



Colonel Jason K. Fettig, Director

MARINE CHAMBER ORCHESTRA  
Saturday, August 26, 2023 at 7:30 P.M.  
Rachel M. Schlesinger Concert Hall and Arts Center  
Northern Virginia Community College  
Alexandria Campus  
First Lieutenant Darren Y. Lin, conducting

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Jennifer Higdon (b. 1962)

*To The Point* (2003)

Ned Rorem (1923–2022)

String Symphony (1985)

Waltz  
Berceuse  
Scherzo  
Nocturne  
Rondo

## INTERMISSION

Romeo Cascarino (1922–2022)

*Blades of Grass* (1945)

*MSgt Joseph DeLuccio, English horn*

Coleridge-Taylor Perkinson (1932–2004)

Sinfonietta No. 1 for Strings (1976)

Sonata Allegro  
Song Form  
Rondo

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# ***PROGRAM NOTES***

## ***To The Point (2003)***

Jennifer Higdon (b. 1962)

Jennifer Higdon is one of America's most acclaimed and most frequently performed living composers. She is a major figure in contemporary Classical music, receiving the 2010 Pulitzer Prize in Music for her Violin Concerto, a 2010 Grammy for her Percussion Concerto, a 2018 Grammy for her Viola Concerto and a 2020 Grammy for her Harp Concerto. In 2018, Higdon received the Nemmers Prize from Northwestern University which is given to contemporary classical composers of exceptional achievement who have significantly influenced the field of composition. Most recently, the recording of Higdon's Percussion Concerto was inducted into the Library of Congress National Recording Registry. Higdon enjoys several hundred performances a year of her works, and *blue cathedral* is today's most performed contemporary orchestral work, with more than 600 performances worldwide. Her works have been recorded on more than seventy CDs. Higdon's first opera, *Cold Mountain*, won the prestigious International Opera Award for Best World Premiere and the opera recording was nominated for 2 Grammy awards. Her music is published exclusively by Lawdon Press.

*To The Point* (2003) is a work derived from Higdon's fourth string quartet, *Impressions*. That work was commissioned to be a compositional response to the Debussy and Ravel string quartets. This particular movement is a response to their second movements, which both imitate the Gamelan heard by the composers at the 1889 World Exposition. It uses extensive pizzicato and other string colorings (as a reflection of the Gamelan ensemble's colorful percussion instruments). Each instrument has its own theme (as would a Gamelan instrumentalist) and there is no development of those themes (following Debussy and Ravel's lead). In addition, the word "point" in the title refers to the pointillistic technique in Impressionist painting (from the composers' time period).

*-Jennifer Higdon*

## **String Symphony (1985)**

Ned Rorem (1923–2022)

American composer and author Ned Rorem grew up in Chicago where he studied piano and music theory as a child. He developed an early interest in twentieth-century composers such as Igor Stravinsky, Maurice Ravel, and Claude Debussy, and discovered jazz vocalist Billie Holiday, whose work made a lasting impression on him. He began formal composition studies in 1940 at Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois and moved onto the Curtis Institute of Music, Philadelphia in 1942. However, Rorem was not fond of the rigid instruction there and opted to move to New York, where he became a secretary and copyist for Virgil Thomson, from whom he learned about orchestration and prosody. After eventually completing his formal training at The Julliard School in 1949, Rorem went to Paris, where he studied at the École Normale de Musique with Arthur Honegger, and gained acceptance into the literary and musical circle of Jean Cocteau, Georges Auric, and Francis Poulenc. He returned to New York in 1958

due to the increased attention his compositions received in the United States and later taught at the Curtis Institute, the school that he had rejected in his youth.

Rorem's nearly four hundred songs for solo voice and either piano or chamber ensemble constitute his most notable body of work, however, he was also a prolific composer of instrumental music. It was an orchestral suite, *Air Music* (1974), that won him the Pulitzer Prize in 1976. Rorem's String Symphony (1985) was a departure for him inasmuch as it was not programmatic and did not draw direct inspiration from poetry or literature. He writes the following about this piece:

The composition of String Symphony was begun on May 26, 1985, in Nantucket, and completed there just eight weeks later. The product of this shortish parturition (shortish, considering that other large projects involved me at the same time) is not bedecked with extramusical teases. I have so often been chided for the literary or visual names of my non-vocal compositions (Remembering Tommy, Green Music, Sunday Morning, and so on) that I decided in this case to fall back on just the lean term "symphony," even as I composed for just a clean choir of bowed instruments rather than for full orchestra.

Like most symphonies of the past half-century, the piece is called that *faute de mieux*; the term has become so all-encompassing as to be meaningless. By textbook standards this piece is probably less faithful to classical definitions than are my previous three symphonies (each for big orchestra). Indeed, it could as easily be named Suite, as hinted by the Chopin-esque titles of its five sections: Waltz, Berceuse, Scherzo, Nocturne, Rondo.

I'm seldom interested in what composers say technically about their finished work, and this particular work is so formally clear as to need no verbal exegesis. For you who like to learn such things, however, I'll allow that the various movements share their tunes, and that those tunes seem mostly shaped (I myself realized this *ex post facto*) from minor thirds.

