THE PRESIDENT'S OWN

Lieutenant Colonel Ryan Nowlin, Director

UNITED STATES MARINE BAND
Sunday, March 29, 2026 at 2:00 P.M.
Rachel M. Schlesinger Concert Hall and Arts Center
Northern Virginia Community College
Alexandria Campus
Captain Jose D. Toranzo, conducting

Be Glad Then, America

John Philip Sousa* (1854–1932)
edited by the United States Marine Band

March, "George Washington Bicentennial"

Joel Puckett (b. 1977)

Pacific Carnival Fanfare (2025)

Brad Ellis (b. 1968)

McGuffy's Reed (2015)

GySgt Trevor Mowry, oboe soloist
MGySgt Russell Wilson, piano soloist

William Schuman (1910–92)

New England Triptych (after the music of William Billings)

"Be Glad Then, America"
"When Jesus Wept"
"Chester"

INTERMISSION

Aaron Copland (1900–90)
arranged by Thomas Knox*

Old American Songs, Set One

"The Boatman's Dance"
"The Dodger"
"Long Time Ago"
"Simple Gifts"
"I Bought Me a Cat"

MGySgt Kevin Bennear, baritone

Morton Gould (1913–96)

Symphony for Band, *West Point*

Epitaphs
Marches

MGySgt Kevin Bennear, concert moderator

*Member, U.S. Marine Band

PROGRAM NOTES

March, "George Washington Bicentennial"

John Philip Sousa* (1854–1932)
edited by The United States Marine Band

John Philip Sousa remained active as both a composer and conductor into the final years of his life and produced several notable marches in 1930 and 1931. In anticipation of the national celebration marking the two-hundredth anniversary of George Washington's birth, a special commission was formed in Washington, D.C. to coordinate the bicentennial observances. Sousa was engaged to compose a ceremonial march for the occasion. He completed "George Washington Bicentennial" in June 1930.

Later that year, while touring with his own ensemble, Sousa returned to Washington, D.C. where he conducted a preview performance of the new march with the United States Marine Band on the White House lawn for President Herbert Hoover and his guests. The march continued to feature prominently in performances during the years leading up to the official bicentennial in 1932, including appearances on the Sousa Band's 1930 and 1931 tours.

The culmination of the bicentennial celebrations took place on February 22, 1932 at Capitol Plaza, where Sousa conducted combined bands of the U.S. Army, Navy, and Marine Corps in a national ceremonial event honoring Washington's legacy. This appearance marked the last time Sousa conducted the Marine Band in public. Just weeks later, following a rehearsal in preparation for a concert with the Ringgold Band of Reading, Pennsylvania, Sousa passed away unexpectedly on March 6, 1932.

"George Washington Bicentennial" stands as both a significant contribution to Sousa's late output and a work closely connected to the traditions and ceremonial history of the United States Marine Band.

Pacific Carnival Fanfare (2025)

Joel Puckett (b. 1977)

Joel Puckett is an American composer whose music has been performed by orchestral, operatic, choral, and wind ensembles in the United States and abroad. His works include concert music, music for the stage, and repertoire written for educational settings, reflecting a broad engagement with contemporary ensemble practice.

Puckett has written extensively for wind band, with works performed by collegiate, professional, and service ensembles. In addition to his work as a composer, he is an educator and currently serves on the faculty of the Peabody Conservatory in Baltimore, Maryland, where he is chair of music theory and related studies. His music reflects a sustained interest in writing for performers and ensembles across a range of institutional and concert contexts.

Pacific Carnival Fanfare was commissioned and given its première performance by the San Jose Wind Symphony in honor of its longtime conductor, Edward C. Harris. The work has since been performed by several wind ensembles across the country.

McGuffy's Reed (2015)

Brad Ellis (b. 1968)

Brad Ellis is an American composer whose music draws on jazz, popular idioms, and concert traditions, blending them into works that are both structurally clear and stylistically flexible. He has written for a wide range of ensembles and media, and his music often reflects close collaboration with performers, particularly soloists, whose individual voices shape the expressive character of his works.

