Lieutenant Colonel Jason K. Fettig, Director

UNITED STATES MARINE BAND
Sunday, May 3, 2015 at 2:00 P.M.
Dekelboum Concert Hall
The Clarice Smith Performing Arts Center
University of Maryland
Lieutenant Colonel Jason K. Fettig, conducting

Elements

Igor Stravinsky (1882–1971)
transcribed by R. Mark Rogers

Fireworks, Opus 4 (1908)

Warren Benson (1924–2005)

The Passing Bell (1974)

Jennifer Higdon (b. 1962)
transcribed by the composer

Percussion Concerto (2005)
MGySgt Christopher Rose, soloist

INTERMISSION

Darius Milhaud (1892–1974)

La Création du monde, Opus 81a (1923)

Leonard Bernstein (1918–90)
transcribed by Jay Bocook

Symphonic Suite from *On the Waterfront* (1956)

The 2015 Chamber Music Series will continue Sunday, May 10 at 2:00 P.M. in John Philip Sousa Band Hall at the Marine Barracks Annex in Washington, DC. The program will include the works of Telemann, Bartok, and Ravel. The performance will be streamed live on the Marine Band's website.

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PROGRAM NOTES

Fireworks, Opus 4 (1908)

Igor Stravinsky (1882–1971)
transcribed by R. Mark Rogers

Igor Stravinsky was twenty years old in 1902 when he began studies with the legendary Russian composer and teacher Nicolai Rimsky-Korsakov. Stravinsky possessed clear musical potential from an early age, but his time with Rimsky-Korsakov helped codify a strong direction for his music, and the young composer eagerly absorbed everything he could from the elder master. In the spring of 1908, Stravinsky visited his teacher for what turned out to be the final time, and the two discussed an idea for a new piece that Stravinsky planned to compose as a wedding gift for Rimsky-Korsakov's daughter. Stravinsky completed the score in six weeks that summer and excitedly sent it to his teacher, only to receive a telegram a few days later informing him of Rimsky-Korsakov's death. His beloved teacher never saw the finished work that symbolized a pivotal moment in Stravinsky's career.

Fireworks is a four-minute "fantasy for orchestra" that both pays homage to his Russian nationalist roots nurtured by Rimsky-Korsakov while also deliberately taking leave of that world. It is a remarkable piece of formal transition in Stravinsky's voice that combines the brilliant orchestration and clear melodic focus of his mentor with his own sophisticated palette of rhythmic and harmonic complexity and even a dash of French impressionism, all within its surprising brevity. Interestingly, the reception to the piece was less than enthusiastic, especially from the Russian musical establishment. Alexander Glazunov famously remarked upon hearing the work that it contained "no talent, only dissonance." However, there was another influential artist in the audience for the première that heard something entirely different. The Russian impresario Serge Diagalev was looking for a composer with which to collaborate on a new ballet. He was captivated by the wholly unique sound Stravinsky was able to coax from the orchestra and hearing "Fireworks" was all that was required to convince him to take a chance on the largely untested composer. Their first collaboration was completed just two years later in 1910 with *The Firebird*, followed closely by *Petruschka* in 1911 and *The Rite of Spring* in 1913. This seemingly inconsequential little fantasy led directly to the creation of three of the most significant works in the classical repertoire and catapulted Stravinsky into the pantheon of the most important composers of the twentieth century.

The Passing Bell (1974)

Warren Benson (1924–2005)

American composer Warren Benson served on the composition faculties of Ithaca College in New York, Southern Methodist University in Dallas, and the Eastman School of Music in Rochester, New York. He was the recipient of numerous significant awards during his long career, including four Fulbright grants, a John Simon Guggenheim Composer Fellowship, National Endowment for the Arts composer commissions, and the Diploma de Honor from the Republic of Argentina. Elected to the National Band Association Academy of Wind and Percussion Arts in 1988 and the Percussive Arts Society Hall of Fame in 2003, Benson was also the author and director of the first pilot project of the Ford Foundation's Contemporary Music Project and was a founding member of the World Association for Symphonic Bands and Ensembles.

