THE PRESIDENT'S OWN

Lieutenant Colonel Jason K. Fettig, Director

MARINE CHAMBER ORCHESTRA
Saturday, August 15, 2015 at 7:30 P.M.
Rachel M. Schlesinger Concert Hall and Arts Center
Northern Virginia Community College
Alexandria Campus
Lieutenant Colonel Jason K. Fettig, conducting

Russell Peck (1945–2009) — *Signs of Life II* (1983/1986)

Allegro
Arioso
Scherzo

Boris Papandopulo (1906–91) — Concerto for Xylophone and String Orchestra

Allegro con brio
Andante sostenuto
Tempo di valse
Prestissimo

GySgt Kenneth Wolin, soloist

INTERMISSION

Alexander Glazunov (1865–1936) — Theme and Variations in G minor, Opus 97

George Antheil (1900–59) — Serenade for String Orchestra (1948)

Allegro
Andante molto
Vivo

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

Signs of Life II (1983/1986)

Russell Peck (1945–2009)

American composer Russell Peck grew up in Detroit, Michigan, the youngest of three children in a musical family. His father sang in the Detroit Symphony chorus and encouraged young Russell's interest in music. He started on piano in the fifth grade and later added trombone to his musical palette, performing in school bands and orchestras, all the while nurturing an interest in composing his own music. Peck's musical influences while growing up ranged from the great works of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart and Ludwig van Beethoven to the Soul and Motown sounds that dominated the Detroit music scene during the composer's formative years. This combination left an indelible mark on the young musician, and these disparate influences would become a hallmark of his unique compositional style.

Peck graduated with honors from the University of Michigan, earning his bachelor's degree in 1966 and continuing on to receive a masters and doctorate from the institution in 1967 and 1972, respectively. He studied with a veritable who's who of twentieth century American luminaries, including Leslie Bassett, Ross Lee Finney, Gunther Schuller, and George Rochberg. In 1966, he received the prestigious Koussevitzky Prize awarded through his association with the Tanglewood Music Center, and during his career he earned numerous other awards including two Ford Foundation Fellowships and grants from the National Endowment for the Arts. His works have been performed by many of the leading orchestras in America, including an unprecedented commission from a consortium of thirty-nine orchestras in 2000 that led to the creation of his popular timpani concerto *Harmonic Rhythm.* Peck also achieved widespread acclaim for his narrated orchestral demonstration piece, *The Thrill of the Orchestra,* which has been translated into numerous languages, including French, German, Spanish, Hebrew, Portuguese, Japanese, Korean, and Cantonese.

In addition to his active composing, Peck briefly served on the faculties of Northern Illinois University, the Eastman School of Music, and the North Carolina School of the Arts. However, in 1979, Peck's focus shifted toward humanitarian causes that had become increasingly important to him. He abruptly left his successful academic career in order to more fully dedicate himself to addressing and ending world starvation. These pursuits continued in earnest for several years, and he had ceased composing altogether before reemerging on the musical scene in 1983 with a work that would soon prove to be one of his most successful, *Signs of Life.*

Signs of Life is a two-movement work for string orchestra that fully explores Peck's trademark intermingling of musical worlds. A lush and colorful Arioso is followed by a jazz and blues infused Scherzo that explores several extended techniques for the stringed instruments. Three years later, Peck added a new movement with the subtitle "Don't Tread on Me" in front of the original two and called the updated version of the suite *Signs of Life II.*

Shortly after Peck's premature death in 2009, a fellow former student at the University of Michigan, conductor Larry Livingston, wrote about his good friend in a program featuring a performance of *Signs of Life:*

> In an era which demanded perforce that all "serious" composers write music in the "modern" style, which is to say guaranteed to befuddle the uninitiated listener, Russell was the first rebel with a cause. He decided early on that his music would sing, dance, and appeal to the vox populi. He folded melodic and rhythmic devices familiar to everyone into his own inimitable language, rich in affective meaning.…
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> Beyond his extraordinary gifts as a composer, Russell carried a deep and unrelenting care for downtrodden and misbegotten souls who languished undeservedly in tragic circumstances, and devoted a significant portion both of his life and his personal resources to addressing world hunger.… It was following one such quest to heal the world that Russell penned *Signs of Life,* so redolent with his original, accessible, and heart-felt voice.

Concerto for Xylophone and String Orchestra
Boris Papandopulo (1906–91)

Boris Papandopulo was among the most successful and prolific Croatian composers of all time. With more than 440 works to his credit, Papandopulo wrote for virtually every medium during his productive career and helped codify a national musical style for his native country. Among his many works, he completed six operas, fifteen ballets, several film scores, a number of children's pieces, and concertos for solo instruments. Although his compositional voice evolved through several stages during his lifetime, spanning from populist to thoroughly modern, his works were often infused with a palpable humor and also deeply influenced by the folk music elements of Croatia and that of other countries throughout southeastern Europe.

