



Lieutenant Colonel Jason K. Fettig, Director

MARINE CHAMBER ORCHESTRA
Sunday, February 7, 2016 at 2:00 P.M.
Rachel M. Schlesinger Concert Hall and Arts Center
Northern Virginia Community College
Alexandria Campus
Major Michelle A. Rakers, conducting

What's in a Nickname?

Joseph Haydn (1732–1809)

Symphony No. 96 in D, *The Miracle*

Adagio; Allegro
Andante
Menuetto: Allegretto
Finale: Vivace assai

Carl Nielsen (1865–1931)

Flute Concerto (1926)

Allegro moderato
Allegretto

GySgt Elisabeth Plunk, soloist

INTERMISSION

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756–91)

Symphony No. 41 in C, K. 551, *Jupiter*

Allegro vivace
Andante cantabile
Menuetto: Allegretto
Molto allegro

The 2016 Chamber Music Series continues Sunday, February 14 at 2:00 P.M. in John Philip Sousa Band Hall at the Marine Barracks Annex in Washington, DC. The concert will feature an all-clarinet program.

The performance will also be streamed live on the Marine Band's website.

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PROGRAM NOTES

Symphony No. 96 in D, *The Miracle*

Joseph Haydn (1732–1809)

Although more than 200 years have passed since Joseph Haydn's death in 1809, few composers have been able to match his far-reaching musical influence and astonishing prolificacy. In total, he penned 108 symphonies, sixty-eight string quartets, forty-seven piano sonatas, twenty-six operas, and numerous cantatas and masses. Haydn's long and productive career spanned the late Baroque through the entire Classical period and more specifically, coincided with the most significant period of development of the classical symphony. Haydn's own bountiful catalogue of symphonies undoubtedly had a principal impact on both the evolution and popularity of the form that continues to dominate the classical repertoire to this day. In fact, his achievements were so significant that history has bestowed upon him the indelible, if unofficial, monikers of the "father of classical music" and the "father of the symphony."

Haydn spent a significant portion of his professional career employed by the wealthy and powerful Hungarian Esterhazy family. As *Kapellmeister* at the Esterhazys' sprawling palace thirty miles outside of Vienna, Haydn was expected to rehearse, conduct, manage, and regularly compose for as many as twenty-five instrumentalists, half a dozen singers, and a choir exclusively employed by the Prince. In turn, Haydn was afforded everything he needed for the task and was considered one of the most prominent figures on the staff, enjoying the services of his own footman and maid. Esterhazy's resident orchestra generally included seven string players, one flute, one bassoon, and pairs of oboes and horns, although additional instrumentalists could be acquired as necessary. Indeed, the instrumentation of the many symphonies Haydn wrote for frequent performances at the Esterhazy palace confirm these numbers, although most of his later symphonies employ an expanded instrumentation that resulted from his work with other orchestras during travels to Paris and London beginning in the mid-1780s. When his third patron Prince Nikolaus died in 1790, Haydn was permanently released from his residency at the palace and allowed to travel even more frequently. Although he no longer lived at the estate, Haydn maintained Vienna as his permanent home and he remained in partial service to the Esterhazy family to his death.

Haydn's most productive residencies away from Vienna were his two extended visits to London between 1791 and 1795. He was invited to England by the *impresario* Johann Peter Salomon and commissioned to write six symphonies. During his first trip, Haydn spent two concert seasons presenting these new symphonies: numbers 95, 96, and 97 in 1791 and numbers 93, 94, and 98 in 1792. His time there was so successful that he was scarcely back in Austria before returning to London in 1794 to give the premières of his final six symphonies. These twelve works, collectively known as the "London" or "Salomon" symphonies, contain some of Haydn's most ambitious and enduring music, representing the culmination of the composer's life work and lasting legacy.

The moniker that has long been assigned to Symphony No. 96 in D was not proposed by the composer, but one that attached itself by strange and random circumstance. Musicologist Edward Downes recounts the story:

When Haydn came to take his place at the keyboard during one of his London concerts, the audience, curious to observe the great man at close quarters, crowded forward towards the orchestra, leaving empty a large number of seats in the middle of the auditorium. While the seats were still empty, a huge chandelier plunged down and smashed, terrifying the whole audience. When those whose lives had perhaps been saved by the accident of their curiosity realized what had happened, the cry went up "Miracle! Miracle!" The odd thing about this incident is that it did not happen at the performance of Symphony No. 96, but in 1794, at the première of Haydn's Symphony No. 102, but the nickname "Miracle" has stuck to No. 96.

Flute Concerto (1926)

Carl Nielsen (1865–1931)

Carl Nielsen stands as an important historical figure to the sonic development of the symphony. He has been likened to Ludwig van Beethoven in that he was making his initial musical statements at a time when one era was dying and another was being born. Beethoven came to Classicism when it was ceding to Romanticism; Nielsen entered the picture as Romanticism was yielding to neo-Classicism, showing a new style or rather inventing it through his progressive tonality.

