THE PRESIDENT'S OWN

Colonel Jason K. Fettig, Director

MARINE CHAMBER ORCHESTRA
Sunday, May 12, 2019 at 2:00 P.M.
Rachel M. Schlesinger Concert Hall and Arts Center
Northern Virginia Community College
Alexandria Campus
SSgt Karen Johnson, coordinator

Alistair Coleman (b. 1998)

Constellations (2016)

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770–1827)
arranged by Vinzenz Lachner

Piano Concerto No. 5 in E-flat, Opus 73, *Emperor*

Allegro
Adagio un poco mosso
Rondo: Allegro

Roman Rabinovich, guest soloist

INTERMISSION

Edvard Grieg (1843–1907)
arranged by Richard Tognetti

String Quartet No. 1 in G minor, Opus 27

Un poco andante; Allegro molto ed agitato
Romanze: Andantino; Allegro agitato
Intermezzo: Allegro molto marcato; Più vivo e scherzando
Finale: Lento; Presto al saltarello

The Spring 2019 Chamber Music Series will conclude Sunday, May 19 at 2:00 P.M. in John Philip Sousa Band Hall at the Marine Barracks Annex in Washington, DC. The program will feature works by Brahms and Dvořák. The performance will be streamed live on the Marine Band's website and at www.youtube.com/usmarineband.

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PROGRAM NOTES

Constellations **(2016)**
Alistair Coleman (b. 1998)

Constellations was originally commissioned by the D.C.-based Takoma Ensemble and premièred under the direction of Victoria Gau in April 2015. The piece was subsequently performed and recorded by the Atlantic Music Festival Orchestra in July 2016 in Waterville, Maine. *Constellations* originated from my experiences as a young child traveling with my family to the Blue Ridge Mountains in Virginia. Each night, we would venture up to the mountain top to stargaze where we would search for constellations, and even create our own names for interpretations of different shapes in the night sky. In this piece, I intend to capture the sense of the uncertainty and complexity of discovery, a child-like sense of wonder and imagination, and the unmitigated beauty of these shimmering lights illuminating our window to the universe. Additionally, I develop motifs presented in several contrasting contexts and combinations to create an effect of constellated musical ideas threaded throughout the work.

- Alistair Coleman

Piano Concerto No. 5 in E-flat, Opus 73, *Emperor*
Ludwig van Beethoven (1770–1827)
arranged by Vinzenz Lachner

In the year 1809, Austria was at war with France for the fourth time in a space of eighteen years. Describing the atmosphere in Vienna in a letter to his publisher, Ludwig van Beethoven wrote, “The whole course of events has affected my body and soul. What a disturbing, wild life around me; nothing but drums, cannons, men, human misery of every sort.” However, what emerged from this chaotic period in his life was one of his most orderly and masterfully designed compositions.

Beginning in 1803, Beethoven experienced a period of some of his most prolific composition. Beethoven biographer Maynard Solomon called this the composer’s “heroic decade,” beginning with the composition of his third symphony, *Eroica,* and ending with the fifth piano concerto. While the *Eroica* Symphony set the new trajectory of Beethoven’s music during this time, the *Emperor* Piano Concerto defined its peak.

Irving Kolodin, an influential music critic of the twentieth century, wrote that the fifth piano concerto represented the nineteenth-century ideals of liberty, fraternity, and equality through the soloist’s emergence as an equal and full partner of the orchestra, no longer a servant of the larger group. This ideal is evoked in the very opening of the concerto, in which the long orchestral tutti section, characteristic of most classical concertos, is replaced by three orchestral chords, each of which launches the soloist into brilliant and virtuosic displays of fireworks. In this piano concerto, but even as early as his fourth piano concerto, Beethoven announced to the world that the concerto form was no longer a polite display of artistry, but an integrated, powerful musical force.

The idea of the cadenza was also reinvented in Beethoven's concertos. Though capable of performing a brilliantly improvised cadenza, Beethoven preferred to write out a cadenza in the published versions of his works, often barely tolerating the efforts of others to come up with their own cadenzas. In his fourth piano concerto, he specifically indicated that "the cadenza is to be short," and in the fifth he specified "do not make a cadenza here, but attack the following immediately." He was essentially seizing control from the hands of the soloist and making sure that his intentions and wishes were followed exactly. This level of direction created an entirely new dynamic between the soloist and the composer, which resulted in today's common practice of deferring to the composer's wishes.

