

WASHINGTON METROPOLITAN

Gamer Symphony Orchestra

The Washington Metropolitan Gamer Symphony Orchestra (WMGSO) is a community orchestra and choir whose mission is to share and celebrate video game music with a wide audience, primarily by putting on affordable, accessible concerts in the D.C. area.

Game music weaves a complex melodic thread through the traditions, shared memories, values, and mythos of an entire international and intergenerational culture. WMGSO showcases this music that largely escapes recognition in professional circles.

The result: classical music with a 21st-century twist, drawing non-gamers to the artistic merits of video game soundtracks and attracting new audiences to orchestral concert halls.

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About Our Music Director



Jamin Morden attended Northwestern University, dual majoring in French Horn Performance and Music Education. After he completed a master's degree in French Horn Performance at Yale University, he moved to Maryland to teach instrumental music in Montgomery County Public Schools. Jamin is also involved with Symphony of the Potomac and the Maryland Band Directors' Band.

About Our Choir Director



Anthony Khong is an active musician, educator, and arts administrator and is native to the D.C. area. Prior to his work in community choirs, he served as a chorus teacher in Fairfax County. Anthony holds a master's in Arts Management from George Mason University, and a bachelor's in Music Education from James Madison University, where he studied voice and clarinet.

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START!

Simian Suite

Donkey Kong Country (1994)

Donkey Kong Country 2: Diddy's Kong Quest (1995)

David Wise

Arr. Lee Stearns

Donkey Kong debuted in 1981 alongside Mario and is one of Nintendo's first and most popular video game characters. He first appeared in games as an antagonist (or in the case of *Donkey Kong Jr.*, the character being rescued). It wasn't until over a decade later when Rare made the *Donkey Kong Country* series that Donkey Kong became a playable character with his own backstory and cast of side characters. *Donkey Kong Country* (DKC) is the third-best-selling game on the SNES console, frequently appears on lists of the top games of all time, and spawned two sequels as well as several re-releases and spinoffs.

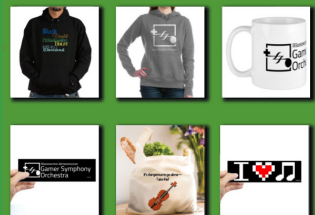
Alongside the impressive SNES-era graphics and tight gameplay, *DKC* also features a stellar soundtrack composed primarily by David Wise. The music is frequently atmospheric and mixes environmental sounds with memorable melodies and percussive accompaniments. This percussion/rhythm ensemble arrangement, titled "Simian Suite," is a medley of five tracks from *Donkey Kong Country* and its sequel, *Donkey Kong Country 2*. While some of the atmospheric elements of the originals remain, this arrangement focuses on the catchy melodies and high-energy rhythms and includes jazzy reinterpretations.

"Simian Suite" features Lee Stearns on drum set and tambourine; Kunho Kim on tom-toms, found percussion, taiko drum, and claves; Jess Bateman on bongos, temple blocks, found percussion, and timbales; Julius Verzosa on congas, finger cymbals, cabasa, chimes, tambourine, and marimba; Sandy Chilson on glockenspiel, crotales, and marimba; Alvin Macasero on xylophone, chimes, tam-tam, triangle, cowbell, and shaker; Cory Haley on marimba and sleigh bells; and Scott Luxenberg on vibraphone and chimes; with Les Doerfler on bass guitar and Jadzia Metcalf-Burton on piano.

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Nature's Crescendo

Stardew Valley (2016)

Eric Barone

Arr. Sandy Chilson

Stardew Valley is commonly referred to as a “farming simulator” game. The game starts when you inherit your grandfather’s farm, but it is about far more than just farming. *Stardew Valley* includes puzzles, quests, befriending and romancing townsfolk, mystery-solving, mining, fishing, minigames, and most importantly, creating and nurturing your community. One of the most alluring parts of *Stardew Valley* is that there is no real story campaign—the player has complete freedom to play the game however they want without compromising what storylines, quests, or map regions they can access.

Eric Barone (AKA Concerned Ape), the creator of the game, composed all of the game’s music using synthesized instruments. While the tracks are short, they are a highlight of the game, with complex, fun, and beautiful tunes that evoke emotions that enhance the gameplay. Many regions in the game have their own soundtracks, and each year in the game is broken into the four seasons, with each season having its own three tracks that alternate as the background music each day.

“Nature’s Crescendo,” a jaunty, upbeat track, is one of the three tracks that may greet the player when they wake up on a summer day. A *Stardew Valley* fan might be reminded of the luau at the beach, growing melons and summer squash, or the ice cream stand in town open for the season.

