



Colonel Jason K. Fettig, Director

CHAMBER MUSIC SERIES
Sunday, October 29, 2023 at 2:00 P.M.
Christ Church
Washington, DC
GySgt Tessa Gross, coordinator

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685–1750)
arranged by Frederick Mills

Tocata and Fugue in D minor

SSgt Chris Larios and GySgt Robert Bonner, trumpet
GySgt Timothy Huizenga, horn
SSgt Russell Sharp, trombone
GySgt Simon Wildman, tuba

Juri Seo (b. 1981)

Shui (2017)

SSgt Alexander Garde, MSgt Michael Metzger,
and MSgt Gerald Novak, percussion

GySgt Parker Gaims*

Antiphonies for Clarinet Quartets (2016)

MGySgt Vicki Gotcher and MGySgt Michelle Urzynecok, E-flat clarinet
MSgt William Bernier, GySgt Zachary Gauvain,
GySgt Joseph LeBlanc, and GySgt Meaghan Kawaller, B-flat clarinet
MSgt Harry Ong and SSgt Alexander Bullard, bass clarinet

INTERMISSION

Camille Saint-Saëns (1835–1921)
arranged by Edgar Girtain

Danse Macabre

*MSgt Janet Bailey, GySgt Christopher Franke,
GySgt Sheng-Tsung Wang, and GySgt Foster Wang, violin*

Jenni Brandon (b. 1977)

Colored Stones (2014)

Smoky Quartz
Lapis Lazuli
Tiger's Eye

SSgt Stephen Rudman, bassoon

Andrew Sorg

Voices in Da Fan (2014)

Voice
Scherzo
Haunted Lullaby
Nightmare

*GySgt Anthony Bellino and SSgt Daniel Taubenheim, trumpet
GySgt Brigette Knox, horn
MGySgt Chris Clark, trombone
GySgt Landres Bryant, tuba*

*Member, U.S. Marine Band

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PROGRAM NOTES

Tocatta and Fugue in D minor

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685–1750)

arranged by Frederick Mills

The Tocatta and Fugue in D minor is a two-part composition by Johann Sebastian Bach frequently utilized to underscore dramatic and suspenseful moments across popular culture. Its opening three dramatic flourishes, followed by the low, growling pedal underneath huge, fortissimo rolling chords has long been associated with Western horror films.

The first half of the piece is a toccata, a rhapsodic musical form that showcases the performers' virtuosity. It is filled with fast arpeggios and scales, but also syncopations and short cadenza-like passages that give the performer liberty for personal expression. The dark and brooding toccata serves as a dramatic introduction to the intricate fugue that follows.

Bach is widely regarded by musicians as the master of the fugue, a contrapuntal musical form. This fugue is an excellent example of the form, which is characterized by the overlapping repetition of a principal theme with interspersing episodes. Bach modulates between major and minor modes, giving the music moments of light before its dramatic and powerful climax.

There is a possibility this work started its life as an organ improvisation. Bach, like many composers of his time, wrote many works for themselves to perform as part of their church or court duties. Because of this, musicologists have theorized that this toccata and fugue was improvised before it was written down.

Known for its drama and driving rhythm, this work has been featured in many films and adapted for a wide range of ensembles. This arrangement for brass quintet is by Frederick Mills of the Canadian Brass. Because of this, the Tocatta and Fugue in D minor is one of Bach's most performed works and one of the most immediately recognizable pieces in classical music.

Shui (2017)

Juri Seo (b. 1981)

Upon first glance at the set-up for Korean-American composer Juri Seo's percussion trio *Shui*, one's attention is held by a large glass bowl filled with water that is placed at the center of the stage. The use of this bowl of water is foreshadowed by the title of the piece; *shui* translates to "water" in Chinese and the object plays a crucial role in creating the mystical atmosphere experienced throughout the work. Aside from the bowl of water, the remaining instrumentation is minimal and consists only of six individual crotales. The crotales are played by three percussionists, who strike them to create melodies and harmonies that suddenly become haunting when the instruments are slowly dipped into the bowl of water, causing their pitch to drop. This meditative work invites the listener to experience a surprisingly expansive sound world despite the beautiful simplicity of the implements involved. Seo writes about the work,:

I conceived *Shui* as a miniaturized version of an extended musical meditation. The circular shape of the instrument, the round bowl, and the long resonance are all conducive to [a] meditative environment. As in any ensemble music — perhaps more

palpable in this case — the performers are indispensable parts of the whole. Each performer has only two pitches so that all melodies have to be played collectively. There's one moment they have to pass crotales to each other without killing the resonance, as if the sound is a living being.

