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ELDRED MARSHALL

PIANO

SUNDAY, MARCH 8, 2026 3:00 PM
GREAT HALL
ST. MATTHEW'S CATHEDRAL
DALLAS, TEXAS

cathedralartsdallas.org

PROGRAM

UNE FÊTE DE LA MUSIQUE FRANÇAISE A Celebration of French Music

Barcarolle No. 4 in A-flat major, Op. 44 (1886) Gabriel Fauré (1845-1924)

Images, Livre 1 (Images, Book 1) (1905) Claude Debussy (1862-1918)

Reflets dans l'eau (Reflections in the water)
Hommage à Rameau (Homage to Rameau)
Mouvement (Movement)

Gaspard de la nuit (Guardian of the night) (1908) Maurice Ravel (1875-1937)

Ondine (Water Nymph)
Le Gibet (The Gallows)
Scarbo (Goblin)

INTERMISSION

Huit Préludes (Eight Preludes) (1928-9) Olivier Messiaen (1908-1992)

1. *La colombe* (The dove)

Vingt Regards sur l'enfant-Jésus (Twenty Gazes upon the infant Jesus) (1944)

1. *Regard du Père* (The Father's gaze)



Le Tombeau de Couperin (The Tomb of Couperin) (1917) Maurice Ravel

Prélude
Fugue
Rigaudon
Forlane
Menuet
Toccata

ELDRED MARSHALL

The Press Enterprise (Riverside, California) hailed his “dazzling technique” and his “clean, tidy approach.” Music critic Laurence Vittes described him as an “illumination in music,” and said of his all-Beethoven recital: “Marshall presented a recital so full of musical thrills and beauties, and so in identification with the composer’s own persona, that, for a few hours, it was as if he were communing across the centuries to conjure up a rare and magical musical spectrum.” The Telegraf Online Constanta (Romania) reported that Marshall “captivated the audience” in Mozart’s Piano Concerto No. 20, which he conducted from the keyboard.

Eldred Marshall began studying the piano at age six and played in public by age seven. His prodigious and inquisitive mind allowed him to quickly master large swaths of the piano repertoire and consistently win top prizes at the competitions he entered as a child. By the age of 16, he debuted with an orchestra, playing Brahms’s Piano Concerto No. 2 with the Victor Valley College Symphony Orchestra. Before entering into Yale University, where he graduated with honors with a B.A. in Political Science, he had already performed all over the United States. The critically-acclaimed pianist has performed in Spain, Italy, the Republic of San Marino, Belgium, Germany, Romania, Bulgaria, the Ukraine, the People’s Republic of China, and Canada. He has twice performed the entire cycle of Beethoven’s 32 Piano Sonatas as a concentrated series, from memory. Other notable tour projects include all-Bach piano recital programs, including the *Goldberg Variations*, the *Well-Tempered Clavier*, Book I, and Beethoven’s *Diabelli Variations*. Eldred was a featured artist at the 2024 *Basically Beethoven* Festival in Dallas, and guest artist at the 2024 Lied Center Piano Academy in Lincoln, Nebraska. As an orchestral conductor, Marshall has led the Ukrainian State Academic Orchestra (Kiev, Ukraine), the Kharkiv Youth Symphony (Kharkiv, Ukraine), the Pleven Philharmonic Orchestra (Pleven, Bulgaria), the Vidin Philharmonic Orchestra (Vidin, Bulgaria), the Filharmonica Oltenia di Craiova (Craiova, Romania), and the Constanta “Black Sea” Philharmonic Orchestra (Constanta, Romania). He has also led several opera productions, including Mozart’s *Bastien und Bastienne*, *Le nozze di Figaro*, and *Die Zauberflöte*, as well as Debussy’s *Pelléas et Mélisande*. Marshall earned three Master of Music degrees from Southern Methodist University: Piano (2011), Organ (2012), and Orchestral Conducting (2013). He earned his Doctor of Musical Arts in Piano Performance degree from the University of North Texas in 2018. He has taught and guest lectured at Grambling State University, the University of Nebraska at Lincoln, Texas A&M at Commerce, the University of North Texas, SMU, and North Texas Central College. His doctoral dissertation examines the art of conducting piano concerti from the piano: performance practice, discipline and whether or not it is “real conducting.” Marshall presently serves as the Artistic Director/Conductor of the Mansfield Philharmonic Orchestra. He also serves as Associate Director of Music at Our Lady of the Lake Catholic Church in Rockwall, Texas. He is the founding Artistic Director/Conductor of the Lucas Chorale, and Organist/Music Director of Grace Fellowship Seventh-day Adventist Church in Lucas, Texas.