Like Peck, Papandopulo grew up in a musical household. His father was a Greek nobleman and his mother a well-known Croatian opera singer named Maja Strozzi-Pečić. Papandopulo began lessons on the piano early on and subsequently pursued study in composition at the Music Academy in Zagreb. In the years just before the Second World War, Papandopulo found success as a conductor of numerous prominent Croatian orchestras and choruses and eventually became the music director of several opera companies in Rijeka, Sarajevo, Zagreb, and Split. Although he spent much of his career on the podium, his lasting musical influence in Croatia came largely from his work as a composer.

His music shows the influence of several Russian composers, most notably Dmitri Shostakovich, and his works share many qualities with his Russian contemporary, not the least of which is the sense of humor that pervades so much of his music. These qualities are abundant in his colorful xylophone concerto. Given its expressive limitations, few substantial orchestral concerti exist for the xylophone, yet Papandopulo takes full advantage of the instrument's inimitable timbre and considerable technical potential. The vigorous opening movement pits an incessant sixteenth note drive against the interjections of the orchestra and exploits the woody and aggressive punctuations that are often assigned to the instrument within the symphony orchestra. Without the sustaining qualities of other percussion instruments, Papandopulo cleverly crafts a slow movement for the xylophone that superimposes articulated gestures from the soloist over long and resonant lines in the strings. The third movement is a particularly Shostakovichian waltz, with its sarcastic, tongue-in-cheek lilt and dissonances, and the final movement brings the concerto to a virtuosic close with a vivacious romp in 6/8 time.

Gunnery Sergeant Kenneth Wolin, soloist

Percussionist Gunnery Sergeant Kenneth Wolin of Oak Park, Michigan, joined "The President's Own" United States Marine Band in October 1997. Gunnery Sgt. Wolin began his musical training at age eight. After graduating from Oak Park High School in 1985, he attended Oberlin Conservatory in Ohio where he earned a bachelor's degree in percussion performance in 1989. He continued his studies at the University of Michigan (U-M) in Ann Arbor where he earned a master's degree in percussion performance in 1991. His percussion instructors were Michael Rosen of Oberlin Conservatory, Michael Udow of the U-M, and Sam Tundo of the Detroit Symphony. Prior to joining "The President's Own" he performed with the Rhode Island Philharmonic in Providence, Sarasota Opera in Florida, and served as an extra with the Detroit Symphony, Toledo Symphony in Ohio, Springfield Symphony in Massachusetts, and New Hampshire Symphony in Manchester. Additionally, he performed professionally throughout the state of Massachusetts as a marimba soloist.

Theme and Variations in G Minor, Opus 97
Alexander Glazunov (1865–1936)

Alexander Glazunov was born in St. Petersburg as the son of a wealthy publisher. He began playing piano at age nine and started composing at eleven. The prominent Russian composer Mily Balakirev recognized Glazunov's talent and brought his work to the attention of Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov. Rimsky-Korsakov later recalled "Balakirev once brought me the composition of a fourteen- or fifteen-year-old high-school student, Sasha Glazunov. It was an orchestral score written in childish fashion. The boy's talent was indubitably clear." He accepted Glazunov as a student and afterwards famously remarked that "[Glazunov's] musical development progressed not by the day, but literally by the hour."

Glazunov quickly forged his own identity as a composer, and his output in the years that followed was prolific by any measure. He emerged as a successor to Balakirev's nationalism in music, but his compositional style absorbed a number of other qualities from the Russian luminaries around him, from Alexander Borodin's sense of orchestral grandeur to Piotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky's lyricism and Rimsky-Korsakov's command of orchestral color. For a time, he successfully melded these elements of Russian nationalism with the more cosmopolitan influences swirling around him in the latter half of the nineteenth century.

In 1905, Glazunov assumed directorship of the St. Petersburg Conservatory and served in that capacity until 1928. Among his many students was a young and talented composer named Dmitri Shostakovich. Younger composers like Shostakovich and Sergei Prokofiev eventually considered Glazunov's music to be old fashioned and passé, but this new generation of musical luminaries continued to acknowledge Glazunov's substantial reputation and his irreplaceable contribution to Russian music during a period of significant transition.

Much of Glazunov's music has since fallen into obscurity, but some of his works remain in the repertoire of orchestras worldwide, including several of his eight completed symphonies, his ballets *The Seasons* and *Raymonda*, and significant concertos for saxophone and violin, the latter of which was a favorite of legendary virtuoso Jascha Heifetz. In 1895, the same year Glazunov completed his popular Symphony No. 5 in B-flat, he composed a Theme with Variations in g minor for string quintet. More than two decades later, he arranged the work for string orchestra and this version has since found a permanent place in the repertoire. The work is firmly rooted in the traditional Russian style, with its elegant and stately theme followed by a series of six distinct variants that grow organically from the melodic seed without ever overshadowing the essence of the original melody.

