



Colonel Jason K. Fettig, Director

CHAMBER MUSIC SERIES
Sunday, October 24, 2021 at 2:00 P.M.
John Philip Sousa Band Hall
Marine Barracks Annex
Washington, DC

Max Bruch (1838–1920)

String Octet in B-flat, Opus posth.

Allegro moderato
Adagio
Allegro molto

*MSgt Janet Bailey, GySgt Chaerim Smith,
GySgt Sheng-Tsung Wang, and SSgt Ryo Usami, violin
MGySgt Christopher Shieh and GySgt Tam Tran, viola
SSgt Clayton Vaughn, cello
MGySgt Glenn Dewey, double bass*

Fanny Mendelssohn Hensel (1805–47)

String Quartet in E-flat

Adagio ma non troppo
Allegretto
Romanze
Allegro molto vivace

*GySgt Karen Johnson and SSgt Ryo Usami, violin
GySgt Sarah Hart, viola
SSgt Caroline Bean Stute, cello*

INTERMISSION

Clara Schumann (1819–96)

Three Romances for Violin and Piano, Opus 22

Andante molto
Allegretto
Leidenschaftlich schnell

*SSgt Ryo Usami, violin
SSgt Christopher Schmitt, piano*

Felix Mendelssohn (1809–47)

Sextet in D, Opus 110, MWV Q 16

Allegro vivace
Adagio
Minuetto
Allegro vivace; Allegro con fuoco

*SSgt Ryo Usami, violin
GySgt Tam Tran and GySgt Sarah Hart, viola
SSgt Clayton Vaughn, cello
MGySgt Glenn Dewey, double bass
SSgt Christopher Schmitt, piano*

The Fall Chamber Music Series will conclude Sunday, Oct. 31 at 2:00 P.M. with an in-person and live streamed performance from John Philip Sousa Band Hall in Washington, DC. The program will include works by R. Strauss, Schumann, and Mussorgsky.

www.marineband.marines.mil | (202) 433-5809 | www.facebook.com/marineband | www.twitter.com/marineband | www.instagram.com/usmarineband

PLEASE NOTE: The use of recording devices and flash photography is prohibited during the concert. In addition to works of the U.S. Government (as defined by 17 U.S.C. § 101 et seq.), this performance may also contain individuals' names and likenesses, trademarks, or other intellectual property, matter, or materials that are either covered by privacy, publicity, copyright, or other intellectual property rights licensed to the U.S. Government and owned by third parties, or are assigned to or otherwise owned by the U.S. Government. You should not assume that anything in this performance is necessarily in the Public Domain.

PROGRAM NOTES

String Octet in B-flat, Opus posth.

Max Bruch (1838–1920)

Born in Cologne, Germany, Max Bruch lived during some of the most transformative years in music history. Piotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky, Antonín Dvořák, Edvard Grieg, Nicolai Rimsky-Korsakov, and Gustav Mahler were born and died during Bruch's lifetime. Felix Mendelssohn, Robert Schumann, Frédéric Chopin, Franz Liszt, Anton Bruckner, and Johannes Brahms all lived during Bruch's time as well. Additionally, Bruch had to face changes in compositional styles throughout his career; Richard Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde* broke the boundaries of tonality as it was known in 1865, and Arnold Schoenberg's String Quartet No. 2 introduced the beginnings of twelve-tone music in 1908. Bruch had to compete against the biggest names in Western music history throughout his entire life and, unfortunately, often was overshadowed by these titans. Despite this, he composed about 200 works, including the famed Violin Concerto No. 1 in G minor, Scottish Fantasy, and *Kol Nidrei*.

Bruch's String Octet in B-flat was not the first such piece to emerge from Romantic-era Germany. Perhaps the most famous work in the genre was Mendelssohn's String Octet in E-flat, written in 1825, and the older composer's influence is clear in this later octet. The overall structure and virtuosity are similar between the two works, but perhaps to make a distinction from Mendelssohn's composition, Bruch replaced the second cellist with a double bassist and wrote one movement fewer. Interestingly, while Mendelssohn's octet was written early in his compositional career, at age sixteen, Bruch completed his piece at age eighty-two, and it was his last composition.

The String Octet in B-flat was finished only seven months prior to Bruch's death. This was a difficult time for him because his son had died in 1913, his wife Clara had passed away in 1919, and Germany had just lost World War I. The musical vogue of the time was serialist music of the Second Viennese School, but instead of following that trend, Bruch composed and glorified the late Romantic style that he knew best. After his death, the manuscript of the octet passed around for some time, so it was not premiered until 1937. Even following the premiere, the music was overlooked, and the manuscript disappeared until 1986, when it resurfaced at an auction. The first edition was not published until 1996.