NOTES

The composer, organist, pianist and teacher **Gabriel Fauré**, one of the foremost French composers of his generation, wrote the first of thirteen barcarolles in 1880 and his last one 41 years later, in 1921. His Barcarolle No. 4, composed in 1886, is a lyrical and harmonically rich piano piece, reflecting Fauré’s evolving personal style, blending late-Romantic influence with emerging modernism. The *barcarolle* is a musical form intended to evoke the gentle, rocking motion and songs of Venetian gondoliers, typically in a compound time signature like 6/8. While maintaining the characteristic rhythm, Fauré expands the traditional form with his unique harmonic language. The piece has a velvety and tranquil character, marked *allegretto* (moderately fast). It’s a graceful and soothing work, described as having a pastoral quality, reminiscent of a sicilienne dance. Fauré uses rich textures and counterpoint, demanding sensitive use of the pedal to create an exquisite sonic fabric. Adventurous harmonics are also a key feature. Fauré frequently shifts to wildly different and unexpected keys at a moment’s notice within the main theme (such as C-flat major or G major), while maintaining the underlying rhythmic pulse. This complex integration of tonal and modal procedures is characteristic of his innovative style. Fauré was ambidextrous, and often places the main melody in the middle register of the piano, with accompaniment figures in both the high treble and the low bass. This creates a unique mirror image effect, with a central melody supported by both the upper and lower registers.

Incubated in Impressionism in the visual arts and the Symbolist movement in literature, **Claude Debussy** was alert to the interplay of words and images. “I am almost as fond of pictures as I am of music,” he wrote. He composed three sets of musical *Images*, two for piano, and another for orchestra. In place of a visual stimulus, Debussy used carefully written titles, by turns evocative and enigmatic, to stimulate the imaginations of his listeners. Completed in 1905, the first volume of *Images* was first performed in Paris by the virtuoso Catalan pianist Ricardo Viñes. “The sound of the sea, the curve of the horizon, the wind in the leaves, the cry of a bird, are engraved like so many complex impressions deep within us,” Debussy told an interviewer in 1911. “Then suddenly, without any deliberate effort on our part, one of these memories surfaces to express itself in the language of music.” It’s interesting to note that each of the three *Images* features a similar three-note motif, which occurs often, and is sometimes hidden in the accompaniments. Debussy valued the *Images* highly, telling his publisher, Jacques Durand, “I think I may say without undue pride that I believe these pieces will live and will take their place in the piano literature ... either to the left of Schumann, or to the right of Chopin.” And in another letter to Durand: “I believe more and more that music in its essence is not a thing that can be poured into a rigorous and traditional mold. It is made of colors and rhythmical beats.” *Reflets dans l’eau* (Reflections on the water) is a masterpiece in the tradition of water music, the piano conjuring up water at rest and at play, deep and mysterious, or glinting in sunshine. *Hommage à Rameau* actually borrows no stylistic traits from Jean-Phillipe Rameau (1683-1764), Debussy’s composer predecessor. At the time he was composing his first set of *Images* in 1903, Debussy was editing some of Rameau’s music. Perhaps the melancholy of the piece describes the allure of a remote and possibly unknowable past. *Mouvement* explains itself. The performer is asked to play with “a whimsical lightness, but precisely.”

Maurice Ravel's *Gaspard de la nuit* is widely regarded as one of the pinnacles of piano literature, exemplifying the symbiosis between literary inspiration and musical innovation in the early twentieth century. Based on Aloysius Bertrand's 1842 collection of poems, *Gaspard de la nuit: Fantaisies à la manière de Rembrandt et de Callot*, Ravel's work translates the darkly fantastic and vivid world of Bertrand's Romantic prose poetry into a virtuosic pianistic landscape. The composition's three movements, "Ondine", "Le Gibet", and "Scarbo", demonstrate technical ingenuity and a skillful dialogue between text and music, between early Romantic literary symbolism and early twentieth-century impressionist soundscapes. The poem "Ondine" presents the reader with a watery seductress whose ethereal presence blurs boundaries between desire and danger: "On the wave's trembling crest, she glides, a form of silver light, her eyes deep as midnight seas, her song both a lure and a threat." Ravel's musical setting of "Ondine" captures this duality through shimmering arpeggios and fluid figurations that mimic the movement of water and the beguiling, seductive nature of the nymph. The beauty of Ondine's world is fraught with danger, a tension Ravel conveys through sudden harmonic shifts and moments of dissonance within otherwise lyrical arpeggios. The interplay between major and minor modalities suggests the nymph's dual nature as enchanting yet potentially lethal. As musicologist Steven Huebner calls it, "beauty and peril are inseparable." The second movement, "Le Gibet," presents a stark contrast, both thematically and musically. Bertrand's poem describes a desolate landscape dominated by the image of a hanged man, whose body sways endlessly on the gallows, casting a grotesque shadow over the surrounding plain. Ravel's interpretation is unflinchingly faithful to this atmosphere of horror and stasis. The movement is characterized by an unrelenting tolling of a B-flat octave in the low register, an ostinato that functions as a musical representation of the motion and the poem's persistent morbid tone. Ravel strips away ornamental flourish, presenting an almost skeletal texture, emphasizing immobility, emptiness, and decay. Ravel conjures the poem's dread through temporal and harmonic manipulation, achieving an immediacy that prose alone cannot. The third and final movement, "Scarbo," presents perhaps the greatest challenge in translating text into music. Bertrand's description of the impish, nocturnal dwarf Scarbo is dense with unpredictability and terror: "A shadow flits across the moonlit walls, mocking, taunting; its laugh echoes in the rafters, never still, never silent. One dares not look, lest it vanish and reappear more cruelly." The movement is characterized by rapid, repeated notes, sudden dynamic shifts, and capricious melodic leaps, all of which convey Scarbo's mercurial nature. "Ondine" exemplifies lyrical fluidity and seduction, "Le Gibet" embodies stasis and desolation, and "Scarbo" conveys impish volatility and terror. Together, they form a cohesive psychological and aesthetic journey. (Abridged and adapted from an essay by Georg Predota for the internet newsletter *interlude.hk*, December 28, 2025)

