



Colonel Jason K. Fettig, Director

MARINE CHAMBER ORCHESTRA
Saturday, July 24, 2021 at 7:30 P.M.
Rachel M. Schlesinger Concert Hall and Arts Center
Northern Virginia Community College
Alexandria Campus
Colonel Jason K. Fettig, conducting

Pēteris Vasks (b. 1946)

Cello Concerto No. 2, *Presence* (2011–12)

Cadenza: Andante cantabile

Allegro moderato

Adagio

SSgt Caroline Bean Stute, soloist

INTERMISSION

Antonín Dvořák (1841–1904)

Serenade for Strings in E, Opus 22

Moderato

Tempo di valse

Scherzo

Larghetto

Finale: Allegro vivace

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PROGRAM NOTES

Cello Concerto No. 2, *Presence* (2011–12)

Pēteris Vasks (b. 1946)

One of Latvia's most successful contemporary composers, Pēteris Vasks is known for writing music that reflects on the experience of the Latvian people and explores the mysteries of the human condition. Vasks came of age in a world filled with contrasts and challenges. As the son of a Baptist pastor in Soviet-controlled Latvia, his family withstood a tremendous amount of ideological pressure. The composer expressed this hardship in his music, maintaining his conviction that "a composer should be the conscience of his people." The subtle protest and resistance embedded in his works was part of a larger musical revolution in the Baltic region, which reflected the yearning for independence from the restrictive and oppressive Soviet rule.

Vasks' goals of forging a direct emotional connection with listeners and leading them into a more enlightened state of being shine through in his Cello Concerto No. 2. The work was written for the Argentinian cellist Sol Gabetta, whom Vasks met at a chamber music festival in Switzerland. Gabetta had been an admirer of Vasks' compositional style since hearing his solo cello work *Grāmata čellam* at a young age. In the subsequent years, they developed a close friendship, which resulted in Vasks' composing several works especially for Gabetta, as well as her fervent advocacy of his music.

The Cello Concerto No. 2 is scored for soloist with string orchestra and bears the subtitle *Presence*. The composer clarified that his use of the word meant, "I am here. I am not distant. With every breath I am here in this world, with all my ideals and dreams of a better world." He further explained that the work was "dominated by a mood that suggests the soul ascending into the cosmos. I was then inspired to conjure up the idea of the soul returning to earth and starting a new life. And then I had the idea of giving musical expression to this new beginning in life in the form of a lullaby."

While the concerto begins and ends with contemplative, slower movements, the central movement represents the conflict inevitable in life. Vasks described the relentless rhythmic activity of this movement as a place "in which even negative ideas—the feelings of aggression—can be processed.... It is [also] possible to hear the sarcastic and ironical tutti passages...there is a final chord in this second movement that sounds like a scream."

Staff Sergeant Caroline Bean Stute, the featured soloist in this performance, has spent a considerable amount of time studying the unique works of Vasks and described her musical relationship with this concerto in the following words:

This concerto, like much of Vasks' music, is steeped in stark dramatic contrasts. The sublime versus the grotesque, consonance versus dissonance, order versus chaos—as a performer, I'm constantly trying to inhabit and convey these very distinct sound worlds. Vasks' lyrical, melodic writing is on full display in the outer movements (and intermittently in the middle movement). The phrases are extremely long and build slowly, so it is important to hold onto the musical tension. Sometimes it feels as if time is standing still!

As a polar opposite to this “singing” music, a turbulent musical character dominates the second movement. Its rhythmic pull is unrelenting, almost mechanical, and teeters on the edge of losing control. The two giant solo cadenzas in this piece are unusual in their scope and important to the musical narrative. The first one begins almost inaudibly on the cello’s lowest pitch and intensifies little by little, constantly striving upwards. It feels a bit like reaching the peak of a mountain after lots of little ups and downs! The second cadenza also centers on upwards ascent into the highest reaches of the cello. Amid all of the chaos, the music finds brief moments of repose in the form of a short recurring motive—like a cantor singing the familiar refrain. I think that quest for beauty and contemplation against all odds is something Vasks was really after. Or in his own words, “All around me the flesh is spoken about, but I want to shout: Where is the spirit, the soul? ... That is why in my sounds I try to uphold a beam of light.”

