



Master Gunnery Sergeant Charles Willett

July 16 2013 10:32 AM

Clarinetist Charles Willett of Alton, Ill., joined “The President’s Own” United States Marine Band in May 1989.

Master Gunnery Sergeant Willett began his musical instruction at age 12. Upon graduating from Alton Senior High School in 1979, he attended Southern Illinois University in Edwardsville, Ill., where he earned bachelor’s (1983) and master’s (1984) degrees in music performance. While at Southern Illinois University, he studied clarinet with George Mellott. He earned a premier prix in clarinet from the Conservatoire d’Orléans in Orléans, France, where he studied with Michel Arrignon, and in 1996 he completed his doctorate degree in clarinet performance at Florida State University in Tallahassee where he studied with Frank Kowalsky.

MGySgt Willett performs with the Marine Band, Marine Chamber Orchestra, and Marine Chamber Ensembles at the White House, in the Washington, D.C., area, and across the country during the band’s annual concert tour. He has performed numerous solos with “The President’s Own,” including Georges Meister’s Fantasia for Clarinet, “Erwinn,” in 1998 and 2002, and Amilcare Ponchielli’s Clarinet Duet, “Il Convegno,” also in 2002. In addition to his musical duties, MGySgt Willett has served as a Tour Coordinator since 2003, advancing and serving as on-site manager during the band’s annual concert tour.

MGySgt Willett, the son of Elizabeth Willett and the late Howard Willett of Alton, currently resides in Alexandria, Va.

The Marine Band is America’s oldest continuously active professional musical organization. Founded in 1798, the band has performed for every U.S. President since John Adams. Known as “The President’s Own” since the days of Thomas Jefferson, the Marine Band’s primary mission is to provide music for the President of the United States and the Commandant of the Marine Corps.

