The U.S. Army Orchestra
1LT Silas N. Huff, Conducting

Featuring Music By
Elgar, Copland, Stravinsky, and Wagner

Sunday, June 22, 2014 | 3:00 pm
Bowie Center for the Performing Arts
Bowie, MD
The U.S. Army Orchestra
1LT Silas N. Huff, Conducting
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Serenade for String Orchestra, Op. 20 . . . . Sir Edward Elgar
   Allegro piacevole
   Larghetto
   Allegretto

Quiet City . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . Aaron Copland
   MSG Gil Hoffer, trumpet
   SSG Meredith Rouse, English horn

Concerto in E flat “Dumbarton Oaks” . . . . Igor Stravinsky
   Tempo Giusto
   Allegretto
   Con moto

Siegfried Idyll . . . . . . . . . . . . . . Richard Wagner

Violin
MSG Laura C. Knutson, Greenbelt, MD
SFC Krista M. Smith, Indianapolis, IN
SFC Daniel W. Pierson, Kansas City, MO
SFC Marlisa D. Woods, Fairfax, VA
SFC Emily R. Leader, Chicago, IL
SSG Annette C. Barger, San Antonio, TX
SSG Matthew Evans, State College, PA
SSG Judith S. Cho, New York, NY
SSG Hannah Eldridge, Warrington, PA
SSG Christina W. Wensel, Evanston, IL
SSG Catherine E. Gerhiser, Savannah, GA
SSG Robert E. Martin, Philadelphia, PA

Viola
SFC Holly E. Watters, Dayton, OH
SSG Timothy C. Zenobia, Altoona, PA
SSG(P) Beth W. Dunkel, Milwaukee, WI
SSG Nicholas Hodges, Mechanicsburg, PA

Cello
SFC Samuel R.J. Swift, Lansing, MI
SSG Benjamin R. Wensel, Rochester, NY
SSG Hrant Parsamian, New York, NY
SSG Jessica Sammis, Bethesda, MD

Bass
SFC Thomas K. Fowler, Pomona, CA

Flute
SFC Robert E. Aughtry, Gaffney, SC

Oboe / English Horn
SSG Meredith Rouse, Boston, MA

Clarinet
SSG Timothy C. Sutfin, Crystal Lake, IL
SSG Aaron D. Scott, Pittsburgh, PA

Bassoon
SFC Dean G. Woods, Dalton, GA

Horn
SSG Aaron K. Cockson, Foley, AL
SSG Brian Anderson, Columbia, SC

Trumpet
MSG Gil Hoffer, Indianapolis, IN
ABOUT OUR SOLOISTS

Master Sergeant Gil Hoffer hails from Indianapolis, IN, and holds Bachelor's and Master's Degrees from Indiana University School of Music. He began his military service in 1986 as a trumpeter in the 4th US Army Band in Chicago, IL. He has also served in the 8th US Army Band in Seoul, Korea, the Army Ground Forces Band in Atlanta, GA, and the Army Old Guard Fife and Drum Corps in Washington, DC. He has been with The U.S. Army Band "Pershing's Own" since 1998. Although normally a member of the Concert Band and the US Army Orchestra, he also enjoys performing occasionally with the Ceremonial Band, the Army Blues Jazz Ensemble, and the Army Brass Quintet. He has had numerous solo appearances with the Concert Band and the Army Blues, and has also performed as a solo bugler in Arlington National Cemetery and at the Tomb of the Unknowns. Gil is also actively involved in the musical community of the greater Washington Metropolitan area, and has performed with the Maryland Philharmonic, Maryland Symphony, Alexandria Symphony, Manassas Ballet Theater and Dominion Symphony Orchestra, and has recorded with several professional studios in the Washington area.

Staff Sergeant Meredith Rouse joined the United States Army Band "Pershing's Own" in 2009. She has been featured as a soloist with the Concert Band at the US Capitol and at George Mason University, and with the Orchestra at the Library of Congress. SSG Rouse is also a member of the Woodwind Quintet. A former member of the Louisiana Philharmonic, the Princeton Symphony, the Binghamton Philharmonic, and the Civic Orchestra of Chicago, she has also performed as a guest with Boston Modern Orchestra Project, Opera Boston, and the Chicago Symphony Orchestra. SSG Rouse holds a Bachelor's degree from the New England Conservatory. She completed a Master's degree in Orchestral Performance and a Professional Studies Certificate at the Manhattan School of Music, where she later served four years as oboe teaching assistant. Formerly a member of Southeastern Louisiana University, she currently plays English horn for the Fairfax Symphony in Virginia.