The concerto was nicknamed *Emperor* not because of any references to the infamous Napoleon Bonaparte, but because of its dedication to Archduke Rudolph of Austria. An amateur pianist himself, the archduke realized that Beethoven was a national treasure and, not wanting any other financial offers to tempt him away, set up a fixed annual annuity that would keep Beethoven as a permanent resident of Vienna. In addition to this concerto, Beethoven dedicated many other important works to his benefactor, including the Piano Trio, Opus 97, *Archduke,* several piano sonatas, the fourth piano concerto, and Missa Solemnis.

The arranger of this version for string orchestra accompaniment, Vinzenz Lachner, was an active conductor, composer, and teacher in Germany and spent thirty-seven years as the court conductor in Mannheim during the middle of the nineteenth century. As part of a family of professional musicians, Lachner was acquainted with Franz Schubert and Johannes Brahms and counted Max Bruch and Hermann Levi among his students. It is most likely that his arrangement of Beethoven's Piano Concerto No. 5 was undertaken during his many years in Mannheim.

Roman Rabinovich, guest soloist

The eloquent pianist Roman Rabinovich has been highly lauded by *The New York Times, BBC Music Magazine,* the *San Francisco Classical Voice,* and others. He has performed throughout Europe and the United States in venues such as Wigmore Hall in London, Carnegie Hall and Lincoln Center in New York, the Great Hall at the Moscow Conservatory, the Cité de la Musique in Paris, and the Millennium Stage at the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C. Rabinovich has participated in festivals including the Marlboro Music Festival in Vermont, the Lucerne and Davos Festivals in Switzerland, the Prague Spring International Music Festival, and the Klavier-Festival Ruhr and the Festspiele Mecklenburg-Vorpommern in Germany. An avid chamber musician, he is also a regular guest at ChamberFest Cleveland in Ohio.

Rabinovich has earned critical praise for his explorations of the piano music of Joseph Haydn. At the 2018 Bath Festival in England, he presented a ten-recital, forty-two-sonata series, earning praise in *The Sunday Times.* Prior to that, as artist-in-residence at the 2016 Lammermuir Festival in Scotland, he performed twenty-five Haydn sonatas in five days, and over two seasons in 2016 and 2017, he performed all of Haydn's sonatas in Tel Aviv, Israel.

In the 2018–19 season, Rabinovich has made concerto appearances with the Israel Symphony Orchestra, Seattle Symphony, Des Moines Symphony, and the Orquestra Sinfónica do Porto Casa da Música in Portugal. Recitals included a return to Wigmore Hall, as well as performances at the Liszt Academy Festival in Budapest, the Society for the Performing Arts in Houston, and the Philip Lorenz Keyboard Concert Series in Fresno, California. As a chamber

musician, Rabinovich will appear with Dutch violinist Liza Ferschtman at the Royal Concertgebouw in Amsterdam and at the Festspielhaus Baden-Baden and the Beethoven-Haus Bonn in Germany.

Rabinovich made his Israel Philharmonic debut under the baton of Zubin Mehta at age ten. He was a top prizewinner at the twelfth Arthur Rubinstein International Piano Master Competition in 2008. In 2015, he was selected by Sir András Schiff as one of three pianists for the inaugural *Building Bridges* series, created to highlight young pianists of unusual promise.

Born in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, Rabinovich immigrated to Israel with his family in 1994, where he began his piano studies with Irena Vishnevitsky and Arie Vardi. He went on to graduate from the Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia as a student of Seymour Lipkin, and earned his master's degree at the Juilliard School in New York, where he studied with Robert McDonald.

