



Marine Band | Marine Chamber Orchestra | Marine Chamber Ensembles

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## MARINE CHAMBER ORCHESTRA

“The President’s Own” Marine Chamber Orchestra offers a variety of programming, from Broadway and light classical selections to staples of the orchestral repertoire, from the Baroque to the present. This includes compositions for string orchestra and those utilizing various wind instruments. Lauded by critics for their dramatic and confident performances, the Marine Chamber Orchestra is helping shape the identity of “The President’s Own” for the 21st century.

The Marine Chamber Orchestra frequently performs for high-profile events at the White House, and concerts by this ensemble offer patrons a virtual glimpse into the Executive Mansion. The Marine Chamber Orchestra concert series also provides the musicians an opportunity to explore the rich and varied repertoire of the chamber orchestra.

Research reveals that at least several members of the Marine Band played string instruments from its earliest years. Letters sent to the Commandant of the Marine Corps in 1806 indicate that strings for string instruments were being sought for the band.

Evidence of strings can be found through the nineteenth century. Francis Scala, the director of the band during the Civil War-era, included some string music in his personal music collection which served as the band’s performance library.

It is possible that civilian musicians were utilized to create an orchestra on special occasions. A Navy Department memo from 1878 indicated that the Marine Band would perform as an orchestra at an upcoming White House State Dinner. John Philip Sousa was known to have included strings with the Marine Band when performing for major White House events. In his autobiography, Sousa wrote, “... as an orchestra [we played at the White House] beside the staircase between the East Room and the reception rooms.” Scholars also believe the Marine Chamber Orchestra gave regular concerts at the Marine Barracks music hall, Washington, D.C., as early as 1893.

The U.S. Marine Symphony Orchestra officially emerged as a concert ensemble under the leadership of William H. Santelmann, Marine Band Director from 1898-1927. Santelmann, who auditioned for the band on clarinet, baritone, and violin, developed the Marine Symphony Orchestra by requiring all wind and percussion performers with less than nine years of service to be proficient on a stringed instrument. This requirement was eliminated in 1955. Today’s Marine Chamber Orchestra musicians hail from some of the

### **PLAYING AMERICA’S MUSIC SINCE 1798**

Marine Barracks, 8<sup>th</sup> and I Streets, SE, Washington, DC 20390-5000

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nation's most prestigious conservatories and display an intense and musical mastery of their instruments.

Whether performing works by classical masters such as Franz Schubert, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Franz Joseph Haydn, and Ludwig van Beethoven, or modern composers such as David Diamond and Virgil Thomson, the Marine Chamber Orchestra's virtuosity shines for Presidents, heads of state, and concert patrons alike.

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