhaps a reference to the three Kalandars. Lush upper strings suggesting love introduce the third movement, *The Young Prince and the Young Princess*. While this movement could reference a love story in *One Thousand and One Nights*, it could also be Rimsky-Korsakov's way of depicting the beginning of Shahryar's love for Sheherazade, since the romantic strings begin the movement and Sheherazade's solo only comes before the final *tutti* climax. The final movement has a title that summarizes the story: *The Festival at Baghdad—The Sea—The Ship Breaks on a Rock Surmounted by a Bronze Horseman—Conclusion*. Motives from the previous movement are repeated and developed; the shipwreck near a bronze warrior statue is a direct reference to the third Kalandar's tale in *One Thousand and One Nights*. Bright percussion and rapid articulation create a festival atmosphere as the movement builds to majestic *tutti* of the main theme, which is followed by the final statement of Sheherazade's solo accompanied by the harp and wood chords, triumphant in its peace.

– Program note by Elizabeth Massey, Ph.D.



David Neely, *Music Director*
 Mark Wakefield, *Manager of Instrumental Ensembles*

VIOLIN

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Concertmaster (Ives, Wilson)
 Jessica Zhu, *Concertmaster*
 (Rimsky-Korsakov)
 Yuan-Ju Liu,
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 Emily Chen
 Anton Doan
 Jing Fan
 José Antonio Guzman
 Anthony Holc
 Max Jacobs
 Lina Kang
 Kiran Kaur
 Anna Kelleher
 Ellie Kim
 Elsa Kinnear
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 Hoclín Molina
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 Felipe Rodas
 Nina Staniszevska
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 Eleanor Sturm
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 Emily Bussa
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 Fabio Dantas de Araujo Costa
 Seth Goodman
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 Noah Hamermesh
 Nailah Harris
 Wesley Hornpetrie
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 Teddy Hersey
 Benjamin Knight
 Asa Dawson

FLUTE

Larissa Hsu
 Andrew Hui
 Ksenia Mezhenny
 Brianne Steif

OBOE

Jonathan Alonzo
 Yelazat Azhbagambetov
 Lauren Riley

ENGLISH HORN

Lauren Riley

CLARINET

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 Nicholas Lopez
 Sophie Ross
 Matthew Vice

BASSOON

Meghan Freer
 Makayla Bowen-Longino

CONTRABASSOON

Jonathan Zepp

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 Liam McConlogue
 Owen Miller
 Drew Mincey
 Matthew Tremba

TRUMPET

Theresa Bickler
 Ben Lostocco
 Jacob Weglarz

TROMBONE

Liam Glendening
 Colton Wilson

BASS TROMBONE

Gilberto Cruz

TUBA

Grace Tifford

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