



Colonel Jason K. Fettig, Director

MARINE CHAMBER ORCHESTRA
Saturday, August 26, 2017 at 7:30 P.M.
Rachel M. Schlesinger Concert Hall and Arts Center
Northern Virginia Community College
Alexandria Campus
Major Michelle A. Rakers, conducting

Niels Gade (1817–90)

Novellette No. 2, Opus 58

Andante, allegro ma non troppo
Intermezzo: Allegro moderato
Andante espressivo
Finale: Allegro moderato

Johann Baptist Georg Neruda (1708–80)

Concerto in E-flat for Trumpet and Strings

Allegro
Largo
Vivace

MSgt Michael Mergen, soloist

INTERMISSION

Edvard Grieg (1843–1907)

Suite for Strings, Opus 40, *From Holberg's Time*

Praelude
Sarabande
Gavotte; Musette
Air
Rigaudon

The U.S. Marine Band performs Wednesdays and Thursdays at 8 P.M. on the lower west terrace of the U.S. Capitol through August 31, 2017.

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PROGRAM NOTES

Novellette No. 2, Opus 58

Niels Gade (1817–90)

Considered the most prominent Danish composer of the nineteenth century, Niels Gade was born into a musical family, but he did not begin any formal musical training until age fifteen when he began to play the violin and study music theory and composition. He became a junior member of the Royal Danish Orchestra, the same group that eventually premièred his earliest compositions. However, when they declined to perform his Symphony No. 1 in C minor, Opus 5, he made a significant friend when he reached out to Felix Mendelssohn in Leipzig, Germany, who enthusiastically received the work and offered the première performance. Around that same time, Gade received a Danish government grant that provided him the opportunity to study with Mendelssohn. Mendelssohn quickly acknowledged Gade's talent and hired him on as the assistant conductor with the Gewandhausorchester and also as a teacher at the Leipzig Conservatory. Many of Gade's works were premièred in Leipzig, and conversely, Gade premièred some of Mendelssohn's works, to include the Violin Concerto in E minor. This collegial friendship also extended to Robert Schumann, who was also living in Leipzig at the time. It is easy to understand the influence Mendelssohn had upon Gade's musical language. He even continued in Mendelssohn's footsteps, serving as principal conductor of the Gewandhausorchester upon Mendelssohn's death in 1847. Gade held this position until his return to Denmark in 1848 during the First Schleswig War, the conflict between Prussia and Denmark. He became the director of the Copenhagen Music Society and led that organization to the height of its success, leading concerts for forty years until his death. Perhaps even more noteworthy was his legacy as one of the founding members of Denmark's first conservatory, where he had a tremendous impact on Scandinavian composers including Edvard Grieg and Carl Nielsen, among others.

One might assume that Gade's two works for strings, titled Novelettes, were influenced by the works of Antonín Dvořák and Piotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky, whose string serenades achieved immediate prominence in 1875 and 1880, respectively. However, Gade's first Novellette in F for Strings, Opus 53 was composed in 1874, so it is very likely that it helped to influence in some part the work of his contemporaries. His Novellette No. 2 in E, Opus 58 was composed in 1886 and remains a substantial yet charming addition to the strings-only repertoire. Gade's collection of works includes eight symphonies, a violin concerto, concert overtures, music for organ, piano, and chamber works as well as full-scale cantatas.

Concerto in E-flat for Trumpet and Strings

Johann Baptist Georg Neruda (1708–80)

Czech composer Johann Baptist Georg Neruda was born in Bohemia and worked in Prague. He was an accomplished composer, violinist, and cellist who worked as a member of the theater orchestra in Prague until becoming a member of the court orchestra under Count Rutowski of Dresden from 1750 until his death. He composed ninety-seven works to include eighteen symphonies, fourteen concertos, thirty trios, six violin pieces, and an opera. However, many of his works are now unfortunately lost. Neruda had a gift for melodic invention and was one of the first to realize that a solo brass instrument blooms in a halo of pure string sound. His music is clearly influenced by the Italian School, while his use of dynamics shows the influence of the Mannheim School. Neruda was also active as a teacher and the father of two sons, Ludwig and Anton Friedrich, who became accomplished violinists with the Dresden court orchestra.