McGuffy's Reed is a concert work for oboe and wind ensemble that unfolds in a broad, arch form. The title is a play on *McGuffey's Readers*, a nineteenth-century series of educational textbooks. It reflects the work's origins as both an educational collaboration between the composer and the University of Maryland, Baltimore County (UMBC), as well as the central role of the oboe soloist. The piece begins with a slow, ethereal waltz, characterized by a gently flowing triple meter and luminous harmonic color. The oboe soloist enters almost immediately, presenting a lyrical primary melody that gradually incorporates blues-tinged inflections as the opening section unfolds. Throughout this passage, the accompanying ensemble is scored in spacious, transparent textures that create open, resonant sonorities.

The opening material is interrupted by solo piano, which introduces subtle hints of jazz and blues before giving way to a faster, more assertive central section. This contrasting middle portion shifts into duple meter and adopts a sharper rhythmic profile, drawing on jazz-inflected gestures and heightened energy. At its peak, the music expands into a full-bodied ensemble passage reminiscent of a big band "shout," followed by a syncopated episode with a Latin flavor. Here, the oboe and piano engage in a call-and-response dialogue, with the piano soloist acting as a foil to the oboe soloist, not merely an accompaniment.

As the central section subsides, the music narrows to a brief oboe cadenza. Unflashy and restrained, this passage serves as a reflective bridge back to the opening atmosphere of the piece. The work concludes with a shortened return of the initial melodic material, bringing the expressive arc full circle and restoring the contemplative atmosphere of the opening.

McGuffy's Reed was given its première performance by the UMBC Wind Ensemble with Trevor Mowry as the solo oboist. The work was also recorded by Mowry and the UMBC Wind Ensemble on the album *Filtering*, released by Albany Records.

Gunnery Sergeant Trevor Mowry, oboe soloist

Co-principal oboe Gunnery Sergeant Trevor Mowry joined "The President's Own" United States Marine Band in June 2012. He began his musical training on piano at age five and oboe at age nine. Upon graduating from Glenbard West High School in Glen Ellyn, Illinois in 2007, he attended the Eastman School of Music of the University of Rochester in New York where he studied with Richard Killmer and earned a bachelor's degree in music in 2011. Gunnery Sgt. Mowry pursued graduate studies with Robert Atherholt at Rice University in Houston. Notable solo appearances with the Marine Chamber Orchestra include performances of Eric Ewazen's *Down a River of Time* in 2019 and Jean Françaix's *L'horloge de flore* (*The Flower Clock*) in 2015. He has given master classes at the University of Northern Colorado in Greeley, Georgia State University in Atlanta, and the University of Florida in Gainesville. Prior to joining "The President's Own," Gunnery Sgt. Mowry was guest principal oboe with the Houston Grand

Opera, principal oboe with the Wheaton Municipal Band in Illinois, and a freelance musician. In 2010, he won the Eastman School of Music's annual Concerto Competition.

Master Gunnery Sergeant Russell Wilson, piano soloist

Pianist Master Gunnery Sergeant Russell Wilson joined "The President's Own" United States Marine Band in September 2002. He began his musical instruction on piano at age seven with Gail McDonald. After graduating in 1999 from Surrattsville High School in Clinton, Maryland, he earned a bachelor's degree in classical piano in 2004 and a master's degree in jazz in 2007, both from the University of Maryland, College Park, studying piano with Cleveland Page and jazz with Ron Elliston.

Master Gunnery Sgt. Wilson is a frequent soloist on piano and accordion and has performed Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's Concerto for Two Pianos in E flat, Ottorino Respighi's Concerto a Cinque, Ernest Bloch's Concerto Grosso, Camille Saint-Saëns' *Carnival of the Animals,* and Richard Adinsell's Warsaw Concerto with both the Marine Band and Marine Chamber Orchestra. He also was a 2011 tour soloist, performing Edvard Grieg's Piano Concerto in A minor, Opus 16. Prior to joining "The President's Own," Master Gunnery Sgt. Wilson was a freelance accompanist, performed at Busch Gardens in Williamsburg, and worked aboard Norwegian Cruise Lines, performing solo classical recitals and as a member of a show band.