***Blades of Grass* (1945)**  
Romeo Cascarino (1922–2022)

Romeo Cascarino was born in the Italian American community of South Philadelphia and began composing and playing piano by age nine. He was largely self-taught until age seventeen when his talents were noticed by American composer Paul Nordoff. Nordoff introduced him to the poet e.e. cummings and helped him obtain a scholarship to attend the Philadelphia Conservatory of Music. Around 1941, his father sent some of his compositions to Aaron Copland. Cascarino was then invited to attend Tanglewood, the summer home of the Boston Symphony Orchestra, located in Lenox, Massachusetts. During World War II, Cascarino joined the Army as a musician and honed his orchestration and arranging skills while directing big bands and orchestras. He would later go on to receive two Guggenheim Fellowships in composition: the first in 1948 for a body of work completed before he was twenty, and the second in 1949 for his first orchestral work *Prospice*, inspired by the Robert Browning poem. He became composition department chair in 1950 at the Philadelphia-based Combs College of Music, whose notable alumni include composer Vincent Persichetti, pianist Leopold Godowsky, and saxophonist John Coltrane. He received an honorary doctorate from Combs and loyally served the institution until its doors closed in 1990.

Cascarino was interested in literature in addition to music, and he spent countless hours as a young man studying poetry and prose at the Free Library of Philadelphia. These literary influences often manifested in his orchestral works, as is the case with *Blades of Grass*.

Completed just after World War II in 1945, the work is directly inspired by Carl Sandburg's poem "Grass," a meditation about men dying in battle throughout history. Cascarino would often request that the poem be recited before performances.

Grass

By Carl Sandburg

Pile the bodies high at Austerlitz and Waterloo.  
Shovel them under and let me work—  
    I am the grass; I cover all.

And pile them high at Gettysburg  
And pile them high at Ypres and Verdun.  
Shovel them under and let me work.  
Two years, ten years, and passengers ask the conductor:  
    What place is this?  
    Where are we now?  
  
    I am the grass.  
    Let me work.

### **Master Sergeant Joseph DeLuccio, English horn soloist**

Oboist and English horn player Master Sergeant Joseph DeLuccio joined "The President's Own" United States Marine Band in January 2005. Master Sgt. DeLuccio began his musical training on piano at age seven and oboe at age thirteen. Upon graduation in 1995 from Vernon Township High School, he attended the Baldwin Wallace Conservatory of Music in Berea, Ohio, where he earned a bachelor's degree in oboe performance in 1999. Master Sgt. DeLuccio earned a master's degree in oboe performance from DePaul University in Chicago in 2001. He has pursued doctoral studies at the University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music, where he studied with Mark Ostoich. His instructors included Elizabeth Camus of the Cleveland Orchestra; Michael Henoeh, assistant principal oboe of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra; John de Lancie of the Aspen Music Festival in Colorado; and Jan Eberle of the Chautauqua Music Institute in Chautauqua, N.Y.

Prior to joining "The President's Own," Master Sgt. DeLuccio performed with the Civic Orchestra of Chicago, the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, Concertante di Chicago, the Illinois Symphony Orchestra, the Kentucky Symphony Orchestra in Highland Heights, the Elgin Symphony Orchestra in Illinois, and The Louisville Orchestra in Kentucky. He also attended music festivals in Sarasota, Florida; Aspen, Colorado; and Chautauqua, New York; as well as the American Institute of Musical Studies in Graz, Austria. Master Sgt. DeLuccio has also participated in the Alabama Oboe Day at the University of Alabama-Tuscaloosa and the Oboe Day at Mesa State College in Grand Junction, Colorado, and has performed in an alumni recital at Baldwin Wallace. In addition, he has given master classes and clinics at schools and universities across the country during the national concert tour.

**Sinfonietta No. 1 for Strings (1976)**  
Coleridge-Taylor Perkinson (1932–2004)

Coleridge-Taylor Perkinson was raised in New York City in a musical household. His mother, who was an active pianist, organist, and theater director, named him after the Afro-British composer Samuel Coleridge-Taylor. Perkinson attended New York's High School of Music and Art. He displayed an early interest in composition and won the school's Choral Competition for his work *And Behold*. Upon graduation in 1949, he also won the LaGuardia Prize for musical excellence. He studied composition with Charles Mills and Vittorio Giannini, and conducting with Jonel Perlea, earning a bachelor of music in 1953 and a master of music the following year from the Manhattan School of Music. He became interested in jazz and popular music alongside talented classmates such as Herbie Mann, Donald Byrd, and Max Roach (he would later serve as pianist in Roach's quartet for one year). In 1965, Perkinson began what would become a lifetime of advocacy for Black American music when he co-founded the Symphony of the New World, the first racially integrated orchestra in the United States. Part of the group's mission statement was to create job opportunities for non-white classical musicians who had not yet been accepted in the nation's symphony orchestras. He served as associate conductor for the group from 1965 to 1970 and as director for the 1972-73 season. From 1998 until his death, Perkinson served as the coordinator of performance activities at the Center for Black Music Research, located in Chicago's Columbia College.

*Sinfonietta No. 1 for Strings* was completed in 1954 when Perkinson was only twenty-two years old; and as is the case with the early output of many prodigious young composers, the work displays a wide range of influences. The first movement, *Sonata Allegro*, takes inspiration from the Classical and Romantic form of the same name. Perkinson presents a distinctly modern take, with pointed dissonances, rhythmic hemiola, and the use of mixed-meter time signatures that are often obscured by rhythmically displaced melodic and contrapuntal figures. The large second movement, *Song Form*, is romantic and expressive, but with an elegiac stoicism not unlike Samuel Barber's famous *Adagio for Strings*, which might have been a guiding light for the young composer. The opening melodic development is followed by a plaintive middle section, which quiets to a whisper before a truncated recapitulation of the opening melody, and the movement ends with a delicate *pizzicato* in the contrabasses. The energetic final movement, *Rondo*, features virtuosic counterpoint that challenges the listener with rhythmic displacement and metric ambiguity. True to its title, the movement moves between a principal theme and various contrasting episodes, including a beautifully lyrical middle section.