

**May 3, 2025**

7:30 pm

**“Midnight in Paris”**

**Wedding March from *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, Op. 61**  
*Felix Mendelssohn (1809-1847)*

**March Militaire for Orchestra, Op. 51, No. 1**  
*Franz Schubert (1797-1828)*

**Wannabe Conductors**

**Violin Concerto in D Major, Op. 77**  
*Johannes Brahms (1833 - 1897)*

- I. Allegro non troppo
- II. Adagio
- III. Allegro giocose, ma non troppo vivace – Poco piu presto

**Rachel Barton Pine, violin**

**INTERMISSION**

**Menuet antique**  
**Valses nobles et sentimentales**  
**La Valse**  
*Maurice Ravel (1875 - 1937)*

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**Wedding March from *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, Op. 61**

***Felix Mendelssohn (b. Hamburg, Germany, February 3, 1809; d. Leipzig, Germany, November 4, 1847)***

*The work is written for two flutes, two oboes, two clarinets, two bassoons, two horns, three trumpets, three trombones, one tuba, timpani, percussion, and strings.*

On two occasions, Felix Mendelssohn composed music for William Shakespeare's play ***A Midsummer Night's Dream***. First in 1826, near the start of his career, he wrote a concert overture for the play. Later, in 1842, he wrote incidental music for a production of the play. The incidental music includes his ***Wedding March***, which may be the most popular single piece of music composed by Mendelssohn.

King Frederick William IV of Prussia asked Mendelssohn in 1842 for some stage music to ***A Midsummer Night's Dream***. Heinrich Eduard Jacob in his book ***Felix Mendelssohn and His Times*** – translated from the German by Richard and Clara Winston – writes, “Mendelssohn never thought of completing his magnificent overture to ***A Midsummer Night's Dream*** by composing music for the *entire* play. Mendelssohn’s head was reeling! What a variety of plans!”

**March Militaire for Orchestra, Op. 51, No. 1**

***Franz Schubert (b. Vienna, Austria, January 31, 1797; d. Vienna, Austria, November 19, 1828)***

*The work is written for three flutes, piccolo, two oboes, two clarinets, two bassoons, four horns, three trumpets, three trombones, one tuba, timpani, percussion, and strings.*

The ***Three Marches Militaires***, Op. 51, D. 733, are pieces in march form written for piano four-hands (a piano duet) by Franz Schubert. The first of the three which we will hear tonight is far more famous than the others and has been arranged for orchestra. It is one of Schubert's most famous compositions, and it is often simply referred to as “Schubert's *Marche militaire*.” The march was arranged for orchestra by Leopold Damrosch who came to the United States from Germany in 1871 and later became conductor of the New York Philharmonic.

The book ***Composers: Their Lives and Works*** reads, “A master of melody, Schubert was renowned for his song settings of German poetry, his genius in symphonies and chamber works, as well as his piano works. He took composition lessons from Antonio Salieri who was notorious for his earlier rivalry with Mozart. Schubert showed a great deal of talent at a young age. His deepest ambition was to emulate the achievements of Beethoven. Schubert’s total list of compositions turned out to be vast – about a thousand of his works are now cataloged and he has taken his place as a great composer alongside Beethoven, Haydn, and Mozart.”

**Wannabe Conductors**

## **Violin Concerto in D Major, Op. 77**

*Johannes Brahms (b. Hamburg, Germany, May 7, 1833; d. Vienna, Austria, April 3, 1897)*

- I. **Allegro non troppo**
- II. **Adagio**
- III. **Allegro giocose, ma non troppo vivace – Poco piu presto**

### **Rachel Barton Pine, violin**

*The work is written for solo violin, two flutes, two oboes, two clarinets, two bassoons, four horns, two trumpets, timpani, and strings. The duration of the work is 38 minutes.*

Brahms composed his **Violin Concerto** in the summer and early autumn of 1878. “However, the published score incorporates a few revisions made after the first performance, which was given on January 1, 1879 in Leipzig by violinist Joseph Joachim, with Brahms conducting the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra,” writes Michael Steinberg in his book, ***The Concerto: A Listener’s Guide***. The work is dedicated to Joachim.

“Joachim the violinist is remember as a superb soloist and an unswerving and effective advocate for Brahms. He even made his conservatory orchestra in Berlin available to Brahms to enable him to tryout his compositions,” continues Steinberg.

