



Lieutenant Colonel Jason K. Fettig, Director

MARINE CHAMBER ORCHESTRA
Sunday, March 15, 2015 at 2:00 P.M.
Rachel M. Schlesinger Concert Hall and Arts Center
Northern Virginia Community College
Alexandria Campus
First Lieutenant Ryan J. Nowlin, conducting

Influences

Alessandro Marcello (1684–1750)

Concerto in C minor

Allegro moderato

Adagio

Allegro

SSgt Tessa Vinson, oboe soloist

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685–1750)

Brandenburg Concerto No. 5 in D, BWV 1050

Allegro

Affettuoso

Allegro

GySgt Elisabeth Plunk, flute soloist

GySgt Erika Sato, violin soloist

SSgt Christopher Schmitt, piano soloist

INTERMISSION

Felix Mendelssohn (1809–47)

Symphony No. 3 in A minor, Opus 56, *Scottish*

Andante con moto; Allegro un poco agitato

Vivace non troppo

Adagio

Allegro vivacissimo; Allegro maestoso assai

The U.S. Marine Band will perform Sunday, March 22 at 2:00 P.M. in the Rachel M. Schlesinger Concert Hall and Arts Center at Northern Virginia Community College, Alexandria Campus. The program will include works by Herrmann, Vaughan Williams, and Ravel.

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PROGRAM NOTES

Concerto in C minor

Alessandro Marcello (1684-1750)

Mystery and misattribution surround this frequently performed concerto and staple of the oboe repertoire. One of the most well-known works of the Baroque era, its rightful author went unrecognized for centuries—a subject that still today is a source of confusion and debate. The Concerto in C minor must have made an impression on Johann Sebastian Bach as it was one he preserved by arranging it in the early eighteenth century. He included the arrangement in a collection of works by other composers including Antonio Vivaldi. Published in Weimar circa 1713, Bach's mistaken attribution to "A. Vivaldi" is only one component that masked the real composer's identity.

As interest in the source material for Bach's collection grew, a copy of the concerto surfaced in Germany's Schwerin Library. The copy, signed "Marcello," was cataloged as a creation of Benedetto Marcello (1686–1739). It was not until a copy of the concerto was discovered in the British Library as part of collection published in 1717 that Alessandro Marcello is clearly identified as the composer.

While this discovery has largely put to rest the question of authorship, the concerto's pedigree is far from clear. The oboe concerto was originally composed sometime between 1708 and 1713 in the key of D minor and was arranged by Bach in the same key. Alessandro's far more prolific brother Benedetto took it upon himself to make a new edition of the work, transposing it to C minor in the process. It is this C minor version of the concerto that is most often performed and will be heard today.

Between Alessandro's original work, Benedetto's alterations in his edition, and Bach's arrangement with his own ornamentations and imprint, it is very difficult to make concrete attributions of common performance practice. It is clear, however, that this justly celebrated work is one that has left an indelible impression on all who have encountered it.

SSgt Tessa Vinson, oboe soloist

Oboe/English hornist Staff Sergeant Tessa Vinson of Santa Monica, California, joined "The President's Own" United States Marine Band in October 2008. Staff Sgt. Vinson began her musical training at age eight, and upon graduating from Santa Monica High School in 2001, she attended the University of California, Santa Barbara, where she studied with Stuart Horne of the Los Angeles Opera. She earned a bachelor's degree in music (2005) and a master's degree in orchestral performance (2007) from the Manhattan School of Music in New York. Her instructors include David Weiss of the Los Angeles Philharmonic, and Robert Botti and Joseph Robinson of the Manhattan School of Music. Prior to joining "The President's Own," she performed with the New York City Opera, The Aeros Quintet, and the Philharmonic Orchestra of the Americas. She also held a residency at the 92nd Street Y's Music Unlocked Project and served as the associate oboe teacher for the Manhattan School of Music.

