Colonel Michael J. Colburn, Director

MARINE CHAMBER ORCHESTRA
Sunday, March 2, 2014 at 2:00 P.M.
Rachel M. Schlesinger Concert Hall and Arts Center
Northern Virginia Community College
Alexandria Campus
Major Jason K. Fettig, conducting

Homage to the Godfathers

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770–1827) — Overture to *Egmont*, Opus 84

Franz Joseph Haydn (1732–1809) — Symphony No. 97 in C

- Adagio; Vivace
- Adagio ma non troppo
- Menuetto e trio
- Finale: Presto assai

INTERMISSION

Nino Rota (1911–79) — Divertimento Concertante (1968)

- Allegro
- Marcia
- Aria
- Finale

MSgt Aaron Clay, bass soloist

Sergei Prokofiev (1891–1953) — Symphony No. 1 in D, Opus 25, *Classical*

- Allegro con brio
- Larghetto
- Gavotte: Non troppo allegro
- Molto vivace

The Marine Chamber Music Series will continue Sunday, March 9 at 2:00 P.M. in John Philip Sousa Band Hall at the Marine Barracks Annex in Washington, DC. The program will include works by Mozart, Shostakovich, and Copland.

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PLEASE NOTE: The use of recording devices and flash photography is prohibited during the concert.

PROGRAM NOTES

Overture to *Egmont*, Opus 84

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770–1827)

Ludwig van Beethoven was enamored with the idea of justice and righteousness prevailing over tyranny. The overtones of these themes were often represented in his music and were central to the storyline in his lone opera *Fidelio*. Beethoven had once admired Napoleon Bonaparte and his role in the French Revolution for embodying these very ideals, but when Napoleon declared himself Emperor, Beethoven's view of him immediately turned to disgust and disappointment. Napoleon brought his French invasion to Vienna in 1809 and the resulting months of occupation were destructive for the city and its residents. The French finally departed in October of that year, and the city was eager to begin rebuilding and reclaiming its identity. As part of the recovery, the director of the famed Hoftheater, Josef Härtel, arranged for the production of a pair of dramas that appropriately dealt with the subject of hard won freedom from oppression by a foreign tyrant. These plays were penned by two of the great figures of the German stage; Friedrich Schiller with his *William Tell* and *Egmont* by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe.

Beethoven was approached to compose the incidental music for the *Egmont* production. The composer had long admired Goethe and was eager to apply his craft to the German master's drama, even going so far as to waive his fee for the project. "Goethe's poems have tremendous power over me," Beethoven once declared, adding, "I am tuned up and stimulated to composition by this language, which builds itself into higher orders as if through the work of spirits, and already bears in itself the mysteries of harmonies."

Goethe also knew of and admired Beethoven's work, and the two men eventually met in person in July 1812. Goethe heartily approved of Beethoven's music for *Egmont,* but their descriptions of each other reveal a measure of disappointment at the discovery that their temperaments were significantly mismatched. In a letter to a friend, Goethe wrote: "Beethoven's talent amazed me. However, unfortunately, he is an utterly untamed personality; he is not altogether wrong in holding the world detestable, but surely does not make it more enjoyable for himself or others by his attitude." Beethoven in turn wrote to his publisher: "Goethe delights far too much in the court atmosphere—far more than is becoming in a poet."

Nevertheless, the marriage of Goethe's words and Beethoven's notes was a success. While the various songs, entr'actes, and melodramas in Beethoven's full score have since fallen into relative obscurity, the brilliant overture has remained a cornerstone of the orchestral repertoire. Goethe specifically directed that the music to his play not be a lament, but rather a "Symphony of Victory." The overture serves as a musical summary of the entire action of the drama, from its foreboding opening chords through the transformative, stormy Allegro and celebratory coda. The play is set in Brussels during the sixteenth century, when the Netherlands were occupied by the Spanish. The local leader of the resistance, Count Egmont, is imprisoned and condemned to death, and his grief-stricken wife takes her own life. The night before Egmont's execution, she appears to him in a dream, transformed into the goddess of freedom. She predicts that his death will inspire his countrymen to rebellion, and emboldened by the vision of his beloved, he is able to face his execution with the courage of a true martyr.