Benson came to composition in an unusual manner. He began his career as a percussionist and timpanist, earning a position with the Detroit Symphony Orchestra at age twenty-two. He was largely self-taught as a composer, and his works reveal a sophisticated understanding and mastery of the many colors achievable with percussion instruments. Yet his music is often defined less by the rhythmic drive one might expect from a composer with such a background and more by a deeply lyrical and expressive sensibility. His catalog includes more than 150 compositions touching on almost all major genres of music including a large body of vocal pieces. The musical qualities of the voice are readily apparent even in his purely instrumental works, including an extensive collection of music for band and wind ensemble. Many of these pieces have since joined the list of the most significant contributions to the repertoire of the twentieth century, including *The Leaves Are Falling; The Solitary Dancer;* Symphony No. 2, *Lost Songs;* and *The Passing Bell.*

Composed in 1974 on a commission from the Luther College Concert Band, *The Passing Bell* is a memorial to their clarinetist and concertmaster, a Norwegian student named Dennis Rathjen, who died after a brief illness. The work begins dramatically with a solo clarinet boldly sounding a C and blossoms into a stunning soundscape of constantly

shifting sonorities that employ the full array of textures and colors available in the ensemble. The centerpiece of the work is Benson's quoting of two hymns; the first that appears is from 1653 entitled "Jesus, Meine Zuversicht," and is often associated with the Lutheran burial rights. Benson introduces the hymn as though it is seen through a prism, its fractured pieces weaving in and out of the fabric of the surrounding sounds before the second hymn suddenly emerges. "Merthyr Tydvil" by Joseph Parry is a Welsh hymn of faith composed in 1870. From its tentative introduction, Benson brings the stirring melody to a brilliant apotheosis that signals the ultimate triumph of hope over death.

Percussion Concerto (2005)

Jennifer Higdon (b. 1962)
transcribed by the composer

Pulitzer-Prize winning composer Jennifer Higdon had a relatively late start in music. She taught herself to play flute at age fifteen, began formal musical studies at age eighteen, and didn't begin composing until age twenty-one. Nevertheless, she has since achieved unparalleled success as one of the most often-performed composers of her generation and has been hailed by *The Washington Post* as "a savvy, sensitive composer with a keen ear, an innate sense of form and a generous dash of pure esprit." Higdon's list of commissioners and performing organizations is extensive and includes The Philadelphia Orchestra, The Chicago Symphony, The Atlanta Symphony, The Baltimore Symphony, The Boston Symphony Orchestra, The Cleveland Orchestra, The Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra, The London Philharmonic Orchestra, The Luzern Sinfonieorchester, The Hague Philharmonic, The Melbourne Symphony, The New Zealand Symphony, The Pittsburgh Symphony, The Indianapolis Symphony, and The Dallas Symphony, as well as such prominent ensembles such as the Tokyo String Quartet and "The President's Own" United States Marine Band.

A recipient of the 2010 Pulitzer Prize in Music for her Violin Concerto, Higdon has also received awards from the Serge Koussevitzky Foundation, the Guggenheim Foundation, the American Academy of Arts and Letters (two awards), the Pew Fellowship in the Arts, Meet-the-Composer, and the National Endowment for the Arts. She has been a featured composer at festivals including Tanglewood, Vail, Cabrillo, Grand Teton, Norfolk, and Winnipeg and has served as composer-in-residence with the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra, the Green Bay Symphony Orchestra, the Philadelphia Orchestra, and the Fort Worth Symphony. She also currently holds the Milton L. Rock Chair in composition studies at The Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia. She enjoys several hundred performances a year of her works, and her music has been recorded on more than four dozen albums.

Commissioned in 2005 by The Philadelphia Orchestra, the Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra, and the Dallas Symphony Orchestra, the Percussion Concerto won the Grammy in 2010 for Best Contemporary Classical Composition. "The President's Own" United States Marine Band commissioned the composer to create a transcription for wind ensemble in 2008. Higdon offers the following about the work:

