



Lieutenant Colonel Jason K. Fettig, Director

MARINE CHAMBER ORCHESTRA
Saturday, July 18, 2015 at 7:30 P.M.
Rachel M. Schlesinger Concert Hall and Arts Center
Northern Virginia Community College
Alexandria Campus
First Lieutenant Ryan J. Nowlin, conducting

Gustav Holst (1874–1934)

St. Paul's Suite, Opus 29, No. 2 (1912–13)

Jig
Ostinato
Intermezzo
Finale (The Dargason)

Aaron Copland (1900–90)

Clarinet Concerto (1948)

SSgt Christopher Grant, soloist

Aaron Copland (1900–90)

“Hoe Down” from *Rodeo* (1942)

INTERMISSION

Gerald Finzi (1901–56)

Prelude for String Orchestra (1929)

Ernest Bloch (1880–1959)

Concerto Grosso No. 1 (1924)

Prelude: Allegro energico e pesante
Dirge: Andante moderato
Pastorale and Rustic Dances
Fugue: Allegro

The United States Marine Band performs Wednesdays at 8 P.M. on the lower west terrace of the U.S. Capitol and Thursdays at 8 P.M. at the Sylvan Theater on the grounds of the Washington Monument through August 27, 2015.

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PROGRAM NOTES

St. Paul's Suite, Opus 29, No. 2 (1912–13)

Gustav Holst (1874–1934)

In the early days of his career, long before the success of his suite *The Planets*, British composer Gustav Holst found it impossible to earn a living as a composer. In 1904, after holding several teaching positions, he was appointed musical director at St. Paul's Girls' School in Hammersmith, his biggest teaching post to date and one that he kept until his death. In 1913, the new music wing of St. Paul's was opened and he was given a large, soundproof room for his work. On weekdays he would teach in it, but on Sundays and holidays he spent hours composing there. The first piece he wrote in this room was *St. Paul's Suite* for string orchestra. The four movements of this short and straightforward work provide insight into Holst's development as a composer and reveal several of the influences most important to him. The first and last movements, Jig and Dargason, the latter of which is an arrangement of the final movement of his Second Suite in F for Military Band, illustrate the composer's fascination with British folk music. The second movement, Ostinato, demonstrates his interest in clever musical devices that facilitate the development of material. The third movement, Intermezzo, is undoubtedly the most interesting of this suite, and it illustrates two characteristics of the mature Holst. The first of these is his lifelong interest in the music and religion of the Far East, an influence that is vividly evoked by the solo violin. The second characteristic is his penchant for combining seemingly unrelated and disparate styles of music. In the Intermezzo the composer is still experimenting with this technique, juxtaposing the mystical solo violin with energetic interludes that are evocative of a British barn dance. If the effect isn't entirely convincing in *St. Paul's Suite*, Holst had certainly refined this technique by the time he composed *The Planets*, a work which masterfully combines all of the aforementioned influences.

Clarinet Concerto (1948)

Aaron Copland (1900–90)

Aaron Copland accepted the commission of a clarinet concerto from Benny Goodman in 1947. Known as "The Dean of American Music," Copland has been able to evoke the inner core of what is truly American. His music is characterized by large interval leaps used in a singing manner to develop long and beautiful melodic lines. The sound calls to mind the simple qualities of America's grasslands as well as the freedom and nobility of America's greatest cities. In his clarinet concerto, Copland combines the use of jazz elements with other folk music of the Americas. During a visit to South America, he completed the first movement while in Rio de Janeiro and as expected, the piece incorporates a sort of local flavor as is explained in his own notes:

The Clarinet Concerto is cast in a two-movement form, played without pause and connected by a cadenza for the solo instrument. The first movement is simple in structure, based upon the A-B-A song form. The general character of this movement is lyrical and expressive. The cadenza that follows provides the soloist with considerable opportunity to demonstrate his prowess, at the same time introducing fragments of the melodic material to be heard in the second movement. Some of this material represents an unconscious fusion of elements obviously related to North and South American popular music. (For example, a phrase from a currently popular Brazilian tune, heard by the composer in Rio, became imbedded in the secondary material in F major.) The overall form of the final movement is that of a free rondo with several side issues developed at some length. It ends with a fairly elaborate coda in C major.

Staff Sergeant Christopher Grant, clarinet soloist

Clarinetist Staff Sergeant Christopher Grant joined “The President’s Own” United States Marine Band in July 2006. Staff Sgt. Grant began his musical training on the clarinet at age nine. After graduating in 2002 from James Madison High School in Vienna, Virginia, he earned a bachelor’s degree in music from the University of Michigan (U-M) in Ann Arbor in 2006. His instructors included Kenneth Lee of Vienna, and Fred Ormand and Deborah Chodacki of U-M. With the Marine Band, Staff Sgt. Grant has performed Frank Ticheli’s Concerto for Clarinet, Luigi Bassi’s Fantasy on *Rigoletto*, and Donato Lovreglio’s Fantasy on *Traviata*. In 2012, he performed Vincenzo Bellini’s Gran Duetto Concertato La Sonnambula with Gunnery Sgt. Michelle Urzynicok at the International ClarinetFest in Lincoln, Nebraska.