Brandenburg Concerto No. 5 in D, BWV 1050

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685–1750)

The six Brandenburg Concertos are among Johann Sebastian Bach's best-known compositions. They are dedicated to Christian Ludwig, the Margrave of Brandenburg, and originally titled *Concerts à plusieurs instruments* (Concertos for Various Instruments). It was not until the nineteenth century that a prominent Bach biographer referred to them as the "Brandenburg" Concertos, and thus this moniker became forever associated with these works.

Wishing to move on from his employer Prince Leopold in Cöthen, Bach compiled and arranged these concertos from some of his earlier compositions and sent them to the Margrave in hopes of finding a new position in Brandenburg. The gift was neither acknowledged nor performed, possibly because the concertos required more forces than the Margrave employed. It is said that the Brandenburg Concertos were left in the Margrave's library

untouched and un-catalogued in a stack of scores until his death, only to be sorted through for the purpose of dividing the Margrave's estate.

The fifth concerto, truly a concerto grosso, features flute, violin, and harpsichord. This is significant as it is the first time the harpsichord has entered the ranks of solo instruments in music history. The sixty-five bar cadenza in the first movement creates the feeling of a solo keyboard concerto. The solo group masterfully weaves in and out of the orchestral texture with each episode, allowing the opening theme to serve as a sort of refrain with each additional appearance. The second movement, marked *Affetuoso*, offers placidity and features only the trio instruments in true chamber music style. As is typical with Italian-style concerto of the time, the piece concludes with a faster, dance-like movement in compound meter allowing Bach's compositional and contrapuntal genius to be on full display.

The use of piano as the solo keyboard instrument instead of the harpsichord is very common and casts the piece in an entirely new light because of its prominent role. This perhaps is most clearly observed in the virtuosic performances by pianist Glenn Gould. His renowned interpretation of Bach's keyboard music using the piano fosters a completely new appreciation for the music's craftsmanship and complexity. This instrument, armed with the technical agility of its player, has the capacity to repaint the existing polyphonic textures and ingenious counterpoint in a fascinating and engaging manner. Gould's influence on the listener's perception of this music is unmistakable, and piano will be used in this performance of the Brandenburg Concerto No. 5.

Gunnery Sergeant Elisabeth Plunk, flute soloist

Flutist Gunnery Sergeant Elisabeth Plunk joined "The President's Own" United States Marine Band in June 2004 and was named assistant principal in 2009. Gunnery Sgt. Plunk began her musical instruction at age six. Upon graduating in 1997 from Moline High School, she earned a bachelor's degree in music from the University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory in 2001, and in 2003 received a master's degree in music from Carnegie-Mellon University in Pittsburgh. Her flute instructors included Randolph Bowman of Cincinnati College-Conservatory, and Jeanne Baxtresser and Alberto Almaraz of Carnegie-Mellon. Prior to joining "The President's Own," Gunnery Sgt. Plunk performed with the Opera Theatre of Pittsburgh and as guest principal flute with the Orquestra Sinfônica do Estado de São Paulo (São Paulo State Symphony Orchestra) in Brazil.

Gunnery Sergeant Erika Sato, violin soloist

Violinist Gunnery Sergeant Erika Sato joined "The President's Own" Marine Chamber Orchestra in August 2003. Gunnery Sgt. Sato began her musical training at age 3. After graduating in 1994 from Beaverton High School in Beaverton, Oregon, she attended The Juilliard School in New York, where she earned a bachelor's in 1998 and a master's in 2000. While there she studied with Masao Kawasaki.

Prior to joining "The President's Own," Gunnery Sgt. Sato was a titled and tenured member of the Colorado Symphony in Denver and a frequent performer with the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts Opera house orchestra in Washington, D.C. She has given recitals and made solo appearances across the country with such groups as the Oregon Symphony in Portland and National Repertory Orchestra in Breckenridge, Colorado. Gunnery Sgt. Sato has participated in chamber music festivals in Loon Lake, New York, Aspen, Colorado; Banff, Alberta Canada; Norfolk, Connecticut; and at Tanglewood in Lenox, Massachusetts. She also has collaborated on several recordings and film projects.