As his final work, the octet almost served as Bruch's musical will and testament. The first movement, Allegro moderato, demonstrates the composer's skill in bringing out the vocal quality of the string instruments and their tonal colors. The introduction is slow, with the low instruments building a chord, note by note, to create a rich texture that then evolves into an energetic, grand statement. The second movement, Adagio, is a juxtaposition of a painful, singing melody in the dark key of E-flat minor and an optimistic march-like theme. Some speculate this movement may have been written in memory of Bruch's son and wife. The final movement, Allegro molto, is triumphant in character, a fitting end to Bruch's long lived, challenging career.

String Quartet in E-flat

Fanny Mendelssohn Hensel (1805–47)

Fanny Mendelssohn Hensel was born in Hamburg, Germany, to an upper-class family. The oldest of four children and sister to the better known composer Felix Mendelssohn, Hensel started taking piano lessons in 1811 and composition lessons in 1819, alongside Felix. She showed prodigious talent from an early age, but her father forbade her from pursuing a musical career because women from wealthy families were expected to run the household. In a letter, her father wrote to Hensel saying, “music will perhaps become [Felix’s] profession, while for you it can and must be only an ornament.” Thus, it was not until 1830 that she was recognized as a composer, and not until 1838 that she made her public debut as a pianist, performing her brother’s Piano Concerto No. 1. Hensel appeared only twice more after that to the public as a pianist. In private, she continued to perform regularly at the “Mendelssohn Salon,” a Sunday gathering held at the Mendelssohn household with professional musicians and intellectuals, where she presented works by herself, her brother, other contemporary composers, and past masters.

The siblings had a very close relationship and assisted each other in their musical interests. In 1822, Hensel wrote, “I have always been [Felix’s] musical adviser, and he never commits anything to paper without showing it to me first for my examination.” Though Felix did admire Hensel’s talents as a composer, he was against her publishing using her own name, most likely because of the male-dominated world in which they lived. However, he did publish some of Hensel’s songs under his own name. A year before her death, with support from her husband and without a consultation with Felix, Hensel decided to publish her first work under her own name. After publication, Felix gave her his “professional blessing on becoming a member of the craft.” While she only published six works during her lifetime, today she is credited with composing more than 450 pieces of music, including 250 songs, 125 piano pieces, an orchestral overture, and four chamber works.

Hensel’s String Quartet in E-flat was composed in 1834, but it was not published until after her death. The work was based loosely on an unfinished piano sonata from 1829, and it is one of the first surviving string quartets written by a female composer. The quartet is said to have been performed just once during her lifetime, at the Mendelssohn Salon. Like most of her works, she discussed the composition with her brother. In a letter from 1835, Felix criticized the unorthodox form and modulations in the piece, but Hensel responded by saying it was heavily influenced by the style of writing from Ludwig van Beethoven’s late period. The first movement, *Adagio ma non troppo*, avoids the standard sonata-form and instead resembles a fantasia. The second movement is in the relative minor key of C minor and is written in scherzo form. Instead of a trio, however, it uses a fugue that modulates into F-sharp minor, the most tonally distant key from the home key. (Of note, the use of these tonal centers and fugal structures is very Beethovenian.) The *Romanze* contains a lovely, song-like theme, but it also dabbles in drama with the intensity of German Romanticism. The finale is the most conventional in form, a rondo in which the subject returns regularly, but it is written in the unusual meter of 12/16. Each statement of the rondo theme is slightly different, and the movement builds to an exuberant, exciting conclusion. Unlike Felix, Hensel never studied a string instrument, so she admitted to her brother in a letter, “I lack the ability to sustain ideas properly and give them the needed consistency, therefore songs suit me best, in which, if need be, merely a pretty idea without much potential for development can suffice.” However, she never altered the piece after receiving Felix’s criticism, and as a result, this quartet remains an honest expression of Hensel’s musical voice.

Three Romances for Violin and Piano, Opus 22

Clara Schumann (1819–96)

Clara Schumann was a piano prodigy who also had a talent for composing. However, because of the widespread belief that women were not born to write music for public consumption, she had reservations about composing professionally. Schumann was born in Leipzig and was taught to play the piano and to compose by her father. Most parents saw musical training for young girls only as an asset to marriage, but her controlling father saw it also as an opportunity for financial gain. Schumann quickly became successful, making her musical debut at age nine and performing her own piano concerto at age sixteen, with Felix Mendelssohn on the podium. She was one of the first performers to play from memory, which was not a common practice during that time. Unlike Fanny Mendelssohn Hensel, Schumann was able to pursue a musical career because she was not from a high-class family, and as such, the societal expectation on becoming a housewife was not the same as for Hensel.

