



Colonel Michael J. Colburn, Director

MARINE CHAMBER ORCHESTRA  
Sunday, April 6, 2014 at 2:00 P.M.  
Rachel M. Schlesinger Concert Hall and Arts Center  
Northern Virginia Community College  
Alexandria Campus  
Colonel Michael J. Colburn, conducting

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## Transformations

Rodion Shchedrin (b. 1932)  
based on the work by Georges Bizet

### *Carmen-Suite* (1967)

Introduction  
Dance  
First Intermezzo  
Changing of the Guard  
Carmen's Entrance and Habanera  
Scene  
Second Intermezzo  
Bolero  
Torero  
Torero and Carmen  
Adagio  
Fortune Telling  
Finale

## INTERMISSION

Igor Stravinsky (1882–1971)

### Suite from *Pulcinella* (1922)

Sinfonia  
Serenata  
Scherzino; Allegro; Andantino  
Tarantella  
Toccata  
Gavotta con due variazioni  
Duetto  
Minuetto; Finale

The United States Marine Band will perform Saturday, April 12 at 2:00 P.M. in the The Coolidge Auditorium at the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C. The program will include works by Stravinsky, Sibelius, and Mozart.

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PLEASE NOTE: The use of recording devices and flash photography is prohibited during the concert.

# ***PROGRAM NOTES***

## ***Carmen-Suite (1967)***

Rodion Shchedrin (b. 1932)

based on the work by Georges Bizet

When Dmitri Shostakovich was approached in 1967 by Bolshoi ballerina Maya Plisetskaya about creating a new ballet score based on the tale of *Carmen*, the Russian composer demurred, telling her “I’m afraid of Bizet. Everyone is so used to the opera that whatever you write, you’ll disappoint them.” Undaunted, she then pitched her idea to the Armenian composer Aram Khachaturian, who was equally reluctant to compete with Bizet. “Why do you need me?” he asked Plisetskaya. “You have a composer at home—ask him!” The composer to whom Khachaturian was referring was Rodion Shchedrin, a well-established Soviet composer who also happened to be married to Plisetskaya. The ballerina took Khachaturian’s advice and convinced her husband to compose a score for her new *Carmen* ballet.

However, as soon as Shchedrin tried to compose some new music to accompany the well-known characters so associated with Bizet’s score, he encountered a debilitating case of writer’s block. Unable to come to terms with reality of replacing Bizet, he settled upon a compromise that he characterized as a “creative meeting of the minds.” While all of the melodies in Shchedrin’s *Carmen-Suite* come from Bizet, the unusual scoring for strings and percussion, the sequence and combination of melodies, and the rhythmic and harmonic twists and turns belong entirely to Shchedrin. The result is a work that is both familiar and fresh. The melodies are left largely intact, if sometimes assigned to unusual instruments. In the midst of a familiar passage, Shchedrin often “zigs” when Bizet “zags,” in a manner that is clearly designed to bring a smile to the face of the listener. One of the most surprising moments occurs in the Torero movement, when the melody drops out entirely, leaving only the accompaniment instruments to suggest the possibility of the tune. It is as if Shchedrin suggests that this music is so well known that the audience can imagine the melody all on their own!

Although Shchedrin felt he was paying tribute to Bizet with his *Carmen-Suite*, the Soviet government did not agree and banned the work after its first performance. Yekaterina Furtseva, the Soviet Minister of Culture responsible for the ban, maintained that Shchedrin’s treatment of Bizet’s melodies was too “modernist,” and that the sexual overtones of Carmen’s character would be insulting to Spanish culture. Although Furtseva suffered considerable public ridicule about her obliviousness to the fact that Carmen’s sensuality was no more or less essential to her character in Shchedrin’s ballet than it was in Bizet’s opera, she refused to lift her ban. It was a phone call from none other than Dmitri Shostakovich, calling in his capacity as First Secretary of the Soviet Composer’s Union, that caused Furtseva to reconsider her stance. Shostakovich made a convincing argument that the score was, in fact, a masterly tribute to Bizet, and moreover, a highly successful dance piece. Although Furtseva outranked Shostakovich in the Soviet artistic power structure then in place, his stature in Soviet society was enough to cause her to change her public position and lift the ban. The work immediately attracted international attention and has become Shchedrin’s best known work.

## Suite from *Pulcinella* (1922)

Igor Stravinsky (1882–1971)

At the suggestion of Sergei Diaghilev, director of the Ballet Russe and longtime collaborator with the composer, Igor Stravinsky accepted an invitation to create the musical score for a ballet based upon the ancient form of Italian drama known as the Commedia dell'arte. Largely improvisational, this form of entertainment relied on an array of stock characters based on well-known societal types—servants, masters, lovers—most of whom were identified through a codified use of masks. In order to create a musical atmosphere evocative of the eighteenth century zenith of the Commedia dell'arte, Diaghilev recommended that Stravinsky consider orchestrating the music of Italian composer Giovanni Pergolesi (1710–36), an idea Stravinsky initially resisted. After extensive study of the Italian master's music, however, Stravinsky confessed that "I looked, and I fell in love." History eventually revealed that several of the melodies thought to be Pergolesi's actually came from the pen of his contemporaries, but all of Stravinsky's source material is indeed indigenous to the heyday of Commedia dell'arte.

*Pulcinella* received its première in Paris in 1920 with scenery and costumes by Pablo Picasso and choreography by Léonide Massine. Because the musical style of *Pulcinella* is significantly different than his earlier efforts for the Ballet Russe, Stravinsky was somewhat anxious about public reception. The work is representative of Stravinsky's neo-classical style; simple and sparse in its scoring and structure, and radically different from thickly orchestrated scores such as *The Firebird* and *Rite of Spring*. To his great relief, the work was an immediate success and has remained a standard in the repertory ever since. While most of Pergolesi's original melodies, as well as those of his contemporaries, are intact and eminently recognizable, Stravinsky filters the materials through a distinctive harmonic, rhythmic, and structural prism that subtly but completely transforms this music. Stravinsky's methods of transformation, along with his ability to utilize another composer's ideas while maintaining his artistic voice and identity, have served as an inspiration and model for generations of younger composers.