Staff Sergeant Christopher Schmitt, piano soloist

Pianist Staff Sergeant Christopher Schmitt of Fairfax Station, Virginia, joined "The President's Own" United States Marine Band in August 2013. Staff Sgt. Schmitt began his musical training on the piano at age five and graduated from the Seton School in Manassas, Virginia, in 2004. He attended the New England Conservatory (NEC) in Boston before transferring to The Juilliard School in New York where he earned a bachelor's degree in performance in 2009 and a master's in performance in 2011. He is currently working on a doctorate in performance from Juilliard as well. His teachers have included Marjorie Lee of Virginia, the late Patricia Zander of NEC, and Julian Martin of Juilliard. Prior to joining the band, Staff Sgt. Schmitt taught privately and gave master classes in New York and in the Northern Virginia area.

Symphony No. 3 in A minor, Opus 56, *Scottish*

Felix Mendelssohn (1809–47)

While Marcello's music influenced Bach in a way that compelled him to write an arrangement, and Gould's performances have influenced the way Bach's music is perceived, Felix Mendelssohn had perhaps the most profound impact on Bach's music—he saved it from obscurity.

In 1825, Bella Salomon had given her young grandson Felix Mendelssohn a copy of the manuscript of Bach's *St. Matthew Passion*. In 1829 while in Berlin, Mendelssohn arranged and conducted a performance of this nearly forgotten masterwork to critical acclaim. This was the first time the piece was performed since Bach's death in 1750. The response to the performance not only brought Mendelssohn wide recognition at the early age of twenty, but it was an essential component in the revival of Bach's music in Germany and ultimately the rest of the world.

In that same year, 1829, Mendelssohn embarked on the first of nine tours of the British Isles. Following successful concerts in London, Mendelssohn had joined his friend Karl Klingmann for a three-week vacation in Scotland. He was immediately taken with the beautiful landscape and colorful people, and later described the scene in vivid words to his family:

In the evening twilight we went today to the palace where Queen Mary lived and loved; a little room is shown there with a winding staircase leading up to the door; up this way they came and found Rizzo in that little room, pulled him out, and three rooms off there is a dark corner, where they murdered him.... The chapel close to it is now roofless; grass and ivy grow there, and at that broken altar Mary was crowned Queen of Scotland. Everything around is broken and mouldering, and the bright sky shines in. I believe today in that old chapel the beginning of my Scottish Symphony.

It was not until 1840 and especially in late 1841 that Mendelssohn dedicated himself earnestly to its composition. The symphony, finally completed less than two months before its première in March 1842, was Mendelssohn's last. Designated the third of his five symphonies, the misleading numbering actually reflects the order of publication, not the order of composition.

Although he wrote that he went to Scotland "with a rake for folk songs, an ear for the lovely, fragrant country side," Mendelssohn's symphony does not use any folk music from Scotland. The four movements, played with no break, are unified around the opening melody of the first movement. This theme, revised from his 1829 initial sketch, is unmistakably dark, somber, and elegiac. The movement breaks into an agitated gallop and finally explodes, unleashing the power of the full orchestra. The movement continuously alternates moods, at times nervous, other times calm, but it is all built from the same musical fabric. The movement climaxes in a violent storm scene before evaporating into a reprisal of the introductory material which serves as a seamless transition in to the second movement.

This lively scherzo is ceaseless in energy. The dotted rhythm, appearing subtly in the introductory material and explicitly in the opening clarinet solo, is often referred to as a "Scottish snap" and offers the most distinctive "Scottish" element in the work. The quiet but still swift ending gives way to the slower third movement, which alternates a long, sweeping, *cantabile* melody with a very dramatic and at times forceful, martial fanfare. This effective juxtaposition keeps the listener vulnerable, never at ease.

The final movement explodes immediately with fire and excitement. It was originally marked *Allegro guerriero*, giving the listener free license to envision a series of vivid battle scenes. The composer's aversion to the notion of program music likely resulted in the resulting indication of *Allegro vivacissimo*. Nevertheless, the warlike nature of the movement is inescapable. The return of the haunting opening melody drapes a melancholy curtain over the vivid imagery and develops an unexpected nobility as the symphony concludes.