> The twentieth century saw the development of the percussion section grow more than any other instrumental section in the orchestra or band world. Both the music and the performers grew in capability as well as visibility and the appearance and growth of the percussion concerto as a genre exploded during the latter half of the century.
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> When I am writing a concerto I think of the nature of the featured solo instrument. In the case of percussion, this means a large battery of instruments, from vibraphone and marimba to non-pitched smaller instruments (brake drum, wood blocks, Peking Opera gong), and to the drums themselves. Not only does a percussionist have to perfect playing all of these instruments, but also he or she must make hundreds of decisions regarding the use of sticks and mallets, as there is an infinite variety of possibilities from which to choose. In addition there is the choreography of the player's movements; where most performers do not have to concern themselves with crossing the stage repeatedly during a performance, a percussion soloist must have every move memorized. No other instrumentalist has such a large number of variables to challenge and master. This Percussion Concerto follows the normal relationship of a dialogue between soloist and band. In this work, however, there is an additional relationship of the soloist interacting extensively with the percussion section.
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> This work begins with the sound of the marimba; I wanted the opening to be exquisitely quiet and serene, with the focus on the soloist. Then the percussion section enters, mimicking the gestures of the soloist. Only after this dialogue is established does the band enter. There is significant interplay between the soloist and the ensemble with a fairly beefy accompaniment, but at various times the music comes back down to the sound of the soloist and the percussion section playing together, without the band's presence. Eventually, the music moves through a slow lyrical section, which requires simultaneous bowing and mallet playing by the soloist, and then a return to the fast section, where a cadenza ensues with both the soloist and the percussion section. A dramatic close to the cadenza leads back to the band's opening material and the eventual conclusion of the work.

Master Gunnery Sergeant Christopher Rose, percussion soloist

Percussionist MGySgt Christopher Rose joined "The President's Own" United States Marine Band in October 1997 and was named assistant principal percussionist in February 2001. He began his musical training at age ten, and upon graduating from Chamblee High School in Chamblee, Georgia, in 1986, he attended Rice University in Houston where he earned both bachelor's and master's degrees in music both in 1991. His percussion instructor was Richard Brown. MGySgt Rose has also studied with John Lawless, formerly of the Knoxville Symphony in Tennessee, and Steve Hemphill of Northern Arizona University in Flagstaff. Prior to joining "The President's Own," he served as an extra with both the Houston Symphony and New York City Opera. Additionally, he performed for five years with Andy Williams at his Moon River Theater in Branson, Missouri.

MGySgt Rose is a frequently featured soloist and has performed Joseph Schwantner's Percussion Concerto on numerous occasions, including for the Marine Band's 2001 performance at the World Association for Symphonic Bands and Ensembles (WASBE) conference in Lucern, Switzerland, and The Midwest Clinic, International Conference for Band and Orchestra, in Chicago in 2004. He was a featured tour soloist in 2007, performing William Childs' Percussion Concerto and has also performed Michael Colgrass' *Déjà vu*. In 2009, he performed Jennifer Higdon's Percussion Concerto at WASBE in Cincinnati.

La Création du monde, Opus 81a (1923)

Darius Milhaud (1892–1974)

Darius Milhaud's name is probably most closely affiliated with *Les Six,* a label given by critic Henri Collet in 1919 to a significant collection of French composers including Milhaud and his contemporaries Francis Poulenc, Arthur Honegger, Louis Durey, George Auric, and Germaine Tailleferre. Collet bestowed this title upon them with the hope that they would become a sort of twentieth century French answer to the Russian "Mighty Five" of Modest Mussorgsky, Alexander Borodin, Nicolai Rimsky-Korsakov, Mily Balakirev, and César Cui who had collectively cultivated a strong nationalistic style in their music as the nineteenth century drew to a close. While the names of *Les Six* were only associated for a short time (and their compositional styles even more briefly, if at all), they began using this publicity to get many new works performed. Among the six, Poulenc and Milhaud are credited today as the most significant contributors to what emerged as the predominant French style of the mid-twentieth century.

In 1919, Milhaud embarked on several international trips that had a tremendous impact on his music, most substantially represented in his remarkable 1923 ballet *La Création du monde*. He first traveled to Brazil, and the native syncopated rhythms he heard there began to open new musical doors for Milhaud. However, it was his travels to the United States in the years that followed that solidified his wanderings into uncharted artistic territory. It was in New York City in 1922 where Milhaud was first exposed to authentic American jazz. He was captivated by the style and visited several jazz clubs in Harlem during his stay. It was also while he was in New York that he heard the Paul Whiteman Orchestra, the same group for whom George Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue* was written. Milhaud was invigorated by the opportunity to meld these fresh musical ideas with the unique compositional style for which he was already known, and a brand new sound was forged in his ballet. Many (justifiably) point to Gershwin's groundbreaking *Rhapsody in Blue* as an early benchmark among experiments in combining the classical and jazz idioms, yet *La Création du monde* preceded it by a year. While Gershwin's opus has had more popular and enduring success, Milhaud clearly beat Gershwin to the punch.