The most highly regarded Danish composer of the twentieth century, Nielsen was born to a family of modest means, the seventh of twelve children. At fourteen he became a bandsman in the 16th Battalion of the Royal Danish Army playing the trumpet, and after showing the inclination to compose, he was accepted into the Royal Conservatory of Copenhagen with violin as his primary instrument. Although his international acclaim would take some time to establish, he is most known for his six symphonies, three concerti, and the wind quintet that inspired both his Flute and Clarinet Concerti. Nielsen also composed two operas, *Saul and David* (1901) and *Masquerade* (1906), with the overture to the latter continuing to receive regular performances in Europe and across North America. Additionally, he left a lasting mark on Denmark with his efforts to renew the national song tradition. His most lasting contribution to this genre was his *Folkenhøjskolens melodibog* of 1922.

Similar to his Clarinet Concerto, Nielsen's Flute Concerto emerged from his work on the lauded Wind Quintet, Opus 43 (1922). When he had become acquainted with the Copenhagen Wind Quintet, he decided to compose a work that would "present the characteristics of the various instruments." Through that effort he grew familiar with the individual performers and decided to compose a concerto for each, the music representing the character of each individual. Of this undertaking, Nielsen was only able to finish two of the five concerti promised, the Flute Concerto (1926), and the Clarinet Concerto (1928).

The Flute Concerto is in two movements and was written for and dedicated to Holger Gilbert-Jespersen. The solo instrument is set in dialogue with other instruments, in this case the clarinet, the bass trombone, and the timpani, as well as with the full orchestra. It was a compositional technique Nielsen later utilized in the Clarinet Concerto as well. The work was premièred in Paris in 1926 but that performance contained a "temporary ending" that Nielsen created quickly after he became ill. He later revised the ending, and the new version, the one you will hear in this performance, was premièred in Copenhagen in 1927. Nielsen said this of the instrument for which he was writing: "The flute cannot deny its own nature.... Its home is in Arcadia and it prefers pastoral moods. Hence the composer has to obey its gentle nature, unless he wants to be branded a barbarian." This sentiment, while it explains the overall nature of the piece, certainly justifies the *Poco tranquillo* ending, and with the exception of a couple glissandi outbursts from the bass trombone, the orchestra fades to *piano* while the flute majestically sustains a *forte*.

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 and co-principal in 2015. 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, the principal flute of the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra, and Jeanne Baxtresser, the principal flute of the New York Philharmonic. 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 São Paulo, Brazil.

Symphony No. 41 in C, K. 551, *Jupiter* Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756–91)

The last years of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's life had enough drama and mystery to be worthy of a great novel or screenplay. While the colorful portrait of the composer depicted in the famous Peter Shaffer play and 1984 film version of *Amadeus* is saturated with wild conjecture, there is no doubt that the closing chapter of the composer's life was indeed a whirlwind of activity and intrigue. His personal and professional situation was plagued by turmoil and tragedy in his final years, yet these relentlessly damaging episodes were bookmarked by some of the greatest music to flow from his prodigious pen.

In the summer of 1788, Mozart had just completed and premièred his masterful opera *Don Giovanni* to a lukewarm reception in Vienna. As evidenced by several desperate letters Mozart sent to fellow Freemason Michael Puchberg beginning in June of that year, his financial situation had become so dire that he was searching for any meaningful way to relieve the strain of his debts. This was likely the genesis for his grand and final three symphonies, numbered 39, 40 and 41, which were all completed in a span of only a few months during that summer. It appears as though Mozart had hoped to unveil his new symphonies (and secure some much needed income) at a pair of subscription concerts that apparently never took place. In fact, there is no concrete evidence that these symphonies were ever performed in Mozart's presence during the three remaining years of his life. This hypothesis seems nearly inconceivable considering the musical significance of each of these three late works. Although they were composed together, each bears its own distinct personality and reveals Mozart's increasingly progressive musical ideas. It would be impossible to overestimate the impact of Mozart's final three symphonies on the development of this historic musical form. He had confidently cast open the door to brand new pathways in these incredible works and seems to barely have broken a sweat in doing so; one can only imagine where that exploration would have gone next had he lived beyond the age of thirty-five.

Symphony No. 41 is nicknamed *Jupiter*, a name that, like *The Miracle*, was not conferred upon the work by its author. According to musicologist H. C. Robbins Landon, it was the person responsible for Joseph Haydn's two visits to London in the 1790s, Johann Peter Salomon, who through the nickname fittingly linked the work with one of the most powerful gods of ancient Rome. It is a grand work often considered to be Mozart's greatest symphonic achievement, and certainly an icon of the Classical symphonic genre.

According to Italian conductor Claudio Abbado, "The *Jupiter* Symphony is one of Mozart's greatest creations. The finale has all these ideas superimposed, bursting out, one after the other, like fireworks. There's a pile-up of musical lines, a proliferation of colors. The ingenuity is almost unimaginable, limitless."