Antiphonies for Clarinet Quartets GySgt Parker Gaims*

Antiphonies for Clarinet Quartets was composed in 2016 and premiered that August at the International Clarinet Association's annual conference in Lawrence, Kansas. The work's premiere was at a joint service recital with clarinetists from the Marine, Navy, Air Force, Army, and Army Field Bands. The piece is an octet comprised of two quartets, each with one e-flat clarinet, two b-flat clarinets, and one bass clarinet. At moments, all the musicians perform as a unit. However, as the title suggests, much of the piece is written with antiphonal effects in which the two quartets interact in a call and response manner. The piece begins in a slow, haunting, and chorale-like D-minor introduction with the full ensemble playing together. As with much clarinet ensemble music, the texture is reminiscent of a pipe organ. Rather than shy away from this similarity, I embrace it! The antiphonal effects appear early on and the quartets operate independently: sometimes playing by themselves and sometimes commenting on what the other just played. On occasion, the melodic lines played by the quartets diverge from one another in opposite directions. The introduction ends quietly with medieval-sounding open intervals and dissonances. The second part of the piece is livelier and starts with a short fugue. Each fugal entrance is mirrored between corresponding instruments of the two quartets beginning with the bass clarinets. When the fugal entrances are complete, the music shifts to an exploration of antiphonal effects between the quartets. This highlights the ensemble's timbral homogeneity, but also the virtuosity of each individual musician. The piece concludes with a restatement of the introductory material, this time in a jubilant D-major.

I would like to thank my friend and colleague GySgt Tessa Gross for programming my piece. I would also like to thank my amazing clarinetist colleagues for performing today. It is an honor for my music to be performed by such incredible musicians.

- Parker Gaims

Danse macabre

Camille Saint-Saëns (1835-1921)
arranged by Edgar Fikes Girtain IV

Danse macabre, written by French composer Camille Saint-Saëns, is a musical setting of the ghoulish events in Henri Cazalis' poem by the same name:

Zig, zig, zig, Death in cadence,
Striking with his heel a tomb,
Death at midnight plays a dance-tune,
Zig, zig, zig, on his violin.
The winter wind blows and the night is dark; Moans are heard in the linden-trees.
Through the gloom, white skeletons pass, Running and leaping in their shrouds.
Zig, zig, zig, each one is frisking.
The bones of the dancers are heard to crack— But hist! of a sudden they quit the
round, They push forward, they fly; the cock has crowed.

Saint-Saëns relies heavily on musical symbolism to convey these macabre images to the listener. Twelve bell tones begin the piece, representing the clock striking midnight, and immediately after, the music plunges into a sharply articulated waltz melody. Often this melody is interrupted by the ringing of harshly dissonant diminished fourth intervals, known infamously as a tritone or “The Devil’s Interval.” The work’s original orchestration utilizes the xylophone to depict the bones of the skeleton dancers rattling over top of their graves. Saint-Saëns also includes the Dies Irae, a Gregorian chant that symbolizes death. However, this version of the Dies Irae is written in a major mode, juxtaposing the jollity of the dance with the morbid subject matter.

When first premièred, the piece was not well received due to Saint-Saëns’s vivid depictions of death. It is now one of his most popular works. This version for four violins, arranged by American composer Edgar Fikes Girtain IV, captures the same spooky character as the original work. Girtain earned his bachelor’s of music in music education, and master’s of arts in music theory from Rutgers University. He earned his doctorate in 2023 from the State University of New York. Girtain’s work has been widely performed around the world.

Colored Stones

Jenni Brandon (b. 1977)

Composer and conductor Jenni Brandon is no stranger when it comes to writing for bassoon. In addition to winning the Bassoon Chamber Music Composition Competition, Brandon has had her works chosen as competition repertoire by both the International Double Reed Society and the Meg Quigley Vivaldi Bassoon Competition. She has composed works from opera to concertos in collaboration with other musicians and artists. Her style is beautiful and lyrical, telling stories through memorable musical lines. As a conductor, she often conducts her own works and others and presents workshops on composing and collaboration. Her award-winning music has been performed internationally and appears on over two albums.

Winner of the 2014 Bassoon Chamber Music Composition Competition, *Colored Stones* explores the beauty and spiritual mythos of three types of stones through music. The first movement, “Smoky Quartz”, alternates between a grounded and playful energy much like the smoky brown stone itself. “Lapis Lazuli” offers serene and gold-shimmering moments resembling this peace-bringing stone’s association with royalty and truthfulness. The piece ends with “Tiger’s Eye”; a deep red stone known for protection and warding off evil. In each of these movements, the bassoon passionately crafts an image of the stone and its supernatural capabilities through time, color, and volume.

Voices in Da Fan

Andrew Sorg

In the summer of 2014, The Atlantic Brass Quintet premièred and recorded *Voices in Da Fan*, a four-movement piece about the woes of insomnia. Sorg describes the work as “a blend of accessible programmatic music and contemporary extended techniques,” and that “the music is influenced by hip-hop and modern brass quintet repertoire.” He was “inspired by the voices that Andrew hears in the white noise of the fan that he uses to sleep at night.”

Sorg has written over forty hip-hop songs and four works for brass quintet: *Mental Disorders*, *Voices In Da Fan*, *Prelude & Fugue in E minor*, and *The Existential Crisis*. He is currently composing *Let Freedom Ring* for the Triton Brass which will “include a dialogue

between between Martin Luther King Jr. and Tupac Shakur.” Andrew is a former member of the grammy nominated Atlantic Brass Quintet, for whom he wrote *Voices in Da Fan*.

GySgt Bryant writes the following about this work:

I encountered this piece by happenstance searching for what I’d describe as “serious contemporary writing for brass quintet that doesn’t need an explanation or reason for young audiences to latch onto.” Both intriguing and palatable, I only ever imagined excerpting parts of this piece's vivid, jarring, enchanting, and humorous sections for use in our young people’s concerts. I’m honestly more frightened than happy to perform it in its entirety, though!