The ballet's original choreography by Jean Borlin seems to be lost to history, however, the scenario by Blaise Cendrars, as well as the sets and costumes of Fernand Leger, have been preserved in both photograph and print. *La Création du monde* was commissioned by wealthy Swedish financier Rolf de Mare and first performed by his troupe, the Ballet Suédois, which were well known at the time for their avant-garde productions. The finished product reflected a French preoccupation with African culture at the time. Milhaud had never been to Africa and perhaps had never even heard traditional African music. The association with the African-American influence on the origins of jazz notwithstanding, Cendrars' scenario was born from traditional African folk-myths with Leger's sets and costumes depicting jungles, wild animals, and dancers wearing unwieldy tribal masks, whereas the roots of Milhaud's music were planted in the jazz clubs of New York.

The story contains five sections which are seamlessly woven together by Milhaud's artful scoring and preceded by a mournful overture featuring the unusual inclusion of an alto saxophone in place of the viola among a quartet of solo strings. The curtain opens to reveal the darkness and chaos before the world began (I). The darkness gives way to reveal a

few gods dancing and chanting around a rotating mass of unknown origin. Trees, animals, insects, and beasts are gradually conjured from the ambiguous orb, and they all join the chanting and dancing (II) until a man and woman appear and perform a joyous and affectionate dance of coupling (III). Witch-doctors interrupt, performing an increasingly frantic ritual (IV), but the couple's union prevails and all cacophony gradually disappears until the man and woman are united in a springtime embrace (V) as the ballet comes to a close.

Symphonic Suite from *On the Waterfront* (1956)

Leonard Bernstein (1918–90)
transcribed by Jay Bocook

The great American conductor and composer Leonard Bernstein wrote music in an astounding array of genres during his prolific professional career. He achieved unparalleled success in blurring the lines between classical and popular styles with works not only for the serious concert stage and the ballet theater, but also for Broadway. In 1954, the thirty-six-year-old composer translated those skills to film when he was chosen for the prestigious assignment of composing the score to Elia Kazan's widely anticipated movie *On the Waterfront*. Starring a young Marlon Brando as a longshoreman battling the rampant racketeering on the New York City docks, Kazan's film poignantly captured the gritty elements of corruption and violence in the city and the deep emotional struggle of Brando's complex character. Bernstein's inventive and moving score was equally compelling, which made it all the more tragic when much of the music he had labored over ended up on the cutting room floor. Although the composer won an Academy Award nomination for best film score of the year, Bernstein was completely soured by the callous process of film score editing and never again composed for movies.

The following year, Bernstein salvaged much of the music that was lost or miscast in the film and created a concert suite. The suite is crafted in six continuous movements and paints a vivid sound portrait of the film's central emotional themes as Bernstein first envisioned them. Because his music was symphonically conceived from the start, one doesn't need to have seen the film to appreciate the music on its own terms. The suite opens with a stark and haunting theme for a solo horn that could easily conjure up images of a melancholy dawn over the Hudson River dockyards. The tranquility is shattered by a brutal "Presto barbaro," punctuated by the relentless interjections of the percussion battery. In the film, this music underscores a scene where an angry mob brutally throws an informer from a tenement rooftop.

Bernstein creates a striking juxtaposition of savagery and tenderness throughout the suite. The love theme that represents the relationship between Brando's character Terry and Edie, portrayed by Eva Marie Saint, is as exquisite as any Bernstein would compose. It is followed by a scherzo-like allegro that leads directly into a reprise of the opening theme and a visceral and climactic finale. An uncredited description included with the composer's first recording of the suite provides a transcendental perspective: "The final impression, after the Suite uncoils to its end, never reaching the same plateau of joy again, is not one of turmoil on the waterfront, though the music did serve that assigned purpose in the movie. What remains is a larger portrait of urban life—its pace, its dangers, its solitude, and its hope."