Staff Sergeant Caroline Bean Stute, cello soloist

Staff Sergeant Caroline Bean Stute of Lakeland, Florida, joined “The President’s Own” United States Marine Band in August 2014. She was appointed assistant principal in January 2020. Staff Sgt. Stute began her musical training on piano at age six and cello at age fourteen. After graduating in 2002 from Harrison School for the Arts in Lakeland, she attended the Eastman School of Music at the University of Rochester in New York, where she earned a bachelor’s degree in cello performance in 2006. In 2008, she completed a master’s degree in cello performance and literature from Indiana University (IU) in Bloomington. She earned her doctoral degree in 2020 from The Graduate Center at the City University of New York, where she was the recipient of a teaching fellowship. Her notable instructors include Steven Doane of Eastman and Janos Starker of IU.

Prior to joining “The President’s Own,” Staff Sgt. Stute was a member of the New World Symphony in Miami Beach, Florida; the Apollo’s Fire Baroque Orchestra in Cleveland; and the new music ensemble Hotel Elephant in New York. She has performed at the Norfolk Chamber Music Festival in Connecticut; the Aldeburgh Festival in Snape, England; and the Sarasota Music Festival in Florida. Staff Sgt. Stute was a fellow at the Tanglewood Music Center in Lenox, Massachusetts, and has taught at Queens College and the Harlem Opus 118 School, both in New York. Additionally, she volunteered in Central America in 2012 and 2014, as a guest teaching artist for the Honduran National Youth Orchestra, sponsored by the U.S. Embassy in Tegucigalpa.

Serenade for Strings in E, Opus 22

Antonín Dvořák (1841–1904)

Antonín Dvořák was born in the Czech village of Nelahozeves north of Prague. He studied music at the Prague Organ School and, by 1862, was appointed principal violist in the Bohemian Provisional Theater Orchestra. Fellow Czech composer Bedřich Smetana became the chief conductor of that orchestra in 1866, and for several of Dvořák’s most formative years, Smetana had a tremendous influence on the young violist. Dvořák left his performing post in 1871 so he could devote more time to composing. He wrote prolifically and began to find

success almost immediately. He won the Austrian State Stipendium three out of four years in a row, and he soon caught the attention of the renowned Austrian composer Johannes Brahms. Brahms championed Dvořák's works and convinced his own publishing company, Simrock, to take on the young Czech.

Shortly after Simrock agreed to publish Dvořák's works, the publishing house commissioned him to compose his first set of Slavonic Dances, no doubt hoping to capitalize on the success of Brahms' Hungarian Dances. Perhaps partly through this encouragement, Dvořák continued to evoke the spirit of Czech folk music in his works throughout his lifetime. His own interest in the folk music of his homeland eventually reached all the way to the United States, where he strongly encouraged American composers such as George Whitefield Chadwick and Amy Beach to celebrate the cultural identity of their own country in their compositions. Dvořák relocated to the United States himself for a time and served as the director of the National Conservatory of Music in New York City from 1892 to 1895. While there he wrote his best-known work, Symphony No. 9, *From the New World*, which was influenced by American spirituals and Native American music. Dvořák returned to his native country and assumed directorship of the Conservatory in Prague in 1901, a post he held until his death.

Although Dvořák was an incredibly successful symphonist, he maintained a deep commitment to chamber music, and his background as an orchestral violist provided him some distinct advantages when composing for strings. His first two cataloged compositions were for string quartet, and in 1875, he completed his Serenade for Strings in E, Opus 22. The work was composed in less than two weeks, and it is bursting with compelling melodies that were a hallmark of Dvořák's style. The Serenade was premièred in Prague in December 1876 with Adolf Čech leading the combined orchestras of the Czech and German Theater Orchestras. The five-movement work was a substantial addition to the string serenade repertoire at the time of its première. It has since become one of the cornerstones of the serenade genre and stands among Dvořák's most enduring works for string orchestra.