Schumann wrote in 1839, “I once believed that I had creative talent, but I have given up this idea; women are not born to compose—nobody has been able to do so. Am I intended to be the one? It would be arrogant to believe that. That was something with which only my father tempted me in former days. But I soon gave up believing this.” She did not give up entirely on composing, however, but her marriage to Robert Schumann in 1840 gave her fewer opportunities to write music. They had eight children together, and the responsibilities of being a wife during that time made many demands of Schumann’s time. Robert was happy to have a competent musical assistant by his side, but he considered her above all his wife and the mother of his children. He occasionally encouraged her to write pieces but generally claimed, “It is impossible to have children and a constantly creative husband and to compose at the same time.”

After Robert’s confinement to a mental asylum in 1854 and subsequent death in 1856, Schumann had to support her children as a single mother, so she stopped composing entirely and made ends meet by taking on an intense performing career, concertizing until 1891. Additionally, she devoted herself to promoting her late husband’s works in a society where the new compositional style championed by Franz Liszt and Richard Wagner was becoming increasingly popular.

Schumann composed her Three Romances for Violin and Piano in 1853, specifically for her own performances on tour with famed violinist Joseph Joachim. “Romance” in nineteenth-century Germany often meant a simple, short piece for piano or solo instrument. This piece was one of two chamber pieces Schumann composed, and it consists of lyrical character pieces, similar in style to those of her husband. The first romance begins quietly with an expressive, flowing tune and later moves to an energetic section, underpinned by arpeggios in the piano. Schumann cleverly quoted her husband’s Violin Sonata No.1 at the end of the movement. A single chord in the piano begins the second romance. This movement somewhat represents all three romances: a lyrical main theme is followed by an energetic, extroverted section with arpeggios and then reprises the original theme, with the piano assuming a larger role. This second romance concludes with a single chord, similar to the opening, but this time the notes are *pizzicato* in the violin. The final romance is the longest of the three and is a conversation between the optimistic, enchanting violin melody and bubbling piano accompaniment with its wave-like arpeggios.

Schumann performed this piece several times on tour with Joachim and even performed it for King George V of Hanover, who was “completely ecstatic” upon hearing it. However, because it was written by a female composer, the music periodicals at the time did not pay any attention to the work.

Sextet in D, Opus 110, MWV Q 16

Felix Mendelssohn (1809–47)

Felix Mendelssohn was born four years after his sister Fanny in Hamburg, Germany. He, too, showed remarkable musical talent as a youth, but unlike his sister, he had the advantage of being able to pursue music as a career without public judgement. Just as Fanny was able to present her works at the weekly Mendelssohn Salon, he also had the opportunity to experiment with his creative ideas every week in his own home. In those days, playing wind instruments was considered less socially desirable, so Mendelssohn's early instrumental works were centered around strings and piano.

The Sextet in D is unconventional in many ways. First, it was one of Mendelssohn's earliest compositions (written even before the famed Octet, which he wrote one year later), and it showcased his advanced compositional skill and virtuosity on the piano. It bears a relatively late opus number because it was not published until after the composer's death, perhaps because it was written so early in his life. Second, the manuscript contained very few changes, which for Mendelssohn was rare; he was notoriously self-critical and constantly revised his works. Finally, the instrumentation was unique. Rather than simply expanding the traditional chamber ensemble by adding a piano, the composition calls for an additional viola and a double bass to reinforce the lower register, allowing the piano to sparkle in the upper register. This sextet is structured almost as a chamber piano concerto, due to the virtuosity of the piano part, while the strings often assume more of an accompaniment role. The first public performance was in London in 1868, a few weeks before its publication, with Joseph Joachim on the violin.

The first movement, *Allegro vivace*, is in the Classical sonata form and highlights the piano as the main voice. The slow second movement is an intimate conversation between the piano and strings, in which the upper strings play muted throughout, and the only dynamic markings are *piano* and *pianissimo*. The third movement Minuetto is unconventionally written in 6/8 meter instead of the typical 3/4 meter and is marked "Agitato." It is followed by a trio that is more conventional but utilizes chromatic scales extensively. The finale serves as an exciting conclusion, beginning with fast scales in the tonic key of D major, then exploring neighboring tonal centers, before reaching the climax by returning to the minor Agitato material from the previous movement. The music finally brings back the principal theme at a faster tempo to conclude the work.