THE PRESIDENT'S OWN

Lieutenant Colonel Ryan Nowlin, Director

MARINE CHAMBER ORCHESTRA
Sunday, March 22, 2026 at 2:00 P.M.
Rachel M. Schlesinger Concert Hall and Arts Center
Northern Virginia Community College
Alexandria Campus
Master Sergeant Karen Johnson, coordinating

Adagio for Strings

Arthur Foote (1853–1937) — Suite in E for String Orchestra, Opus 63

Praeludium
Pizzicato—Adagietto
Fuge

Kenji Bunch (b. 1973) — *E pluribus* (2026)

Mihqelsuwakonutomon (She reminisces)
Gullah Geechee Folk Song
La Bamba (Son Jarocho)
Soldier's Joy

world première

Florence Price (1887–1953) — Andante moderato from String Quartet in G
edited by Er-Gene Kahng

Samuel Barber (1910–81) — String Quartet in B minor, Opus 11

Molto allegro e appassionato
Molto adagio

PROGRAM NOTES

Suite in E for String Orchestra, Opus 63

Arthur Foote (1853–1937)

Arthur Foote was a member of the Second New England School, a group of New England composers who were responsible for the development of the American classical idiom at the turn of the twentieth century. The group, also known as the "Boston Six," included George Whitefield Chadwick, Amy Beach, Edward MacDowell, John Knowles Paine, and Horatio Parker. Foote was one of Paine's earliest pupils at Harvard University in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and in 1875, he received the first master's degree in music ever granted in the United States. Additionally, as a professional organist, Foote held a church position in Boston and served as president of the American Guild of Organists from 1909 to 1912.

In Boston, Foote had the great fortune of having many of his orchestral works performed by the Boston Symphony Orchestra. The orchestra gave the première of his best-known work, the Suite in E for String Orchestra, Opus 63, on April 16, 1909, under the direction of Max Fiedler. The suite was the first American classic for string orchestra, and thus the initial work in a category later enriched by such additions as Samuel Barber's famous Adagio for Strings and David Diamond's *Rounds.*

The Suite in E was composed in three movements. The first is an expansive Praeludium that demonstrates Foote's imaginative writing for strings. The second movement, Pizzicato und Adagietto, is a combination scherzo and slow movement. Pizzicato sections serve as prelude and postlude to the fully developed slow section. The concluding Fuge dramatically sums up the suite with a strong theme and subtle rhythmic emphases to deepen the intensity of the drive toward the exhilarating conclusion.

E pluribus (2026)

Kenji Bunch (b. 1973)

Kenji Bunch writes music that looks for commonalities between musical styles, understandings that transcend cultural or generational barriers, and empathic connections with his listeners. Drawing on a love of vernacular musical traditions and interests in history, storytelling, and the natural world, combined with techniques from his classical training, Bunch creates music with a unique personal vocabulary that appeals to a diverse array of performers, audiences, and critics. With his work frequently performed worldwide and recorded numerous times, Bunch considers his current mission to be the search for and celebration of shared emotional truths about the human experience, from the profound to the absurd, to help facilitate connection and healing through entertainment, vulnerability, humor, and joy.

With dual graduate degrees in viola and composition from The Juilliard School, Bunch has been widely recognized for his works for viola, and he remains active as an innovative performer, comfortable in traditional, experimental, and improvisational musical contexts. He has worked with actors (George Takei, Sigorney Weaver), choreographers (Dave Parsons, Toni Pimble), and musicians across different genres (Ornette Coleman, Lenny Kravitz, Stephen

Sondheim) and has appeared in thousands of performances from the world's greatest stages to Broadway pits, NBA arenas, dive bars, raves, preschools, retirement homes, and state prisons. After over two decades in New York City, Bunch returned to his hometown of Portland, Oregon, where he currently serves as Artistic Director of the new music group Fear No Music and is deeply committed to music education through a variety of teaching positions at the youth and college level. He lives in a Pacific Northwest forest with his wife, pianist Monica Ohuchi, their two children, and two dogs.

The composer writes the following about this work:

> This work was commissioned by "The President's Own" Marine Chamber Orchestra in celebration of the 250-year anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence. To celebrate this milestone, I searched for folk songs that would have existed in America contemporaneously with the Declaration. The wealth and breadth of this material impressed upon me the vast diversity that was already evident at this formative moment, and indeed the motto of this great experiment since that time was *E pluribus unum*: "out of many, one." The songs I set for this work include in order:
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> I. Mihqelsuwakonutomon (She reminisces): recorded in 1890 on a wax cylinder during field research with the Peskotomuhkati tribe in eastern Maine, this was already at that time considered an old song from previous generations.
> II. Gullah Geechee Folk Song: recorded in 1933 in Harris Neck, Georgia, by Amelia Dawley, this song had been passed down aurally for generations, when Amelia's grandmother brought the song with her from West Africa as a teenager enslaved by white colonists in the 1760s. Decades later, musicologists would connect the song to a nearly identical version in a remote village of Sierra Leone.
> III. La Bamba (Son Jarocho): a song familiar to many of us due to the popular rock n' roll version of Ritchie Valens, La Bamba is an ancient song from several centuries ago in Mexico that has its roots in indigenous traditions, Afro-Cuban rhythms brought by the transatlantic slave trade, and the instruments of Spanish baroque music. Popular at weddings and celebrations, this song was certain to have been sung in the region of Mexico that is now part of Texas.
> IV. Soldier's Joy*:* this lively Scottish fiddle tune was likely imported by the British army during the Revolutionary War. There is written record of a British prisoner of war teaching it to revolutionary soldiers from his confinement. Likewise, the song was enjoyed at campfire by Union and Confederate soldiers alike before and after battle during the Civil War. The song has transcended political, cultural, and racial barriers and has endured to become a standard bluegrass instrumental.