String Quartet No. 1 in G minor, Opus 27

Edvard Grieg (1843–1907)
arranged by Richard Tognetti

Edvard Grieg produced only one complete mature string quartet, the String Quartet in G minor, Opus 27, dating from 1878 when he was thirty-five. The historical record indicates that it was a challenge for Grieg, a composer who was perhaps more accustomed to writing in smaller forms such as his celebrated art songs and Romantic piano miniatures. Yet his remains one of the most original and influential string quartets of the late nineteenth century, approximately contemporaneous with the first important quartets from Piotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky, Johannes Brahms, Alexander Borodin, and Antonín Dvořák. It was written in the same year as César Franck's piano quartet, with which it shares some prominent elements of innovative cyclic design. Grieg's quartet even managed to impress the aloof Claude Debussy who, fifteen years later wrote his only quartet in the same key, with more than a few striking similarities.

Like many composers (notably Franz Schubert, Felix Mendelsohn, and Dmitri Shostakovich), Grieg borrows from his own music for the main theme of the quartet: a portion of his somber song "Spillamæd" ("Minstrels"). The icy theme is announced in unison by the quartet right at the beginning, the emphatic slow introductory Andante before the bristling Allegro molto ed agitato. Almost all of the musical material in the first movement is derived from it, including several creative variations of the full theme itself in a wide range of expression and affect. There are at least eight clear permutations for the listener's delightful discovery. But like the cyclic designs of Franck and, later, Debussy, the theme extends beyond the bounds of the first movement to obliquely influence the second, reappear in the third, and frame the fourth including a nearly literal restatement of the quartet's beginning just before the final conclusion. Though the complete work comprises a four-movement design with a great variety of music, it is fused together with a rare artistic unity.

One of the most striking aspects of Grieg's quartet is the distinctive way he writes for the string ensemble, an inseparable combination of texture and color resulting in a consistently unique quartet sound. On one hand, Grieg scores thick sections of unison sounds encroaching on the orchestral with double, triple, and even quadruple stops simultaneously in all parts. Were this the only texture Grieg used, one might be tempted to agree with those who find the quartet rather un-quartet-like. But Grieg employs a diversity of other textures including skillful counterpoint, a

fluid exchange of voice-leading across all four instruments, and a variety of novel sounds that he may well have borrowed from Norwegian folk music for fiddle. If the stormy first movement emphasizes the vast orchestral unity of the strings, the middle movements highlight the delicate spaciousness of individual instruments in diverse combinations. The nimble finale and numerous sections throughout the quartet have an etched clarity of remarkable lightness and effervescence. It is precisely the juxtaposition of all these textures within one work that makes Grieg's music a revelation of new possibilities. Like Debussy, Grieg seemed to wholly reimagine how to use a quartet. Grieg was the first to do so.

Fresh in the way it sounds, Grieg's quartet is equally striking in the way it moves. The music is energized with astonishing rhythmic vitality and the constant impulse to dance. The second movement Romanze begins with a gently swaying waltz that accelerates into an intoxicating whirl around the dance floor with the intensity of a manic dervish. This is but a tentative warm-up for the intricate motions of the third movement Intermezzo, a scherzo with the rustic spice of a festival dance under the midnight sun. The Finale sustains and ultimately surpasses this energetic frolic with its saltarello, a leaping dance of Italian origin dating back to the Middle Ages. Grieg's absorption of Nordic folk dances such as the *springdans* and *haller* is evident here, along with heavy syncopations and cross-rhythms in an unbridled, lyrical frenzy framed by the sober soundposts of the motto theme on either side.

Grieg's musical language was progressive for its time particularly within the generally conservative genre of the string quartet. Highly chromatic with rich harmonies and bold modulations, the music explores modal and pentatonic scales with an exotic folk flavor leading the vanguard of new music invading the traditions of Western Europe. Though Grieg studied in Leipzig using Mendelssohn and Robert Schumann as his first models, he ultimately developed his own unique musical voice perhaps best illustrated by this inspired and passionate string quartet, a harbinger of musical developments towards the end of the century. Grieg would try his hand with the string quartet once more some ten years later, but his efforts produced only two movements and rough sketches for the rest of a quartet in F major. Though incomplete, these continue to demonstrate Grieg's innovative approach with many of the same characteristics. Though leaving us wanting, it is enough for us to marvel. No great cycle of quartets here, just a single finished work of great originality, historical significance and ravishing musical delight.