Brahms and Joachim were very close friends and over the years they gave many concerts together: Joachim on the violin and Brahms on the piano or on the podium. “Brahms quickly acquired the habit of submitting work in progress to Joachim for stern, specific, practical and carefully heeded criticism – especially as it concerned the strings,” adds Steinberg. “As Brahms worked, he sent Joachim passages of his score, and Joachim offered his own comments and suggestions. At last, plans were made for a trial reading with the orchestra of the Berlin Conservatory, for Joachim to compose a cadenza.” Incidentally, this cadenza is one which is frequently performed today.” Joachim continued to champion the work wherever and whenever he could.

Violin soloist Fritz Kreisler (1875-1962) made the first recording of the **Violin Concerto** in 1926 and was instrumental in suggesting some revisions which were mentioned earlier. The concerto has now come to equal Beethoven’s **Violin Concerto** in popularity.



## INTERMISSION

### **Menuet antique Valses nobles et sentimentales La Valse**

**Maurice Ravel (b. Ciboure, France, March 7, 1875; d. Paris, France, December 28, 1937)**

“Maurice Ravel was a French composer whose orchestral works are admired for his skill in handling instrumental colors, and his extraordinary aural imagination,” reads *Composers and Their Lives and Works*. “He was a master of orchestration and made a point of studying the characteristics of all the orchestral instruments to make the most of the palette of different instrumental colors for expressive effect. Surprisingly, most of these works were written as piano pieces that he later orchestrated.”

At the peak of his career in the 1920s and '30s, Maurice Ravel was considered the greatest living composer in France. A pianist and conductor as well as composer, Ravel attended the Paris Conservatoire but found it hindering and left it to develop his own style blending modernism, neoclassicism, and baroque.

Ravel was among the first composers to recognize the potential of recording to bring their music to a wider public. During the 1920s, he took part in recordings of several of his works; others were made under his supervision.

When he was seven, Ravel started piano lessons with pianist Henri Ghys, a friend of composer Emmanuel Chabrier who recommended him; five years later, in 1887, he began studying harmony, counterpoint and composition with Charles-René, a pupil of composer Léo Delibes.

Émile Decombes took over as Ravel's piano teacher in 1889; in the same year Ravel gave his earliest public performance. Aged fourteen, he took part in a concert at the Salle Érard (concert hall) along with other pupils of Decombes, including Alfred Cortot (who became a famous French pianist, conductor, and teacher and was one of the most renowned classical musicians of the 20th century; he was also well known for his piano trio with concert violinist Jacques Thibaud and concert cellist Pablo Casals.). He found himself in a very good company of friends at an early age.

Ravel's undeniable gifts as a musical innovator were later inspired by his French composition teachers, Gabriel Fauré and Erik Satie. He developed his style during one of the most artistically productive periods of the twentieth century.

“Ravel had a carefully guarded personal life as the great French musician he was to become,” writes author Victor I. Seroff in *Maurice Ravel: A Biography*. “Born in the Basque village of Ciboure near the border of Spain, Ravel was raised in the Montmartre district of Paris and became the epitome of the sophisticated, elegant Parisian. But he studied and worked and developed as a fastidious resplendent little man who delighted in Parisian night life, and in travels to Spain, Africa, England, and the United States.”

Seroff continues, “A list of Ravel's compositions is both distinguished and varied and includes music for the theater – *La Valse*.”

#### **Menuet antique**

*The orchestral version is scored for an orchestra consisting of two flutes, piccolo, two oboes, English horn, two clarinets, bass clarinet, two bassoons, contrabassoon, four horns, three trumpets, three trombones, tuba, timpani, harp, and strings.*

**Menuet antique** is a piece composed for solo piano. Counted as 'Opus 1' by Ravel, the original piano version was written in 1895 and orchestrated by Ravel in 1929. Author Seroff writes, "No other composer in the history of music reveals himself so completely from the first published page of his work." Ravel wrote the piece to pay tribute to Emmanuel Chabrier (mentioned above), who had welcomed his early works and helped to establish his musical reputation.

The piano version was first performed on April 18, 1898 by Ricardo Viñes, a long-time friend to whom the composer dedicated the composition. Viñes also gave the premieres of many of Ravel's other works. The orchestral version was first heard in public on January 11, 1930.

### **Valses nobles et sentimentales**

*The orchestral arrangement of the piece is written for two flutes, two oboes, cor anglais, two clarinets (in B♭ and A), two bassoons, four horns, two trumpets, three trombones, tuba, timpani, tambourine, cymbals, snare drum, glockenspiel, triangle, bass drum, celesta, two harps, and strings.*

Ravel is quoted by author Victor I. Seroff in **Maurice Ravel: A Biography**, "The title **Les Valses nobles et sentimentales** sufficiently indicates that I was intent on writing a set of Schubertian waltzes."