***New England Triptych* (after the music of William Billings)**
William Schuman (1910–92)

Although their lives were separated by nearly two centuries, a pair of influential American composers both named William were brought together in the creation of *New England Triptych*. William Billings was born in Boston, Massachusetts in 1746. He was trained as a tanner and left school at age fourteen to support his family upon the death of his father. Billings was described in a contemporary account by William Bentley as "a singular man, of moderate size, short of one leg, with one eye, without any address, [and] with an uncommon negligence of person." An apt description of a tradesman from the latter half of the eighteenth century perhaps, but Bentley then continues to note that Billings "spake [and] sung [and] thought as a man above the common abilities…[he was] the father of our New England music. Many who have imitated him have excelled him, but none of them had better original power." Billings was likely self-taught as a composer, however, he spent considerable time around the choirs of local congregations including the new South Church in Boston. He composed works that spoke directly to the masses during the turbulent times and were known throughout the colonies, from Vermont to South Carolina. Nearly all of his music was written for four-part *a cappella* chorus, and his works were largely distributed in volumes published between 1770 and 1794. Although Billings proved to be one of the most important composers of the Revolutionary period, there was no regulated avenue to financial gain by writing music at the time. Billings died in poverty on September 26, 1800, leaving behind his widow and six children.

Like Billings, William Schuman was drawn to music but began his training in another field. Born in Manhattan, Schuman played violin and banjo as a child and even formed his own salon orchestra during high school. Despite these early experiences, Schuman entered New York University's School of Commerce in 1928 to pursue a business degree while working for a local

advertising agency. It was not until 1930, when he attended a concert at Carnegie Hall given by the New York Philharmonic and conducted by Arturo Toscanini, that his true passion was irrevocably brought to the surface. He would later recall,

> I was astounded at seeing the sea of stringed instruments, and everybody bowing together. The visual thing alone was astonishing. But the sound! I was overwhelmed. I had never heard anything like it. The very next day, I decided to become a composer.

Schuman dropped out of business school and began part-time study at the Malkin Conservatory. He also sought private lessons with the preeminent composer Roy Harris and eventually earned a degree in music education from the Teacher's College at Columbia University in New York City. He soon embarked on a multifaceted career as composer, teacher, and administrator. He taught composition at Sarah Lawrence College in Yonkers, New York, and was later the president of both The Juilliard School and Lincoln Center. Among the many honors he achieved throughout his long and distinguished career, Schuman was awarded the inaugural Pulitzer Prize in music in 1944 for his Cantata No. 2*, A Free Song* based on the texts of Walt Whitman.

New England Triptych remains one of Schuman's most popular works. Originally written for orchestra, the work began its life as the *William Billings Overture* in 1943. The composer soon withdrew that version of the piece and reconstituted the material into the present three-movement suite in 1956. Upon a commission from the music fraternity Pi Kappa Omicron, Schuman arranged and expanded the last movement for concert band. Later he transcribed the other two movements to complete the *Triptych* for winds. In a preface to the score of *New England Triptych*, Schuman writes:

> William Billings (1746–1800) is a major figure in the history of American music. His works capture the spirit of sinewy ruggedness, deep religiosity, and patriotic fervor that we associate with the Revolutionary period in American history. I am not alone among American composers who feel a sense of identity with Billings, which accounts for my use of his music as a departure point. These three pieces are not a "fantasy" nor "variations" on themes of Billings, but rather a fusion of styles and musical language.

