



Colonel Jason K. Fettig, Director

MARINE CHAMBER ORCHESTRA
Sunday, March 12, 2023 at 2:00 P.M.
Rachel M. Schlesinger Concert Hall and Arts Center
Northern Virginia Community College
Alexandria Campus
Gunnery Sergeant Karen Johnson, coordinator

Bratsche

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685–1750)

Brandenburg Concerto No. 6 in B-flat, BWV 1051

Jessica Meyer (b. 1974)

Hello (2021)

Max Bruch (1838–1920)
arranged by Yoon Jae Lee

Romanze, Opus 85
GySgt Sarah Hart, viola soloist

INTERMISSION

Sir William Walton (1902–1983)

Sonata for String Orchestra (1971)

Allegro
Presto
Lento
Allegro molto

*Member, U.S. Marine Band

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PROGRAM NOTES

In German, it's *bratsche*. In French, *alto*. In English, it's the viola: the instrument whose mighty role and presence centers this concert. In the sixteenth and seventeenth-centuries, the Italian word "viola" was used for many kinds of instruments. Take for example the *viola da braccio* (arm viola) that was played on the shoulder and is a cousin of like modern-day violin, or the *viola da gamba* (leg viola) that was played between the legs and is more closely related to the fretted lute. By the nineteenth century, "viola" came describe instruments similar to what we are familiar with today. The viola has a slightly larger body than its violin cousin. Its strings are tuned lower than the violin and its music printed in the alto clef. It is often found playing a "middle" role in Western music, weaving in and out of counterpoint, between the melody and bass line. The viola is imminent in this role. Because of this role, it was and remains crucial to expanding the Western harmonic language. Western classical harmony is modeled after Johann Sebastian Bach's practice and Bach loved the viola. Bach's first biographer took particular note of that love reporting that "[Bach] took pleasure in playing the viola. With this instrument he was, as it were, in the centre of harmony, whence he could best hear and enjoy it on both sides."

Brandenburg Concerto No. 6 in B-flat, BWV 1051

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685–1750)

Between 1718 and 1719, Johann Sebastian Bach traveled to Berlin to negotiate for a new harpsichord for his employer Prince Leopold of Cöthen. While he was in Berlin, he played for the Margrave Christian Ludwig of Brandenburg, another potential wealthy employer. During that trip the Margrave asked Bach to send some of his music to him. Eventually Bach sent six concerti that he grouped together as a collection of "*Six concerts avec plusieurs instruments*" (Six Concertos with Several Instruments) in 1721. Historians believe the concerti Bach sent were a collection of scores written over time written for ensembles and musicians of the Cöthen court, rather than music newly prepared for the Margrave. History suggests these works were not received warmly as there is no record of Bach receiving compensation, gratitude, nor performance of these concerti by the Margrave.

Despite their initial reception, the Brandenburg Concerti, as they came to be known, are some of the most played, listened to, and recorded musical compositions. The diversity of instrumentation and use of the orchestra was groundbreaking. The orchestral forces differ between each concerto, from concerti utilizing only strings, some featuring wind players, and some featuring keyboard with strings. Structurally, some of the concerti feature the orchestral ensemble, while others have soloists taking the lead.

The sixth concerto is unique, not only in the context of the six concerti, but in the entire orchestral canon. It is a string feature for two solo violas, one solo cello, two violas da gamba, and continuo ensemble of bass instruments and keyboard. Violins are notoriously missing from the score. This piece is a rare gem because it features only middle and low-voiced instruments, allowing the listener to bask in the singular, mellifluous sonority of this rare combination.

***Hello* (2021)**

Jessica Meyer (b. 1974)

Jessica Meyer is a GRAMMY-nominated composer/performer of rising prominence. She describes her music as “drawing from wide-ranging influences which include Bach, Brahms, Delta blues, Flamenco, Indian Raga, and Appalachian fiddling.” She started her professional career as a violist, has expanded her musical horizons to the world of composition, and has been working and writing for musical ensembles all around the world. The US Marine Band commissioned Meyer for a piece for symphonic band. That piece, *Press On*, was performed as part the Band’s 2022 Northeast tour.