The **Valses nobles et sentimentales** is, indeed, a suite of waltzes, written for solo piano. The piano version was published in 1911, and an orchestral version was published in 1912.

Later the work was rechristened **Adélaïde, ou le langage des fleurs** (*Adelaide: The Language of Flowers*), orchestrated for ballet and presented in 1912.

A typical performance of all eight waltzes takes 15 minutes:

- I. *Modéré – très franc*
- II. *Assez lent – avec une expression intense*
- III. *Modéré*
- IV. *Assez animé*
- V. *Presque lent – dans un sentiment intime*
- VI. *Vif*
- VII. *Moins vif*
- VIII. *Épilogue: lent*

### **La Valse**

*The work is scored for three flutes (3rd doubling piccolo), three oboes (3rd doubling English horn), two clarinets in A, bass clarinet in A, two bassoons, contrabassoon, four horns, three trumpets in C, three trombones, tuba, timpani, bass drum, snare drum, cymbals, triangle, tambourine, tam-tam, crotales, glockenspiel, castanets, two harps, and strings.*

According to author Victor I. Seroff in **Maurice Ravel: A Biography**, Serge Diaghilev, founder of the Russian Ballet, asked Ravel to write a ballet. It could be a subject of his own choice. In fact, Ravel had thought about this opportunity since 1906. **La Valse** was written between February 1919 and 1920. The work was first performed on December 12, 1920, in Paris.

Ravel described his work and wrote, “It is not subtle! It is a *Grande Valse* – a sort of homage to the memory of the Great Strauss, not Richard, the other – Johann. You know my intense sympathy for this admirable rhythm, and that I hold *la joie de vivre* (joy of life) as expressed by the dance.”

“*La Valse*, eventually became one of Ravel’s most popular works,” adds Seroff. “He envisioned it for the ballet with ‘drifting clouds give glimpses, through rifts, or couples waltzing. The clouds gradually scatter, and an immense hall can be seen, filled with a whirling crowd. The scene gradually becomes illuminated. The light of chandeliers bursts forth. Set in an Imperial Court about 1855 ...”

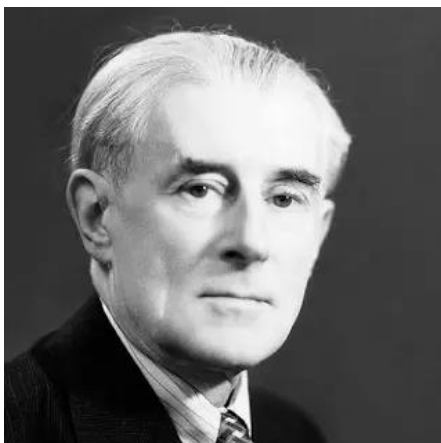
“Unfortunately, Diaghilev refused to produce the ballet, apparently for purely financial reasons,” continues Seroff.

However, the ballet was later actually premiered in Antwerp in October 1926 by the Royal Flemish Opera Ballet, and there were later productions by the Ballets Ida Rubinstein in 1928 and 1931 with choreography by Bronislava Nijinska. The music was also used for ballets of the same title, one by George Balanchine, who had made dances for Diaghilev, in 1951 and the other by Frederick Ashton in 1958.

Apart from the two-piano arrangement, which was first publicly performed by Ravel and Alfredo Casella, Ravel also transcribed this work for one piano. The solo piano transcription is infrequently performed due to its difficulty. However, Lucien Garban produced a transcription for piano four hands in 1920. The pianist Glenn Gould, who rarely played Ravel’s music, made his own arrangement of *La Valse* in 1975. In 2008 Andrey Kasparov produced an improved treatment of *La Valse* for piano four hands, with Ravel’s original scoring distributed more effectively between the performers. Sean Chen recorded his own arrangement on the Steinway & Sons label in 2014.

Amazingly, in 2005 *La Valse* was transcribed for Symphonic Wind Ensemble by Don Patterson, for the United States Marine Band, and was recorded on the album *Symphonic Dances*, conducted by Michael J. Colburn.

“Ravel’s official first appearance in the United States was in Boston on January 12, 1927, where Serge Koussevitzky, the conductor of the Boston Symphony Orchestra, introduced *La Valse*, with the composer conducting the Boston Symphony.” continues Seroff in *Maurice Ravel: A Biography*.



***Maurice Ravel***