The first movement, "Be Glad then, America," is built on these lines from Billings' text:

> Yea, the Lord will answer
> And say unto his people—behold
> I will send you corn and wine and oil
> And ye shall be satisfied therewith.
> Be glad then, America,
> Shout and rejoice.
> Fear not O land,
> Be glad and rejoice.
> Halleluyah!

Timpani played alone intone the outline of Billings' melody, which is then taken over by the low woodwinds and soon developed in a brilliant and aggressive wash of brass. The main section of the hymn is then cast in varied settings of the words "Be glad then, America, Shout and rejoice." The timpani return which leads to a fugal section utilizing the melody that accompanies the words "And ye shall be satisfied." The heroic climax of the movement freely adapts Billings' music to "Halleluyah!"

"When Jesus Wept" was originally set by Billings as a round. Schuman preserves Billings' contrapuntal texture while employing the full array of timbres available from the band. The text of the hymn is as follows:

When Jesus wept, the falling tear
in mercy flowed beyond all bound;
when Jesus mourned, a trembling fear
seized all the guilty world around.

"Chester" is Billings' best-known tune. Although it was originally composed as a church hymn, it was quickly adopted by the Continental Army as a popular marching song. It became one of the preeminent patriotic songs of the colonial era. Schuman's reimagining of Billings' sturdy tune honors the spirit of the original hymn as well as its transformation into an American military anthem. The text, presumed to be written by Billings, is as follows:

Let tyrants shake their iron rod,
And slavery clank her galling chains,
We fear them not, we trust in God,
New England's God forever reigns.

The foe comes on with haughty stride,
Our troops advance with martial noise,
Their vet'rans flee before our youth,
And gen'rals yield to beardless boys.

***Old American Songs*, Set One**

Aaron Copland (1900–90)
arranged by Thomas Knox*

Aaron Copland composed *Old American Songs,* Set One in 1950 as a celebration of the rich and varied tradition of American folk and popular song. Rather than quoting melodies associated with a single region or period, Copland drew upon a broad range of sources, including folk songs, ballads, hymns, and children's songs that he encountered through early American song collections. The resulting set reflects Copland's long-standing interest in vernacular music and his ability to reimagine familiar material through a distinctly modern musical language.

Originally written for voice and piano, *Old American Songs* was later set for voice and orchestra. The wind band version heard today was arranged by Thomas Knox, whose setting preserves the directness and charm of the original songs while adapting them to the sonorities of the concert band.

"The Boatman's Dance" opens the set with lively energy. Based on a minstrel-era song attributed to Daniel Decatur Emmett, it captures the rhythmic vitality of American river music and sets an exuberant tone for the collection.

"The Dodger" follows as a satirical song associated with nineteenth-century political campaigns. Its text presents a series of ironic self-portraits, and Copland's setting underscores the humor and pointed wit of the original material.

In contrast, "Long Time Ago" offers a moment of lyrical introspection. Drawn from a sentimental parlor song of the mid-nineteenth century, Copland treats the melody with simplicity and restraint, emphasizing its nostalgic character.

One of Copland's most widely recognized works, "Simple Gifts" is based on a Shaker tune collected in the mid-nineteenth century. Copland's setting highlights the melody's clarity and balance, qualities that have made it emblematic of his musical style.

The set concludes with “I Bought Me a Cat,” a cumulative children’s song in which each verse adds to the preceding material. Copland’s playful treatment builds momentum through repetition and variation, bringing the collection to an animated and humorous close.

Master Gunnery Sergeant Kevin Bennear, baritone

Baritone vocalist and concert moderator Master Gunnery Sergeant Kevin Bennear joined “The President’s Own” United States Marine Band in January 2000, becoming the third featured vocal soloist since the position was established in 1955. He began his musical instruction at age nine. After graduating in 1990 from Elk Garden High School in Elk Garden, West Virginia, he attended Potomac State College in Keyser, West Virginia, and earned a bachelor’s degree in music in 1996 from West Virginia University (WVU) in Morgantown, where he studied with Peter Lightfoot. He earned a master’s degree in vocal performance in 1999 from the University of Tennessee (UT), in Knoxville, where he studied with George Bitzas. Master Gunnery Sgt. Bennear has performed with the UT Opera Theater, WVU Opera Theater, Theatre West Virginia, and the Knoxville Opera Company, where he played the role of Sharpless in Giacomo Puccini’s *Madama Butterfly* with noted soprano Stella Zimbalis of the Metropolitan Opera. He also taught voice as a graduate teaching assistant at UT.