The Concerto in E-flat was originally intended for the *corno-da-caccia* (hunting horn), a valveless member of the horn family possessing a slender bore size and coiled in modern fashion. The *corno-da-caccia* differed from the traditional eighteenth century horn in that it possessed a shallow cup-shaped mouthpiece quite similar to that of a trumpet. Such horns are believed to have been in use as early as the late seventeenth century and were often used in the scoring of many composers, including Johann Sebastian Bach and George Frideric Handel.

For the *corno-da-caccia* to sound properly, it was trumpeters or high horn players who were asked to play the instrument. Therefore, the tone attained by a trumpeter on such a trumpet-like instrument must have sounded more similar to that of a modern trumpet performance than to that of the modern French horn. The sound and range required of this work justifies its welcome inclusion into the limited number of early classic works for trumpet.

Master Sergeant Michael Mergen, trumpet soloist

Trumpeter/cornetist Master Sergeant Michael Mergen joined “The President’s Own” United States Marine Band in May 1999. Master Sgt. Mergen began his musical instruction at age nine. Upon graduating from Voorhees High School in Glen Gardner, New Jersey, in 1992, he attended the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor, where he earned a bachelor’s degree in music performance and education in 1996. In 1998, he earned a master’s degree in music performance from the Eastman School of Music in Rochester, New York, and in 2008 he earned a doctorate in trumpet performance from The Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C. His instructors included the late Armando Ghitalla, Charles Daval, and Charles Geyer. Prior to joining “The President’s Own,” Master Sgt. Mergen performed with the Singapore Symphony in the Republic of Singapore, the Harrisburg Symphony in Pennsylvania, and was a fellow at the Tanglewood Music Center in Lenox, Massachusetts. In 2001, he performed Eugène Demaré’s “Cleopatra Polka” as a featured soloist on the Marine Band’s national concert tour.

Suite for Strings, Opus 40, *From Holberg’s Time*

Edvard Grieg (1843–1907)

Of the famous artistic figures to emerge from the town of Bergen, Norway, there can be little doubt that Edvard Grieg looms largest. However, this was not the case in 1884 when the town council was planning the bicentennial celebrations for its most famous personality of the day, Ludvig Holberg, one of Scandinavia’s greatest literary figures. Grieg had by this time achieved considerable success as a composer, having written his Piano Concerto and the incidental music for *Peer Gynt*, and he seemed the obvious choice to render a musical tribute to Holberg. Unfortunately for Grieg, the commissioners had already decided upon a cantata as the ideal form for the tribute, a concept about which Grieg was considerably less than enthusiastic. To make matters worse, the cantata was to be presented at the unveiling of a statue of Holberg, an event that was scheduled to take place outdoors in December. Grieg, who enjoyed neither good health nor an especially optimistic attitude, predicted the following scenario:

I can see it now: snow, hail, storm, and thunder, a large male chorus with open mouths into which the rain pours, and me conducting with a rain coat, winter coat, galoshes, and umbrella! Then, of course, a cold or God knows what other kind of illness! Ah well, that is one way to die for one’s country!

In spite of his reservations, Grieg completed the much-dreaded cantata on schedule and somehow survived the première. After its completion, however, he turned his attention to another Holberg tribute about which he was much more excited. Grieg had already written a piano work in honor of Holberg before he accepted the cantata commission, a work that he now decided to score for string orchestra. *Fra Holbergs tid* [*From Holberg’s Time*] is a suite based upon the Baroque dance forms that would have been popular during the writer’s lifetime. In this lovely and charming work the composer utilizes the highly individual and nationalistic style that has become so associated with his music. The suite is by turns invigorating and lyrical, and through his use of Norwegian folk-like melodies and styles, the composer pays homage not only to Holberg, but also to the culture that produced him.