Symphony No. 97 in C

Franz Joseph Haydn (1732–1809)

Although more than 200 years have passed since Franz 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 his home in 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 in London to present these new symphonies, performing numbers 95 through 97 during the 1791 season 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 last 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.

Symphony No. 97 in C is the fifth of the "London" symphonies. The slow opening deliberately avoids its home key before launching into a sprightly Vivace in triple time that revels in it and is built entirely on the C major triad. The Adagio that serves as the second movement takes the form of a graceful theme and variations with each turn of the main theme bringing something fresh to the table. The second variation moves to the dark and majestic sounding key of F minor (like the opening of Beethoven's overture) and is followed by a variant where the violins are directed to play near the bridge of their instruments to produce a glassy, transparent effect that would have been very novel at the time. The conventional Minuet follows the slow movement but breaks from tradition in many subtle ways, as was Haydn's habit in his late symphonies. He playfully varies the style and mood of the melodic material before launching into a rustic peasant dance for the trio section. The finale is unmistakably Haydn to its core; a buoyant and cheerful Presto the likes of which serve as a satisfying summation for so many of the "father's" masterful symphonies.

Divertimento Concertante (1968)

Nino Rota (1911–79)

Nino Rota came to widespread recognition in America as the composer responsible for the haunting scores to Francis Ford Coppola's first two installments of *The Godfather* in 1972 and 1974. Although this was the first time many Americans had heard of Rota, the composer was nearing the twilight of an incredibly prolific career in his native Italy as both a film and concert composer. The bulk of his most popular work was done in collaboration with the famous director Federico Fellini. In total, Rota wrote more than 150 film scores.

Rota's education and experience rivaled any composer of the twentieth century. He was considered a child prodigy, entering the Milan conservatory at age twelve and composing his first oratorio that same year. At the urging of the great Italian maestro Arturo Toscanini, Rota studied briefly at the Curtis Institute in Philadelphia, from 1932 to 1934. When he returned to Italy, he quickly garnered critical acclaim as a concert composer. He was admired and befriended by Igor Stravinsky, and the Hungarian composer Béla Bartók considered Rota's first symphony a masterpiece. Unfortunately, after World War II, Rota's work began to draw criticism for its relatively conservative language, and those opinions grew more insistent as he ventured deeper into the world of film scoring. In the face of this criticism, he strongly resisted the fashionable *avante garde* movement, adopting instead a style that bursts with melody and is rooted in musical story telling.

In the 1960s, at the height of his popularity as a film composer, Rota decided to reduce his schedule of writing nearly ten film scores per year. He wished to devote more time to composing opera and music for the concert hall. The tone of Rota's concert music shares many qualities with those in his film scores, but being freed from the restrictive nature of sequencing music to images meant he could fully develop his unique ideas.
The Divertimento Concertante for solo double bass and orchestra was composed in 1969. As the double bass does not enjoy the same breadth of solo repertoire as its counterparts in the string family, Rota takes the opportunity to revel in the many colors and exceptionally wide range available to a virtuoso double bassist.

The Divertimento contains many of the same neo-Classic elements of clear lines and charming lyricism that are particularly pervasive in Rota's scores for Fellini's films. Scored for a standard Classical orchestra, the opening Allegro is cheerful and festively jaunty in an Italianate style. The soloist enjoys the interplay with the orchestra and is given gestures that sail through the entire range of the instrument, from the characteristic husky bass of the lower strings to the warm and resonant upper register. Throughout the concerto, the soloist explores a four plus octave territory not often heard in the bass' usual role within the orchestra. The bright Marcia has the swagger and humor reminiscent of the music of Sergei Prokofiev and pits the solo bass against crisp and defined lines in the winds and brass. The full expressive capabilities of the double bass are explored in the more serious-minded Aria. The soloist and orchestra each take their turns with a beautiful collection of melodies that are brought to a climax before the soloist offers a lingering, nostalgic epilogue. The Finale bursts forth with an athletic pace and a series of tussles between the soloist and the woodwinds. The energy slackens twice for a brief lyrical interlude and a cadenza before launching into a frenetic reprise of the opening volley that brings the concerto to a close with one final exclamation point.