Serenade for String Orchestra, Op. 20, Edward Elgar

Sir Edward Elgar is known mostly for his compositions for large ensembles—specifically his concertos for violin and cello, and the famous Enigma Variations. However, at the beginning of his musical career, Elgar had hoped to become a virtuoso violinist. Though his attempt at stardom was unsuccessful, this part of Elgar's musical background gave him a special understanding and love of the sound created by a string orchestra. Therefore, it is only fitting that Elgar would describe this brief three movement work as "little tunes" that are "real strings." After hearing some of his masterful compositions, and especially those written later in his life, one might be surprised to learn that Elgar taught himself to compose music while sitting by the Severn River, drawing inspiration from the sounds it produced. His Serenade was written in March of 1892, early in his musical life and before he was even sure he wanted to be a composer. It is most likely one of his earliest compositions to become a member of standard repertoire. The original manuscript is lost, but its present form is thought to have evolved out of material Elgar wrote four years earlier in his work Three Pieces for String Orchestra. The composer’s wife, Alice was a great source of inspiration as well as valued criticism during Elgar’s career, so it is no surprise that he wrote this work as a gift for their third anniversary.

While the compositional technique found in the Serenade suggests the work of a budding musician, there is foreshadowing of the style and technique Elgar later developed. The first movement, Allegro piacevole (meaning peaceful) contains two tranquil themes in 6/8, the second of which introduces the composer's frequent use of the interval of a seventh—a hallmark item in Elgar's compositional tools. The composer loved the music of Richard Wagner and it seems that he unrestrainedly used material from the opera Tristan and Isolde in this beautiful and meditative second movement. In the final movement, Allegretto, Elgar recalls themes from the first movement in a cheerful and buoyant 12/8 and then 6/8 meter. Listen again for the use of his signature brand, the ascension and decline of a seventh. Clearly, this beautiful work commanded a special place in Elgar's heart, because near the end of his life, he referred to it as "his favorite among his work."

Quiet City, Aaron Copland

A television show, radio program, play and certainly a video game would not provide its audience the same experience without background music written to enhance the plot or create a certain mood. This kind of music is known as incidental music. In 1940, Aaron Copland composed such music for a play called Quiet City, by Irwin Shaw. The play was never opened to the public but, a year later, Copland used some of the material he had composed to create a ten-minute work that could be performed apart from the play itself. Scored for an unusual group of instruments (trumpet, English horn and string orchestra), it was a work Copland knew was unique. He said, "There are not many quiet trumpet-solo works in the repertory, and I doubt whether there are many English horn solo-pieces of any sort." In addition, it is uncommon for a piece of music to feature both instruments sharing the role of soloist. The Saidenberg Little Symphony premiered the concert piece in NYC in 1941. A native of Brooklyn, NY, Aaron Copland is known as a distinctly American composer though he did study in Paris with Nadia Boulanger. His music is easily identified by his famous "Copland Sound." The textures in Copland's music suggest the large scope of the rural American landscape, which can clearly be heard in his works Appalachian Spring, Rodeo and Billy the Kid. However, in Quiet City, the composer shows he can successfully use his signature sound to evoke a different setting, that of the bleakness of nighttime in urban America and specifically New York City. Per Copland's description, the piece was intended to describe the loneliness and inner distress of a society profoundly aware of its own security.

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Dumbarton Oaks, Igor Stravinsky

Igor Stravinsky was a native of St. Petersburg, Russia and a valuable contributor to the famous “Ballet Russe”, for whom he wrote Firebird and The Rite of Spring. Born during a period of great trial in the composer’s life, this work is also known as Concerto in E flat for Chamber Orchestra. Stravinsky began composing it during the winter of 1937 in Geneva, Switzerland while he and his family spent time in a sanatorium fighting tuberculosis. It was completed in the spring of 1938 in Paris. The work is dedicated to Robert and Mildred Bliss, who solicited the popular European composer to write a piece of music commemorating their 30th wedding anniversary. The name is derived from the Washington, D.C., home of the Honorable Robert Woods Bliss, a former U.S. ambassador to Argentina and Sweden. Stravinsky’s good friend, Nadia Boulanger, a French conductor and composer, conducted the premier on the family estate in nearby Georgetown during the spring of 1938. One month later, Stravinsky himself performed a success in Paris where the public heard the piece for the first time.

Dumbarton Oaks is clearly indicative of the neoclassical period of Stravinsky’s work. Neoclassicism was a trend in music during the 20th century, a return to the more formal and balanced feel of the Classical and Baroque periods, and eliminate the presence of a specific program. This movement was in direct response to the late Romantic period in music where emotions were expressed freely, form was secondary, and composers aimed to express a story or specific events through the music they wrote. This is also known as Program Music. During difficult periods in his life, the composer found comfort in the music of J.S. Bach, and it seems that Stravinsky’s predecessor greatly influenced him in the writing of this piece. There are multiple parallels between the chamber concerto and Bach’s Brandenburg Concertos, specifically No. 3. Prevalent in Bach’s works is the use of the Baroque form, concerto grosso where solo material is passed around the ensemble. From the beginning and throughout Dumbarton Oaks, you will hear various instruments pop out of the ensemble’s texture with the solo line. In addition, the first and third movements exhibit fugal writing, a Baroque technique where a theme is introduced in more than one voice at different times, but still sets up to a single voice. A third likeness to Bach’s concerto is found in the amount of string players used. Stravinsky leaves out the customary second violin section and accomplishes his desired harmonies with the violins and violas simply dividing into three voices each. This helps to lighten the overall texture and create his explicit Stravinsky sound. This delightful and lighthearted work is performed attacca, meaning there are no breaks between the three movements.

