



MARINE CHAMBER ORCHESTRA
Friday, April 1, 2016 at 7:30 P.M.
The National Presbyterian Church
Washington, D.C.
Major Michelle A. Rakers, conducting

Lieutenant Colonel Jason K. Fetting, Director

Musical Fashion of Great Britain

Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872–1958)
arranged by Ralph Greaves

Fantasia on *Greensleeves* (1934)

Sir William Walton (1902–83)

Concerto for Viola and Orchestra (1929, rev. 1962)

Andante comodo
Vivo, con molto preciso
Allegro moderato

SSgt Sarah Hart, soloist

INTERMISSION

Jean Sibelius (1865–1957)

Valse triste, Opus 44, No. 1 (1903, rev. 1904)

Jean Sibelius (1865–1957)

Symphony No. 7 in C, Opus 105 (1924, rev. 1980)

The U.S. Marine Band will perform Sunday, April 10 at 2:00 P.M. in the Rachel M. Schlesinger Concert Hall and Arts Center at Northern Virginia Community College, Alexandria Campus. The program will include works by Jager, Chaminade, and Dana Wilson.

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PROGRAM NOTES

Fantasia on *Greensleeves* (1934)

Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872–1958)

arranged by Ralph Greaves

Perhaps more than any other English composer, the music of Ralph Vaughan Williams is inextricably connected to the rich folk song tradition of his native country. Vaughan Williams studied composition and organ at the Royal College of Music in London and earned a doctorate from the University of Cambridge in 1901. He struggled to find his identity as a composer, however, until he joined the English Folk Dance and Song Society of London. His discovery of this tremendous treasure trove of inspiration prompted him to travel throughout the English countryside, collecting little known tunes from native singers. He also extensively researched the history of English music, taking particular interest in the Tudor period. He published his first set of folk songs in 1903 and subsequently incorporated many of them into his own compositions. Vaughan Williams' original style helped to refresh and redefine contemporary English music, and when Sir Edward Elgar died in 1934, Vaughan Williams assumed the role of England's leading composer.

The Fantasia on *Greensleeves* contains two folk tunes that date from the sixteenth century. The short work is set in an ABA form with the first theme being the familiar "Greensleeves" melody that since has become affiliated with the Christmas holiday and is also known as "What Child Is This?" The original text that accompanies that famous lilting melody evokes the heartbreak of a lost love: "Your vows you've broken, like my heart, Oh, why did you so enrapture me? Now I remain in a world apart, But my heart remains in captivity." The middle section is a more stern melody, the tune of a traditional English folk song called "Lovely Joan" that also tells the story of a misguided love: "Then he pulled off his ring of gold. My pretty little miss, do this behold...And as he made for the pooks (stacks) of hay, she leaped on his horse and tore away. He called, he called, but it was all in vain, Young Joan she never looked back again." Vaughan Williams used these melodies in several works, to include the incidental music for *The Merry Wives of Windsor* and *Richard II* as well as the opera *Sir John in Love*. It was Ralph Greaves who pulled Vaughan Williams' work from the opera and arranged this setting, Fantasia on *Greensleeves*.

Concerto for Viola and Orchestra (1929, rev. 1962)

Sir William Walton (1902–83)

William Walton was born in Oldham, Lancashire, into a musical family with three other siblings. His father, Charles Alexander Walton, trained at the Royal Manchester College of Music and worked as a voice teacher and church organist. Young William and his older brother sang in their father's choir where they performed some of the large-scale works of George Frideric Handel, Joseph Haydn, and Felix Mendelssohn. Walton eventually attended a prestigious preparatory school for boys, the Christ Church Cathedral School in Oxford, and while there received terrific recognition for his musical talents. But it was clear that he was perhaps less interested in academics. He left Oxford in 1920 without a degree and short on money, but because of the friendships he formed there, Walton went to live with the literary Sitwell siblings. This creative family of writers and poets was a good influence and the relationship quickly cultivated one of his first successful compositions, *Facade* (1923), which was a collaboration with Edith Sitwell that incorporated her poetic verses. Walton went on to write music in many classical genres to include film, opera, and ballet.

It was Sir Thomas Beecham who suggested that Walton, at age twenty-six, compose his Viola Concerto for the famous English violist Lionel Tertis. When it was finished, Walton sent it to Tertis only to be crushed when it was immediately returned without explanation. Feeling rejected, Walton considered reworking the concerto for violin, but fortunately it was suggested that he ask Paul Hindemith to premiere the work, and

Hindemith accepted. Walton conducted the first performance at a Proms concert in 1929 with Hindemith as the soloist. Incidentally, Tertis later regretted that decision and offered, "One work of which I did not give the first performance was Walton's masterly concerto. With shame and contrition I admit that when the composer offered me the first performance I declined it. I was unwell at the time; but what is also true is that I had not learnt to appreciate Walton's style. The innovations in his musical language, which now seem so logical and so truly in the mainstream of music, then struck me as far-fetched."