Master Sergeant Aaron Clay, bass soloist

Double bassist MSgt Aaron Clay joined "The President's Own" United States Marine Band in July 1994 and was appointed principal in 2013. He began his musical instruction at age fifteen. After graduating in 1985 from Fairmont Senior High School in Fairmont, West Virginia, he earned a bachelor's degree in music from West Virginia Wesleyan College in Buckhannon in 1990, where he studied with Richard Manspeaker. Prior to joining "The President's Own," MSgt Clay was a double bassist with the U.S. Navy Band. He was a featured soloist with the Marine Band during the band's 2005 national concert tour.

Symphony No. 1 in D, Opus 25, *Classical*

Sergei Prokofiev (1891–1953)

By 1917, twenty-six-year-old Sergei Prokofiev had already established quite a name for himself. Many considered him to be a promising young composer, but an equal number of observers would have replaced the word "promising" with "notorious." Prokofiev was widely regarded as an incorrigible non-conformist who had squandered his valuable conservatory education at St. Petersburg by writing what many considered to be noisy, sarcastic, and abrasive music. The stalwarts of the Russian musical establishment did not understand what Prokofiev was trying to do and anticipated that each new work by the young renegade would simply up the ante on the last. So when Prokofiev introduced his first official symphony, imagine the surprise of the traditionalists when they discovered that the piece was modeled on the work of none other than Haydn. Prokofiev later explained the inspiration for the symphony in his autobiography:

> I spent the summer of 1917 in the country near St. Petersburg all alone, reading Kant and working a great deal. I deliberately left my piano behind, as I wished to try composing without it.... I had been toying with the idea of writing an entire symphony in this manner; I believed that the orchestra would thus sound more natural.... It seemed to me that, had Haydn lived in our own day, he would have retained his own style, while accepting something of the new at the same time. That was the kind of symphony I wanted to write: a symphony in the classical style. When I saw that my idea was beginning to work, I began to call it the *Classical Symphony*—in the first place, because it was simpler, and secondly for the fun of it ... and in the secret hope that I would prove to be right if the symphony really did turn out to be a "classic."

Haydn would indeed have recognized the forms Prokofiev employed in his symphony: two movements in sonata-allegro form with a central slow movement and a ternary-form dance movement. Haydn might also have appreciated the wit and mischief pervasive in most of Prokofiev's music, as well as the playful ribbing he gives to the form of the classical symphony throughout his own creative opus.

The first movement opens with a confident declaration very prevalent in the classical repertoire; a rapid ascending arpeggio known as the Mannheim rocket. At first blush, the music is cast in an effervescent Classical style, but surprises abound at every turn. From sudden shifts to unexpected keys to a disorienting development section where the violins quarrel with the winds over what key and what beat the theme should be presented, Prokofiev subtly infuses his modern sensibilities into every bar. All is righted by the coda, however, and the movement ends as it began with perfect Classical symmetry. The customary slow second movement opens with a delicate, soaring violin melody that on its surface seems to suspend the antics that came just before. But underlying the lyricism is a frequently quirky accompaniment and an ever-present sense that anything could happen at any moment. As modeled by Haydn and Mozart, the third movement of the Viennese Classical symphony is almost always a three-part minuet; the first section repeated again for the last and sandwiched around a contrasting trio. Prokofiev's third movement is also a three-part dance, but he dispenses with the minuet in favor of another specimen from the French Baroque, this one in duple time. Prokofiev's Gavotte moves through its first two sections in rather traditional form, even shifting the music from the strings to the winds for the trio. But just when we think he has stuck to the script, he tweaks the mold by dressing the original melody in different clothes upon its return. The flute unexpectedly takes the repeat away from the rest of the orchestra and the movement gently slinks away. Haydn undoubtedly would have approved of the final rollicking Vivace, although Prokofiev picks up the pace and pushes the required virtuosity of the orchestra to its very limits. The composer's signature satirical tone saturates the music, but it is a good-natured brand of satire, and in the end the symphony leaves the impression of a loving tribute to the work of the luminaries that came before.

Prokofiev's symphony was an instant success and remains one of his best-loved pieces. The work was undeniable proof that the young rebel was indeed capable of embracing the revered traditions and models of the past, but it was also crystal clear that he was going to accept them on his own terms.