



Lieutenant Colonel Jason K. Fettig, Director

MARINE CHAMBER ORCHESTRA
Sunday, May 17, 2015 at 2:00 P.M.
Rachel M. Schlesinger Concert Hall and Arts Center
Northern Virginia Community College
Alexandria Campus
Major Michelle A. Rakers, conducting

From Mentor to Fast Friends

Johannes Brahms (1833–97)
orchestrated by the composer

Hungarian Dances Nos. 1, 3, and 10

Antonín Dvořák (1841–1904)

Violin Concerto in A minor, Opus 53

Allegro ma non troppo

Adagio ma non troppo

Finale: Allegro giocoso ma non troppo

SSgt Karen Johnson, soloist

INTERMISSION

Antonín Dvořák (1841–1904)
orchestrated by the composer

Rondo in G minor, Opus 94 and
“Silent Woods” from *From Bohemia’s Forest*, Opus 68

SSgt Charlaine Prescott, cello soloist

Johannes Brahms (1833–97)

Variations on a Theme of Haydn, Opus 56a

The United States Marine Band will perform Sunday, May 24 at 8:00 P.M. at the Filene Center at Wolf Trap National Park for the Performing Arts. The program will include works by Williams, Tchaikovsky, and Sousa and will be followed by a fireworks display.

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PROGRAM NOTES

Johannes Brahms (1833-1897)

Johannes Brahms was born in Hamburg, Germany, and died in Vienna, Austria. Despite his family's financial difficulties, Brahms attended private schools as a child and developed a love of learning and reading. His musical studies began at age seven with lessons on piano, cello, and horn. Additionally, his early love of literature, folklore, and travel contributed to his wide ranging musical tastes and influences. Considered a virtuoso pianist and conductor, Brahms was a contemporary and friend of Clara and Robert Schumann, and he would often share his work with them prior to publication.

Hungarian Dances Nos. 1, 3, and 10

Brahms' Hungarian Dances were originally published for piano, four hands. The first set, consisting of ten dances, was completed in 1868 and was an instant success. The inspiration came from the gypsy tunes his violinist and then friend, Ede Reményi, performed during a brief tour with Brahms as the accompanist. After realizing how different their personalities were, the two parted ways, dissolving the tour only three months in. Reményi later accused Brahms of plagiarism, claiming that Brahms had stolen these melodies from him. That assertion was easily debunked, as Brahms explained that they were not his original tunes but merely his arrangements. His initial letter to his publisher Simrock further supported his case, "I offer them as genuine Gypsy children which I did not beget, but merely brought up with bread and milk." Brahms himself later orchestrated the first, third, and tenth dances.

Variations on a Theme of Haydn, Opus 56a

Brahms was exceptionally critical of his own work, and he painstakingly went about composing for orchestra in the shadow of Ludwig van Beethoven, with whom he felt he simply could not compare. His love and respect for the master composers who came before him was evident in his commitment to researching and editing publications of the works of Johann Sebastian Bach, George Frideric Handel, Giovanni Palestrina, and many more. One of his colleagues was Karl Pohl, Haydn scholar and librarian for the Philharmonic Society of Vienna. It was Pohl who directed Brahms' attention towards a work for wind instruments by Joseph Haydn called *Feldparthie*. The theme of the second movement contained an old traditional pilgrims' hymn, "Chorale Saint Antoni," which so captivated Brahms that he copied it for future use. Although scholars now attribute that composition to Haydn's student Ignaz Pleyel, the work maintains a title attributing it to Haydn. Although the initial theme is stated in close fashion to that of the original, the work is unmistakably Brahms. It was premièred by the Vienna Philharmonic under the composer's baton in 1873, three years after he first jotted down the chorale.

Antonín Dvořák (1841-1904)

Antonín Dvořák was born in 1841 and spent most of his life in the village of Nalahozeves, north of Prague. He studied music at the Prague Organ School and by 1862 was principal violist in the Bohemian Provisional Theater Orchestra. Bedrich Smetana became the chief conductor of that orchestra in 1866 and for several years was clearly a tremendous influence on the young Dvořák. Dvořák left his performing post in 1871 so he could commit more time to composition. A prolific young composer, he won the Austrian State Stipendium three out of four years and caught the attention of Johannes Brahms who happened to be a panel judge for that competition. Brahms championed his work and convinced his own publishing company to take on the young Czech.