In this arrangement, the mallet percussion instruments take on the melodies that are usually played by synthesized accordions, trumpets, and wood flutes. This arrangement features Scott Luxenberg on glockenspiel; Cory Haley on xylophone; Sandy Chilson on vibraphone; Lee Stearns on marimba; Kunho Kim and Jess Bateman on castanets, taiko drum, and shaker; Jadzia Metcalf-Burton on piano; Kara Welch on harp; and Les Doerfler on bass guitar.

Ending Theme

Super Mario World (1990)

Koji Kondo

Arr. Cory Haley

Koji Kondo’s “Ending,” composed for *Super Mario World*, is a quintessential example of video game music that, as the final piece of the game, serves as a poignant conclusion to Mario’s adventurous journey in Dinosaur Land.

This arrangement follows the traditional ragtime stylings of xylophonist George Hamilton Green, with a xylophone soloist and marimba quartet accompaniment. Cory Haley is on the solo xylophone; and Alvin Macasero, Kunho Kim, Lee Stearns, and Scott Luxenberg play marimba.

Spyro

Spyro the Dragon (1998)

Stewart Copeland

Arr. Dan Serino

Stewart Copeland, famously known as the drummer for The Police, composed the music for the *Spyro* trilogy for the PlayStation. The soundtrack blends Copeland's rock roots with offbeat rhythms and syncopated bass lines commonly seen in reggae music. This arrangement features "Orbit," which is played on the title screen and "End Titles," which plays after beating the game. These pieces are among the most recognizable themes from the series, with "Orbit" giving some similarities to Copeland's days with the Police, and "End Title" having more reggae-infused beats driving home the completion of the game.

This arrangement features Jess Bateman on glockenspiel, Lee Stearns and Sandy Chilson on xylophone and marimba, Alvin Macasero on drum set, Cory Haley on taiko drum and timbales, Kunho Kim on bongos, Zeynep Dilli on electric keyboard, Kara Welch on harp, JP Zavodny on acoustic guitar, Les Doerfler on electric guitar, and Julius Verzosa on bass guitar.

Price

Persona 5 (2016)/Persona 5 Royal (2019)

Shoji Meguro

Arr. Dan Serino

"Price" from *Persona 5* features a blend of funk, rock, and electronic elements, creating an intense atmosphere for a stealth mission. The piece is the background music for the third palace of the game, which befitting the name "Price," focuses on a villain obsessed with extracting money from his victims.

This arrangement features a rock band ensemble, consisting of Lee Stearns on drum set, Jadzia Metcalf-Burton on electric keyboard, Zeynep Dilli on rock organ, JP Zavodny on lead guitar, Les Doerfler on rhythm guitar, and Julius Verzosa on bass guitar, supported by Scott Luxenberg on mallet station, Cory Haley on cuica, and Alvin Macasero on congas.

PAUSE

Are you enjoying the
show so far?

- Yes.
- Of course!

Intermission is the perfect time to give your feedback (scan the QR code on the right or follow the URL) or make a donation at WMGSO's booth in the lobby!

Audience Feedback
Survey



bit.ly/3Ms9DTI

LEVEL 2 – START!

Resurrections

Celeste (2018)

Lena Raine

Arr. David Crisler

This arrangement is a largely faithful rendition of all the music present in the second chapter of the indie platformer *Celeste*, when the game's story and gameplay start to interact. As the game's protagonist, Madeline, explores old buildings in a sleepy dream state, the ruins come alive around her. She finds a dark doppelganger of herself, who berates Madeline for thinking she can climb Celeste Mountain, triggering a nightmarish sequence during which the dark doppelganger Part of Madeline copies her every move. When Madeline finally wakes up, she finds the ruins empty and trudges ahead, questioning her decision to climb the mountain. Lena Raine's music traces all these developments, while sticking to a small set of motifs that forms the core of the game's musical identity.

This arrangement features Scott Luxenberg on glockenspiel and xylophone, Alvin Macasero on marimba, Sandy Chilson on vibraphone, Jess Bateman on suspended cymbal, Kunho Kim on drum set, Julius Verzosa on bass guitar, Jazdia Metcalf-Burton on piano, and Kara Welch on harp.

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Turtle Woods

Crash Bandicoot 2: Cortex Strikes Back (1997)

Josh Mancell

Arr. Dan Serino

“Turtle Woods” from *Crash Bandicoot 2* blends lively rhythms with an adventurous melody, capturing the game’s lush, forested levels and intricate platforming. The score features complex rhythmic layering in the percussion section, enhancing the excitement of navigating obstacles and enemies.