Olivier Messiaen's *Préludes* is a set of eight pieces written in 1928-29, when the multifaceted prodigy was only 20 and studying at the Conservatoire de Paris. Messiaen considered it to be his first work of any value. These were very much inspired and influenced by Debussy, whose own preludes were less than ten years old at the time. But Messiaen was already well launched on his own path, basing this music on what he called "modes of limited transposition," artificial scales that began with Debussy's beloved whole-tone scale and evolved into six other symmetrical divisions of the octave, providing melodic direction and harmonic color. Messiaen's so-called "added resonance" techniques made his music unique even while he was still a student. As the pianist Pierre-Laurent Aimard writes, "what is most impressive about the *Préludes* is the world of color they inhabit, a world both highly personal and already strongly defined." Each piece involves detailed associations between sound and color. Love and loss generate the emotional range of this clearly structured music, composed after the early death of Messiaen's mother in 1927, and dedicated to the pianist Henriette Roget, whom Messiaen was in love. The solemn *La colombe* (The Dove) was Messiaen's mother, the poet Cécile Sauvage. Like Debussy, Messiaen gave each *Prélude* a title, suggesting a narrative for the work. Some are obvious, such as *La colombe*, a piece with delicate fluttering and gentle cooing high in the register. Messiaen's *Préludes* are also mystical rather than purely impressionistic, and look forward to his profoundly spiritual work, the monumental *Vingt Regards sur l'enfant-Jésus* (Twenty Gazes upon the infant Jesus) of 1944, finished shortly after the liberation of Paris. Intended to complement 12 poems about the Nativity scene by Maurice Toesca, the composition grew to 20 "gazes" and two hours' worth of music, creating one of the most demanding and impressive works in the entire piano repertoire. Through its four themes—God, the Star and the Cross, Chords, and Mystical Love—the *Regards* cover a range of expressions, fluctuating from hypnotic to nightmarish. Among his stated goals in writing music was to destroy the sense of time moving forward, obliterating the subdivision of meter that forms the basis of Western music. So Messiaen's rhythms can create a sense of disorientation. He avidly studied Hindu and ancient Greek rhythms, creating a static music, stripped of the traditional sense of upbeat and downbeat. The first piece, *Regard du Père* (*The Father's gaze*) reflects the passage in Matthew 3:17, a declaration from God the Father, spoken at Jesus' baptism: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." A steady note repeats in the upper part of the piano, but a constantly changing number of repetitions denies the listener a sense of arrival. Instead, we hear a phrase that rises and falls as though following a pattern of breathing rather than a foot tapping. (compiled and adapted from essays by Jeffrey Payne, Piper Starnes and John Henken, Director of Publications for the Los Angeles Philharmonic)

Ravel's *Le Tombeau de Couperin* (The Tomb of Couperin) is a set of six piano pieces written between 1914 and 1917; four of the six went on to be orchestrated and enjoy frequent outings on the concert platform. Each movement is an homage to a friend that Ravel lost in the First World War, yet the overarching character of all six pieces is light, fresh and playful. *Tombeau* is meant here in a sense of tribute rather than mourning. It's easy to think of a tomb as something solemn or foreboding, but Ravel takes the opportunity to pay a stylistic as well as a personal tribute: he aims to capture the essence of his departed friends through the lens of a baroque sound world. The titles of the pieces are all baroque – Prelude, Fugue, Forlane, Rigaudon, Menuet, Toccata – so Ravel is paying tribute to a general musical style as well as to the memory of his departed friends. *Le Tombeau de Couperin* comprises six little jewels of piano music, and appears on the surface to be a contradiction, a reminiscence of lost friends through joyful music. This juxtaposition, however, gives the piece its sense of meaning: there are moments where the music turns inwards and reflects, but the lightness of the piece belies a heartfelt tribute not only to Ravel's absent friends, but to a historical genre of music, and both are done with a twinkle in the eye. (adapted from an essay by Oliver Pashley for *interlude.hk*, March 2, 2021)

Program notes and design by Jon White