Staff Sergeant Sarah Hart, viola soloist

Violist Staff Sergeant Sarah Hart joined "The President's Own" United States Marine Chamber Orchestra in January 2009. Staff Sgt. Hart began her musical training at age six. After graduating in 2002 from Rosati-Kain High School in St. Louis, Missouri, she earned a bachelor's degree in biology and minors in music and chemistry in 2006 from Truman State University in Kirksville, Missouri, where she studied with Dr. Sam McClure. In 2008, Staff Sgt. Hart earned a master's degree in viola performance with an additional focus in pedagogy from Indiana University in Bloomington, where she studied with Atar Arad, former member of the Cleveland Quartet. Staff Sgt. Hart earned a doctorate in 2015 from the University of Maryland in College Park where she studied with Dan Foster, principal viola of the National Symphony Orchestra in Washington, D.C. In addition, she has studied with Dr. Catharine Carroll at the Aspen Music Festival in Colorado. Prior to joining "The President's Own," she performed at the Pacific Music Festival in Sapporo, Japan, and as a member of the Columbus Indiana Philharmonic and the Terre Haute Symphony Orchestra in Indiana.

Valse triste, Opus 44, No. 1 (1903, rev. 1904) Symphony No. 7 in C, Opus 105 (1924, rev. 1980) Jean Sibelius (1865–1957)

By 1902, Finnish composer Jean Sibelius was riding the wave of acclaim for his Second Symphony and had achieved unparalleled success and recognition in the international musical community. In his native country he was viewed in a manner akin to a rock star, his name gracing the labels of cigars and postcards. Despite his triumphs, Sibelius was experiencing personal difficulties during this time and finding it increasingly challenging to summon fresh musical inspiration. Various health problems, frequent heavy drinking, and financial turmoil forced him to take stock of his lifestyle and the effect it was having on his work. As he would later recall to his biographer Karl Ekman, "It was necessary for me to get away from Helsinki. My art demanded another environment. In Helsinki, all melody died within me. Besides, I was too sociable to be able to refuse invitations that interfered with my composition. I found it very difficult to say no. I had to get away."

Sibelius looked to the countryside in an effort to escape the temptations of the city and found permanent refuge twenty miles north in a lakeside forest named Järvenpää (Lake's End). In September 1904 the composer and his wife Aino moved into their new log cabin where he lived more than fifty years, until his death at age ninety-one in 1957. Sibelius immediately found his creative energy revitalized amidst the soothing natural surroundings and within a few months wrote to a friend, "Have begun my Third Symphony."

Valse triste (Sad Waltz) was conceived at nearly the same time as this move to the country. It is a short selection that was originally one of six pieces written as incidental music for a play titled *Kuolema* (*Death*) written by his brother-in-law Arvid Järnefelt in 1903. Although the play was unsuccessful, Sibelius' waltz was an instant success. He revised the piece in 1904 and it has since become one of his signature pieces. The following is an existing program note explaining the scene that Valse triste was intended to accompany:

It is night. The son, who has been watching beside the bedside of his sick mother, has fallen asleep from sheer weariness. Gradually, a ruddy light is diffused through the room: there is a sound of distant music. The glow and the music steal nearer until the strains of a waltz melody float distantly to our

ears. The sleeping mother awakens, rises from her bed and, in her long white garment, which takes the semblance of a ball dress, begins to move silently and slowly to and fro. She waves her hands and beckons in time to the music, as though she were summoning a crowd of invisible guests. And now they appear, these strange visionary couples, turning and gliding to an unearthly waltz rhythm. The dying woman mingles with the dancers; she strives to make them look into her eyes, but the shadowy guests one and all avoid her glance. Then she seems to sink exhausted on her bed and the music breaks off. Presently she gathers all her strength and invokes the dance once more, with more energetic gestures than before. Back come the shadowy dancers, gyrating in a wild, mad rhythm. The weird gaiety reaches a climax; there is a knock at the door, which flies wide open. The mother utters a despairing cry, the spectral guests vanish, the music dies away. Death stands on the threshold.

Sibelius composed his Seventh Symphony at about the time Walton was just beginning his career. It is especially significant in that it is one of the first examples of a symphony being through composed. Sibelius had some initial reservations about labeling the work as a symphony since when it was premiered in Stockholm on March 24, 1924, with the composer conducting, the work carried the title *Fantasia sinfonica*. It is quite remarkable just how seamless his transitions flow so gradually between the various sections. The slow Adagio opening arrives at its peak when the solo trombone dominates the texture in a sort of announcement of the transition about to occur, and the trombone continues that role throughout the piece. Incidentally, Sibelius had labeled the trombone theme on several of his sketch pages as “Aino,” implying that the work contains a personal programmatic narrative. The overall structure of the symphony is slow-fast-slow-fast-slow.

Sibelius struggled with depression throughout his life, and as he was composing his seventh and final symphony, his diary entries revealed that things were “unbearably difficult” at times. Sir Simon Rattle offered the following about the Seventh Symphony: “It’s almost like a scream. It’s the most depressed C major in all of musical literature. There’s no other piece that ends in C major where you feel it’s the end of the world. Look at how carefully he orchestrates it so that it doesn’t sound like a victory, but as something you reach on the edge of death. You finally reach C major—and it’s over.” There was an Eighth Symphony but unfortunately the composer burned it along with many other manuscripts. Sibelius’ symphonic cycle was the centerpiece of his body of work and it continues to influence the world’s great composers.