Meyer writes the following about *Hello*:

This piece (“Hello”) is about that warm and fuzzy feeling you have when you are spending time with a person and they shift from just being someone you know to something more meaningful. Nothing is particularly said, but the connection is clearly felt.

As a child I loved playing Pachelbel’s Canon both in orchestra and in Viola Quartet, and this piece is my 21st Century response to that beloved classic.

Romanze, Opus 85

Max Bruch (1838-1920)

arranged by Yoon Jae Lee

The Romanze for solo viola and orchestra is a late Romantic-era gem that was written in 1912, the later years of Max Bruch’s life and career. Bruch’s compositions are well-known to the fans of violin and cello solo repertoire including his Violin Concerto No. 1, *Scottish Fantasy* for solo violin, and *Kol Nidrei* for cello. In the waning years of Bruch’s career, the extended harmonies made fashionable in the Romantic era were becoming passé. Bruch’s lush and evocative compositional style utilized the Romanze and epitomized Romantic style were considered outdated. Romantic textures and tonalities metamorphosed into more angular, mathematical, rhythmic, and dissonant sounds that are trademarks of twentieth-century, Modernist music. This stylistic trend would only accelerate as the world descended into World War I. However, the lyricism, sweetness, and passion of the Romanze, and much of Bruch’s oeuvre, remain the hallmarks of Bruch’s lasting musical legacy.

Gunnery Sergeant Sarah Hart, viola soloist

Violist Gunnery Sergeant Sarah Hart joined “The President’s Own” United States Marine Chamber Orchestra in January 2009. Gunnery Sgt. Hart began her musical training at age six. After graduating in 2002 from Rosati-Kain High School in St. Louis, she earned a bachelor’s degree in biology with minors in music and chemistry in 2006 from Truman State University in Kirksville, Missouri, where she studied with Sam McClure. Gunnery Sgt. Hart earned a master’s degree in viola performance in 2008 with an additional focus in pedagogy from Indiana University in Bloomington, where she studied with Atar Arad, former member of the Cleveland Quartet. She 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. She also studied with Catharine Carroll at the Aspen Music Festival in Colorado. Gunnery

Sgt. Hart was a featured viola soloist for James Syler's *Love Among the Ruins* with the Marine Band in 2019, Bohuslav Martinů's Rhapsody Concerto in 2011 and Sir William Walton's Concerto for Viola and Orchestra with the Marine Chamber Orchestra in 2016. In addition, she serves as coordinator and oversees program and script development for the Marine Band's Music in the Schools and Music in the High Schools educational programs. 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.

Sonata for String Orchestra (1971)

Sir William Walton (1902–1983)

Sir William Walton is a member of an iconic group of composers hailing from the United Kingdom. He is especially well-recognized by violists because of his full-length concerto for viola and orchestra, a landmark in the instrument's repertoire. While this concert does not feature his viola concerto, merely stating Walton's contribution to the viola's canonic literature is "important" is wild understatement.

Walton uniquely synthesizes a multitude of musical styles and that synthesis is on full display in the Sonata for String Orchestra. The composer Bruce Adolphe described Walton's music as giving "the sense that George Gershwin and Harold Arlen meet Arnold Schoenberg and Elgar and Brahms and Strauss and they're all having a big party." That tremendous range of sound and influence is utilized to great effect in this Sonata. Walton adapted his String Quartet in A minor to create the Sonata for String Orchestra at the request of Sir Neville Martinov for the Academy of St. Martin-in-the-Fields. This new work was given its première in March 1972.

Walton added weight and texture to the string quartet to create this work for string orchestra. It is cast in four movements, mirroring the string quartet. The first movement is reworked significantly, while the other three movements cleave more closely to their original versions for string quartet. The enlarged forces of the orchestra, however, allows Walton to create the distinctive texture of the solo string quartet made up of the orchestra's principal players, against the full orchestra. The work is defined by contrasts, through its ardent lyricism, incisive articulations, folk and jazz influences, and exhilarating finale.

"The difference between a violin and a viola is that a viola burns longer."
— Victor Borge