Andante moderato from String Quartet in G

Florence Price (1887–1953)
edited by Er-Gene Kahng

Florence Price was a pioneering composer and the first Black woman to have a symphony performed by a major American orchestra. Price's compositions, which include symphonies, chamber music, choral pieces, and piano solos, fuse classical music with African American folk and spiritual traditions. After her death, Price's work fell into relative obscurity but has experienced a resurgence in recent years, highlighting her profound impact on American classical music. This resurgence is in part a result of the 2009 discovery of many of Price's musical manuscripts in her old summer home on the outskirts of St. Anne, Illinois.

Born in Little Rock, Arkansas, Price was a child prodigy pianist who graduated from the New England Conservatory with dual degrees in piano teaching and organ performance at age nineteen. Her formal training included composition studies with George Whitfield Chadwick, with whom she began incorporating African American folk music into her original style. Price started a family and a teaching career in the South, but after a few years moved her young family to Chicago, where she faced less racial discrimination and had more professional opportunities. She began composing in earnest as part of the Chicago Black Renaissance, and her Symphony No. 1 was performed by the Chicago Symphony Orchestra in 1933. The String Quartet in G, an unfinished work, stems from this vibrant period.

Andante moderato, the second of the two completed movements, features a warm lyricism that feels familiar and distinctly American. The violin sings contours that could be a spiritual or folk song before the viola leads its own melancholy line in and out of a light dance. The movement closes as it started, with the lovely violin melody wrapping up this perfectly symmetrical three-part form.

String Quartet in B minor, Opus 11

Samuel Barber (1910–81)

Samuel Barber was born in West Chester, Pennsylvania, to a family of musicians. His mother was a pianist, his aunt sang at the Metropolitan Opera, and his uncle was a composer. This musical lineage piqued his interest in music at an early age. He began piano lessons at age six and wrote his first composition a year later. Although his family did not want Barber to become a musician, he was set on his goals. In a letter to his mother at age nine, Barber wrote, "I was meant to be a composer and will be I'm sure…don't ask me to try to forget this unpleasant thing and go play football." Barber became an organist at a local church at age twelve and then enrolled at the prestigious Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia at age fourteen, where he later triple-majored in composition, voice, and piano.

Barber composed his String Quartet in B minor, Opus 11 at age twenty-six while living in Austria. He was so proud of his new work that he wrote to Orlando Cole, the cellist of the Curtis Quartet: "I have just finished the slow movement of my quartet today—it is a knockout!" The original version of the quartet was premièred in 1936 in Rome, but after undergoing several revisions, the final form was premièred by the Budapest Quartet on May 28, 1943 at the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C.

Although Barber was composing at a time when many contemporaries were embracing experimental modernism, this work remains rooted in expressive tonality, elevating melodic line and harmonic warmth over abstraction. The first and third movements—Molto allegro e appassionato and Molto allegro—serve as bookends to the dramatically unfolding center movement. These outer movements are urgent, full of diversity, contrast, and energy. Rapid escalation and sharp gestures trade off with soaring melodies and unexpected harmonic arrivals.

The middle movement, Molto adagio, is the emotional core of the work and one of the most recognizable pieces in all of classical music. Barber later arranged this movement for string orchestra as the Adagio for Strings, a version that has become synonymous with public mourning and solemn reflection. While the composer never stated an elegiac intent for the movement, Adagio for Strings has been performed at such events as the funeral of President Franklin D.

Roosevelt in 1945, the funeral of Albert Einstein in 1955, after the assassination of President John F. Kennedy in 1963, and in the aftermath of the September 11th attacks.

Contrary to the rest of the String Quartet in B minor, the Molto adagio movement is set a half-step lower in the key of B-flat minor, lending it a particularly somber quality. The music unfolds as a long, arching lament, built from a simple, stepwise melody that passes between the different instruments. The musical line grows in intensity, the texture thickens, the register ascends, and dissonance winds in and out, until all the voices unite in a series of climatic, sustained chords—the last of which shifts to a bright-sounding E-major triad. A quiet conclusion follows and dissolves into nothingness, sealing in the power of this lyrical movement.

The addition of double bass to the quartet allows for a greater depth and warmth of sound, similar to the effect achieved in Barber's version of the Molto adagio written for full string orchestra in Adagio for Strings.