Symphony for Band, *West Point*
Morton Gould (1913–96)

Morton Gould was one of the most versatile and widely recognized American composers of the twentieth century whose career bridged concert music, radio, film, Broadway, ballet, and television. Emerging as a child prodigy in New York, Gould published compositions by age six and performed professionally while still a teenager. His early immersion in radio and popular entertainment did not diminish his commitment to serious composition; instead, it shaped a musical voice that combined clarity, rhythmic vitality, and a deep responsiveness to American vernacular traditions. Throughout his career, Gould moved easily between so-called “popular” and “classical” spheres, helping to erode rigid boundaries between them and establishing a distinctive place in American musical life.

Gould’s association with American civic and military institutions was both personal and enduring. Growing up in New York, he was deeply affected by the sound of marching bands and by the sight of veterans parading through city streets: experiences that fostered a lifelong admiration for those who serve in the armed forces and a particular affinity for march music. Ultimately, Gould was rejected from military service for health reasons. But he would use this inspiration to write some of the most substantial and imaginative works in the American concert band repertoire. His music for band reflects not only technical mastery, but also an understanding of the ensemble’s dual role as both an expressive concert medium and a symbol of public ceremony.

Symphony for Band, *West Point* was composed in 1952 for the United States Military Academy Band in honor of the Academy’s sesquicentennial celebration. Conceived as a complete symphonic statement in two movements, the work stands among the earliest large-scale symphonies written expressly for wind band. Rather than adopting the traditional four-movement symphonic model associated with the orchestra, Gould designed the piece to contrast two

complementary expressive worlds: one inward and commemorative, the other outward-facing and ceremonial. In doing so, he affirmed the concert band's capacity for both emotional depth and formal coherence.

The first movement, "Epitaphs," is solemn and reflective in character. Gould described it as a memorial not only to the soldiers of West Point, but more broadly to all who have suffered loss through war and human conflict. The movement opens with a quiet, chant-like idea that unfolds with restraint and dignity, establishing a tone of introspection. As the music develops, these restrained gestures expand into broader statements, creating a sense of dialogue within the ensemble. At the heart of the movement lies a *passacaglia* built on a martial theme, a form traditionally associated with gravity and inevitability. Through layered textures and accumulating intensity, Gould evokes the mechanical and impersonal forces of war, at one point even calling for a specially constructed "marching machine" to suggest the relentless motion of marching feet. The movement ultimately returns to its opening material, restoring a sense of humanity and repose before fading into quiet reflection.

The second movement, "Marches," provides a vivid contrast. Drawing on Gould's lifelong fascination with American march traditions, the movement presents a stylized procession of march-like ideas rather than a single, literal march. Rhythmic energy, crisp articulation, and bold fanfare figures animate the music as themes pass by in varied guises. At one point, Gould evokes the sound of a fife and drum corps to reference the West Point Band's original instrumentation. While the movement is animated and outwardly festive, it is carefully shaped through musical episodes that are transformed and recombined to create a coherent, symphonic trajectory. A brief recollection of material from "Epitaphs" links the two movements before the work concludes in a virtuosic coda of martial brilliance.

Taken as a whole, Symphony for Band occupies a central place in the history of American wind ensemble music. Composed at a moment when American composers were actively redefining the artistic possibilities of the concert band, the work demonstrates how traditional ceremonial materials can be shaped into a large-scale concert work. Gould's Symphony for Band remains both a landmark of the repertoire and a powerful statement of the concert band's role within American musical and civic life.