This arrangement features Cory Haley on marimba, Scott Luxenberg on drum set, Lee Stearns on congas, Alvin Macasero on djembe, Kunho Kim on cowbell, Sandy Chilson on shaker, Jess Bateman on bongos, Zeynep Dilli on celesta, Jadzia Metcalf-Burton on electric keyboard, JP Zavodny on acoustic guitar, and Les Doerfler on bass guitar.

To Ellinia

MapleStory (2003)

CODASOUND

Arr. Jacob Coppage-Gross

The cutesy, side-scrolling style of *MapleStory* is immediately recognizable as one of the first MMORPGs that gamers grew up with in the 2000s. While *MapleStory* has expanded immensely and still sees a healthy playerbase today, the charm of those original days when it took four months to get to level 30 is long gone. Part of the nostalgia for the game goes back to the music itself, with the earliest tunes composed by CODASOUND.

In this arrangement of the piece commonly known as “To Ellinia,” the gentle but rhythmic sounds of the forest are reimagined for mallet percussion, with Lee Stearns on marimba and Scott Luxenberg on vibraphone.

To Zanarkand

Final Fantasy X (2001)

Nobuo Uematsu

Arr. Samantha Ballard

Final Fantasy X is a game of dreams—dreams as opposed to reality and dreams of what one plans for or hopes will come to pass. Alas, it is also a game of dreams that cannot be. Along with “Suteki da Ne,” “To Zanarkand” is considered one of the two main themes for *Final Fantasy X*.

“To Zanarkand” is played during the opening of the game and again at a thematically appropriate moment. The original soundtrack is presented in solo piano with a melody of wide intervals, repeated climbs and falling back down, reaching, yearning, stretching out with your fingertips—only to miss the touch again and again. This arrangement for solo harp is just as simple and stark a statement.

As “To Zanarkand” plays in the opening of *Final Fantasy X*, the main character says in voiceover, “Listen to my story. This may be our last chance.” A group of sorrowful people gather around a campfire by ancient ruins by the seaside. Near the end of the game, the player arrives at the campfire and hears the heart-breaking melody of “To Zanarkand” again when they have learned enough—learned too much—to understand what the ruins are, the reason for sorrow, and why some dreams just cannot be.

This arrangement features Kara Welch on harp.

The Legend of the Seven Stars Yoko Shimomura, Nobuo Uematsu & Koji Kondo
Super Mario RPG: Legend of the Seven Stars (1996/2023)

Arr. Lee Stearns

Super Mario RPG begins like any other *Mario* game: Bowser has kidnapped Princess Peach, and it is up to Mario to save her. However, the story similarities end there, as a huge sword comes crashing down from the sky and pierces Bowser's Castle, scattering Mario, Bowser, and Peach across the world. Developed as a direct collaboration between Nintendo and Square, *Super Mario RPG* has several nods to the *Final Fantasy* series, including a party-based battle system that allows Mario to team up with unusual allies, such as Bowser, Peach, and fan-favorite Geno.

The soundtrack, composed primarily by Yoko Shimomura, merges the upbeat and quirky themes of the *Super Mario* games with epic battle tunes from *Final Fantasy*—including three tracks by the “Beethoven of video game music,” Nobuo Uematsu—and is considered by many to be the best *Mario* soundtrack. The game's music is highly percussive, featuring a diverse instrumentation, from xylophone and marimba to bongos and steel drum, so an arrangement for percussion ensemble is a natural fit. Our arrangement tells an abbreviated version of the game's story: beginning with Bowser's kidnapping of Princess Peach, narrating several of Mario's adventures with his companions, and culminating in a battle against one of the game's bosses.

This arrangement was originally performed in the fall of 2016. Just as *Super Mario RPG* received a remaster in 2023, so has this arrangement—having been redone with updated instrumentation to feature the full rhythm section.

This piece features Cory Haley on drum set; Scott Luxenberg on tam-tam, bongos, congas, mark tree, and temple blocks; Kunho Kim on triangle, tambourine, and shaker; Jess Bateman on glockenspiel and cowbell; Alvin Macasero on snare drum and xylophone; Lee Stearns on marimba and snare drum; Sandy Chilson on vibraphone and shaker; Zeynep Dilli on piano, Kara Welch on harp, Julius Verzosa on bass guitar, and JP Zavodny on acoustic guitar and electric guitar.



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WMGSO's
Fall Concert

Saturday,
November 23,
2024

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Livestreamed on Twitch