Siegfried Idyll, Richard Wagner

The story behind the writing of this piece is a sweet and romantic one! Richard Wagner composed it in 1869 for his wife Cosima, daughter of pianist Franz Liszt, for her birthday, which fell on Christmas day. The presentation of the gift for his beloved wife was done in a unique way. On the morning of her special day while she was still sleeping, Wagner set up his own private orchestra on the stairs of their home. She was awakened to his “symphonic birthday greeting” and then handed the score by her doting husband when the performance was finished. The original name for this work was Tribuschener Idyll—Tribischen being the name of their home in Switzerland. Wagner intended the piece to remain in the family as a private declaration of his love for his wife, but when the family fell on financial hardship they decided to sell their treasure. The original instrumentation is small: approximately 13 players, the size limited by the space available on the staircase that led to their bedroom. When the piece became public domain, it changed to Siegfried Idyll, the name of their home in Switzerland. Wagner—famous for writing elaborate operas like his Der Ring des Nibelungen—here exchanges his usual grandiose style and self-centered, driven personality for an intimate, yet passionate face of a composer who draws inspiration from the themes and motifs in his other works. For instance, the primary theme is also the melody sung by his character, Brünnhilde in act three of Siegfried, the third opera of The Ring Cycle, and was also the basis for his unfinished string quartet, composed prior to the Idyll. Furthermore, its secondary thematic material, sourced from a German lullaby and introduced by the oboe, presents a restricted and tender side of Wagner that deviates from his usual bold declarations.

The U.S. Army Strings, a premier ensemble of the U.S. Armed Forces, provide a musical backdrop for many of the country’s most notable events. Their mission is to serve as musical ambassadors for high-level military and government events at home and abroad, as well as in concert for public audiences. The elite musicians that comprise this ensemble have been trained at the most prestigious music conservatories and universities in the country. This versatile ensemble performs as The U.S. Army Strolling Strings, mixed chamber ensembles, and The U.S. Army Orchestra.

The U.S. Army Strings join with instrumentalists from other elements of The U.S. Army Band “Pershing’s Own” to form The U.S. Army Orchestra. This group performs works from a diverse repertoire at some of the nation’s finest venues, including the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington, DC, Lincoln Center in New York City, the Center at Strathmore in Bethesda, Maryland, the Clarice Smith Performing Arts Center at Maryland, College Park, and the Rachel M. Schlesinger Concert Hall and Arts Center in Alexandria, Virginia.

First Lieutenant Silas N. Huff, a native of San Antonio, Texas, serves as Associate Conductor and Officer in Charge of “Pershing’s Own” headquarters at Fort Eustis, Virginia. He earned his Bachelor of Music degree in Guitar Performance from Texas State University in San Marcos, and a Master of Arts degree in Music Composition from the University of California at Los Angeles. Additionally, he engaged in post-graduate studies in Conducting at California State University, Long Beach, the Trossingen Musik Hochschule (Germany), and L’Institute Musicale de Provence-Aubagne (France).

ILT Huff began his Army career as Associate Conductor and Executive Officer of the U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command Band at Fort Eustis, Virginia. Prior to enlistment, he was a civilian conductor of orchestras, opera, and contemporary music, and has had his own compositions performed across the United States, Europe, and China. Lieutenant Huff’s civilian posts have included Music Director of the Astoria Symphony Orchestra (New York), Music Director of Round Rock Symphony Orchestra (Texas), USA East Coast Tour Conductor for Moscow Ballet, and Opera Producer at the Manhattan School of Music, and he has conducted concerts across the USA, France, Germany, Italy, Czech Republic, Bulgaria, and Russia.

After successful completion of Basic Combat Training at Fort Jackson, South Carolina, and Army Officer Candidate School at Fort Benning, Georgia, I1T Huff was commissioned on 28 July, 2011. He is also a graduate of the Basic Officer Leadership Course at the U.S. Army School of Music, Joint Expeditionary Base Little Creek - Fort Story, Virginia. His military decorations include the National Defense Service Medal, the Global War on Terror Service Medal, the Army Service Ribbon, the Army Achievement Medal, and the Army Commendation Medal.