Serenade for String Orchestra (1948)
George Antheil (1900–59)

George Antheil holds a special identity among American composers of the first half of the twentieth century. His interests and talents were exceptionally wide-ranging; in addition to his career as a composer, Antheil was also a published author and inventor. He grew up in a blue collar environment in Trenton, New Jersey, where his father owned a shoe store. Antheil never formally graduated from either high school or college, but he started studies on piano at age six and showed tremendous musical promise. As a teenager, he began to regularly travel to Philadelphia to take lessons with Constantine von Sternberg, who was a former pupil of Franz Liszt. Antheil's experiences in and around the city on these trips were as valuable as the education in piano and formal composition he received from von Sternberg, and they began to ignite Antheil's curiosity not only about different types of music, but also about the world beyond. Von Sternberg also introduced Antheil to Mary Louise Curtis Bok, who later founded the famed Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia. Assured that Antheil showed signs of natural musical genius, Bok became a patron of the young composer for many years, offering him a stipend of $150 a month to continue his studies.

In 1919 he pursued lessons with composer Ernest Bloch in New York. Bloch initially found Antheil's compositions to be "empty" and "pretentious," but he eventually took a liking to the young man and was instrumental in helping Antheil finish and refine his First Symphony. Once completed, he managed to convince

famed conductor Leopold Stokowski to première the work. This should have proved a seminal moment for Antheil and one that may have helped solidify his standing in the American musical community. However, he was somewhat of an impulsive and restless soul, and before the première could take place, he decided to leave for Europe to attempt to establish himself there as an avante garde composer and pianist. On May 30, 1922, at the age of twenty-one, he sailed to the Old World.

Antheil's stay in Europe began in Germany and proved challenging from the start. Although he found opportunities to perform, his expenses often came out of his own pocket. In the fall of that year, he had a chance to meet his musical idol, Igor Stravinsky. The elder composer must have been initially impressed with Antheil and convinced him to move to Paris, where the musical scene was exploding with artistic innovation and his particular voice might be more welcome. Antheil arrived in Paris in 1923 and Stravinsky even went so far as to arrange a concert to help launch Antheil's career in the French capital. Rather characteristically, the flighty young composer reportedly failed to show up.

Despite alienating some of his allies, Antheil found a home in Paris and was introduced to and mingled with many notable artists of the day, including Erik Satie, Ezra Pound, James Joyce, Virgil Thomson, and Ernest Hemingway. Pound in particular became an ardent supporter and promoter of Antheil and his work, describing his music as breaking things down to its "musical atom." Antheil's music began to reflect his interest in jazz and especially in all things mechanical. He wrote several works that imitated the workings of machinery and included mechanically-rigged instruments to replicate and represent industrial sounds. His most famous work from this period is his *Ballet Mechanique*, originally conceived to accompany a film of the same name by Fernand Léger and Dudley Murphy. Although this style of composition eventually became one of his signatures in the annals of American music history, his inventive "mechanical" works met with little critical success during his lifetime.

After more than a decade of mixed success in Paris as a self-styled American "bad boy" of music, he moved back to Germany for a time, but when the Nazi Party came to prominence in 1933, it was clear that Antheil's brand of music was no longer welcome. He returned to the United States and settled in New York again for a time at the height of the Great Depression. Then, in an unusual turn of events for such a progressive artist, Antheil moved to Hollywood in 1936 and began scoring music for films. He found considerable success there and worked with several famed directors including Cecil B. DeMille and Nicholas Ray. Despite this newfound commercial acceptance, Antheil maintained a certain level of distain for the industry, describing most film scores as "unmitigated tripe." Antheil continued to compose away from films during his time in Hollywood, and his concert music began to take on some of the more populist qualities of his film scoring. Later in his life and before the heart attack that claimed him in 1959, Antheil found some peace with his newfound artistic identity. He expressly self-described a desire to "to disassociate myself from the passé modern schools of the last half-century, and to create a music for myself and those around me which has no fear of developed melody, real development itself, tonality, or other understandable forms."

The charming Serenade for Strings comes from this period. Composed in 1948 and premièred in Los Angeles on September 11 of that year, the work was written at the same time as Antheil's Fifth and Sixth Symphonies and shares many of the playful, open, and optimistic qualities found in those scores. The easy, syncopated opening movement is cast in a traditional sonata form. Although it has a distinctly French feel at times, Antheil cleverly infuses sly American musical references, including quotes of "The Battle Cry of Freedom." The second movement begins with an undulating rhythm in the uneven meter of 5/4 and revisits melodic fragments from the first movement. After a series of solos and cadenzas for the first violin, the movement returns to the music of its opening. Like the Papandopulo concerto, the place of the third movement is occupied by a waltz that at times invokes the spirit of Shostakovich; but in this case it is melded with the distinct sounds of an American style barn-dance and capped by a frenetic coda that sends the orchestra charging for the door at the end of the evening.