Shortly after Simrock agreed to publish Dvořák's works, they commissioned him to compose his first set of Slavonic Dances, no doubt hoping to capitalize on the success of Brahms' Hungarian Dances. One could surmise that it was through this prompting that Dvořák continued to evoke the spirit of Czech folk music in his work. His interest in folk music reached all the way to the United States and he strongly encouraged American composers such as George Chadwick and Amy Beach to utilize their own cultural identity in their compositions. He later came to America, serving as the director of the National Conservatory of Music in New York from 1892-1895. While in New York, he wrote his best-known work, Symphony No. 9, *From the New World*, which contains elements of American spirituals and Native

American music. He returned to his own country at the end of his life to assume directorship of the Conservatory in Prague in 1901, a post he held until his death in 1904.

Violin Concerto in A minor, Opus 53

With Dvořák's background as an orchestral violist he certainly held an advantage when writing for strings. And again, it would be through his connection with Brahms that Dvořák had the opportunity to meet the famed violinist Joseph Joachim in 1878 when Joachim was premiering Brahms' Violin Concerto. Dvořák immediately set off to compose his own violin concerto, which he dedicated to Joachim, but it would not receive its premiere for some time. The two met in Berlin when Joachim's string quartet was performing Dvořák's music, but the meeting resulted in Dvořák needing to make several revisions with Joachim's feedback. But even then, after Dvořák submitted the revised version, Simrock Publishing House wanted further revisions, most likely in accordance with continued feedback from Joachim. However, Dvořák was reticent to make those adjustments and ultimately the work was published four years after its initial submission, in 1883. It was Dvořák's friend František Ondříček who gave the premiere in Prague. Joachim never performed the work in public.

Staff Sergeant Karen Johnson, violin soloist

Violinist Staff Sergeant Karen Johnson joined "The President's Own" United States Marine Chamber Orchestra in March 2011. Staff Sgt. Johnson began her musical training at age four. Upon graduating in 1996 from Highland High School in Gilbert, Arizona, she earned a bachelor's degree in violin performance from The Juilliard School in New York. She earned a master's degree in music from the University of Maryland, College Park in 2002. Her notable instructors include Dr. William Magers formerly of Arizona State University; Joel Smirnoff, formerly of the Juilliard String Quartet; and William Preucil, concertmaster of the Cleveland Orchestra. Prior to joining "The President's Own," she was concertmaster of the Richmond Symphony Orchestra and guest concertmaster of the Seattle, Oregon, and Phoenix Symphonies. She has been featured as a soloist with the Marine Chamber Orchestra on Erich Wolfgang Korngold's Violin Concerto and Henryk Wieniawski's Violin Concerto No. 2. She also has performed as a violin soloist with the Quantico Marine Band of Quantico, Virginia.

Rondo in G minor, Opus 94 and "Silent Woods" from *From Bohemia's Forest*, Opus 68

It wasn't until Dvořák was planning a concert tour in 1892 with his friend and cellist Hanus Wihan that it occurred to Dvořák that he hadn't written anything for cello. In fact, it was said that he had very mixed feelings about the cello as a solo instrument. Luckily that did not prevent him from crafting what has since become one of the greatest works for the instrument, his Concerto in B minor, Opus 104 (1894-5). However, he did have to suddenly craft something for his upcoming tour, so during his Christmas holiday in 1891 he did just that. "Silent Woods" was originally a movement out of the work for piano, four hands titled *From Bohemia's Forest*, that he reworked for cello and piano. His Rondo in G minor, however, was a short piece crafted originally for cello and is his only surviving solo composition for that instrument prior to his Concerto that would come several years later. Dvořák created the orchestral versions to both of these selections nearly two years later, in the fall of 1893.

Staff Sergeant Charlaine Prescott, cello soloist

Cellist Staff Sergeant Charlaine Prescott joined "The President's Own" Marine Chamber Orchestra in December 2013. Staff Sgt. Prescott began her musical training on piano at age six and cello at age ten. After graduating in 2005 from West Potomac High School in Alexandria, she attended Northwestern University (NU) in Evanston, Illinois, where she earned a bachelor's degree in cello performance in 2009. In 2011 she completed a master's degree in classical cello from the Manhattan School of Music (MSM) in New York. She studied with Alan Stepansky at MSM, Hans Jørgen Jensen of NU, and Rachel Young of the National Symphony Orchestra in Washington, D.C. Prior to joining "The President's Own," she was a Tanglewood Fellowship recipient in 2010 from the Tanglewood Music Center in Lenox, Massachusetts, and received the Karl Zeise Memorial Cello Award for the 2010 Tanglewood season. She was the S & R Foundation's 2011 Washington Award and Grand Prize winner. She also was principal cello with the Chamber Orchestra of San Antonio and taught privately.