“Hoe Down” from *Rodeo* (1942)

Aaron Copland (1900–90)

Aaron Copland and choreographer Agnes de Mille were commissioned by the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo to create a ballet about the American West for the 1942–43 ballet season. This would be the composer’s second “cowboy” ballet in five years, the first being *Billy the Kid* (1938). Understandingly apprehensive about tackling a new project on the same subject matter, Copland needed some convincing that de Mille persuasively provided. The result was *Rodeo: The Courting at Burnt Ranch*, which received its debut performance at The Metropolitan Opera House in New York in October 1942. Copland later extracted four movements to form an orchestral suite which has since become a cornerstone of the American symphonic repertoire.

The final movement of this suite, “Hoe Down,” is perhaps Copland’s most recognizable work and was set for string orchestra by the composer. The thematic material comes from the square dance song “Bonyparte.” Characterized by a brisk tempo and jaunty rhythms, the music evokes the feeling of carefree celebration at the end of a long, laborious season. After a false ending, the musicians strike up again for one last go around, and the work concludes with an emphatic unison figure. The music features Copland’s direct style and open harmonies, which have come to define the adventure, optimism and freedom of the American West.

Prelude for String Orchestra (1929)

Gerald Finzi (1901–56)

Born in London at the turn of the twentieth century, Gerald Finzi was the son of a shipbroker. Very early in his life, Finzi experienced a series of tragic and traumatic events. By age eight he had lost his father. Ernest Farrar, with whom he privately studied music, perished in the First World War. Unimaginably, all three of his brothers also died shortly thereafter: one was lost to suicide, the second to pneumonia, and the third killed in action. His sister was the only sibling to survive beyond the war. Undoubtedly, these devastating losses shaped his worldview, his pacifist nature, his introversion, and ultimately his music. As a young adult, he isolated himself in the countryside, experiencing the same vistas that inspired Edward Elgar and Ralph Vaughan Williams.

Finzi was encouraged by conductor Sir Adrian Boult, who had recently conducted the première performance of Gustav Holst’s *The Planets*, to take a course in counterpoint. After following this advice, he eventually settled back in London in 1925. Amid his return to the city of his birth, Finzi found himself in a circle of young musicians, attending concerts and theater performances and meeting both Holst and Vaughan Williams. It was during this time, 1929, that Finzi penned his Prelude for String Orchestra. The piece was intended as the opening music for a triptych for chamber orchestra, “The bud, the blossom, and the berry” which was never completed. The expressive composition was salvaged from Finzi’s abandoned works after his death and published posthumously in 1958.

Concerto Grosso No. 1 (1924)

Ernest Bloch (1880–1959)

Swiss-American composer Ernest Bloch was born in Geneva in 1880 and died in Portland, Oregon, in 1959. He first studied music in his native Switzerland, taking violin lessons from Louis Etienne-Reyer and studying the solfège music education method with the renowned Emile Jacques-Dalcroze. He continued his studies in Brussels, Belgium, taking violin lessons from the virtuoso Eugene Ysaÿe and composition with Francois Rasse. Bloch went on to study in Frankfurt, Germany, and by 1903 found himself in Paris in the midst of the Impressionist movement.

In spite of his considerable music education and talent, Bloch returned to Switzerland in 1904 to begin working as a book-keeper and salesman in his father's business of selling Swiss tourist goods. He kept a hand in music, occasionally composing, conducting, and lecturing, and in 1916 traveled to the United States as conductor for a touring Swiss dance company. Although the tour collapsed almost immediately, Bloch was offered a teaching position at the newly formed Mannes College of Music in New York and sent for his wife and children to join him. Bloch enjoyed tremendous success as a composer and teacher in the United States and was a founding member of the Cleveland Institute of Music in 1920. Although he became a naturalized American citizen in 1924, he returned to his native Switzerland for most of the 1930s. Concerns about growing anti-Semitism and the possibility of losing his American citizenship forced Bloch's return to America in 1940, and he spent the remainder of his teaching career at the University of California at Berkeley. He retired from teaching in 1952 and spent the rest of life in Oregon where he continued to compose.

Bloch's modern version of the concerto grosso, his Concerto Grosso No. 1, began life as a demonstration piece for his students at the Cleveland Institute of Music in 1924. He wanted to prove to his pupils that it was possible to incorporate the principles of George Frideric Handel and Arcangelo Corelli into a modern work. This idea sparked Bloch's imagination and eventually became the first in a series of neoclassical works. While there are aspects of the piece that are clearly inspired by the Baroque concerto grosso, including an opening gesture reminiscent of the opening of Handel's Concerto Grosso in D, Opus 6, No. 5, much of Bloch's creation is clearly rooted in the twentieth century. The "obligato piano" replaces what would normally have been a harpsichord, or cembalo, but functions in a manner very different than a standard continuo. While the prelude of the first movement and the fugue of the last owe a great deal to Baroque inspiration, the second and third movements seem at least equally rooted in romantic and modern traditions. It should be pointed out, however, that this type of idiosyncrasy is not inconsistent with the practices of Handel and Corelli, both of whom reveled in defying expectations.