fmmc
Classical Music for All

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From the President

Albert Hunt, FMMC President

I'm excited to be writing this just after hearing the Avanti Orchestra in a wonderful concert on November 8 with violinist Jiwoo Son, who won second prize in violin at the FMMC Foundation's 2025 Johansen International Competition. She is a truly impressive virtuoso, and it was a thrill to hear her play Tchaikovsky's *Violin Concerto*. In my last column, I wrote about what FMMC's local high school competitions offer young musicians. Hearing Jiwoo with Avanti reminded me of what those competitions and the Foundation's international competitions have in common. Both help us discover gifted young artists and give them opportunities to grow and perform. From Bartók's lively Romanian Folk Dances to Beethoven's immortal Fifth Symphony, it was an exciting afternoon of music. Just as enjoyable for me was seeing so many familiar faces from FMMC, both in the orchestra and in the audience. I love that we show up to hear and support one another.

One of the things that sets FMMC apart in the classical music world is that every one of our public concerts is free. That includes our many chamber music programs and performances by the Avanti Orchestra and the Arioso Chorale and Orchestra. So, the next time you come to a concert, bring a friend! Pick a program you'd enjoy together and introduce your friend to some of the people who make FMMC special. It's a wonderful way to grow our community and deepen your own connection to FMMC.



Albert Hunt

I also hope you'll take part in our Fall Fundraising Drive. The dollars we raise help keep our concerts free, and the number of people who give matters nearly as much as the amount we raise. When we apply for grants, funders look at how many people support us. A gift of any size helps show them how much our community values these concerts and wants them to continue. Please consider giving whatever feels right for you. If you've already given this fall, thank you for helping us share music with everyone who wants to hear it.

I hope to see you at one of our concerts soon!

Warm regards,

Albert

A Gift for You in the New Year....

An afternoon of music and friendship. Join us in Falls Church for FMMC's second in-home chamber concert on **Sunday, January 24, 2027**. Open to FMMC members plus one guest. Details to come. Free admission. To sign up, write to admin@fmmc.org



INSIDE THIS ISSUE

2	FMMC Concert Calendar
3	The Arioso Chorale and Orchestra Trip to Italy and Preparation for the January Concert
3	Community Events
3	Celebrating 140 Years: The Women of FMMC
4	In Remembrance Simon Finlow and Lois Jones
5	Foundation News
5	Johansen International Competition News
6	Encore Learning Chamber Music Club
6	In Full Swing: FMMC's Year-End Campaign!
7	Avanti Orchestra Members in Action
7	Membership Update
8	Thank You to our Supporters and Partners!

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ALBERT HUNT
FMMC President
fmmc@fmmc.org

LAILA LINDEN
Executive Director
manage@fmmc.org

For address changes, please go to www.FMMC.org and update your member profile. If you do not have access, send changes to:

JOHN SUTHERLAND EARLE
Membership Chair
membership@fmmc.org

FMMC
755 8th Street NW,
Washington DC 20001
fmmc.org

find us on facebook

FMMC Concert Calendar

December 2026 and Early January 2027

Please check the FMMC website calendar for the most current information.

Friday, December 4 @ 12pm, at St. George's Episcopal Church

- Haydn: Piano Sonata in E-flat Major, Hob.XVI:52. **Luke Ratcliffe**, piano
- Brahms: *Variations on a Theme by Haydn*, op. 56. **Julian Trail** and **Sophia Pallas**, piano
- Paquito D'Rivera: *Afro*. **Christopher Hite** (guest), E-flat clarinet; **Claire Eichhorn** (guest), B-flat clarinet; **Nancy Genovese**, basset horn; **Steve Lawson** (guest), bass clarinet

Friday, December 4 @ 12pm, at Woman's Club of Chevy Chase

The FMMC Composers Group presents works by member composers Leslie Bennett, Jessica Margolin, Jonathan Newmark, Stuart Rosenthal, and Mark Simon.

Thursday, December 10 @ 3pm, at Ingleside at King Farm

- Nadia Boulanger: *Nocturne.* Sofia Gubaidulina: *Sounds of the Forest*. Amanda Harberg: *Feather and Wax*. **Susan Brandt**, flute; **Justin Furnia** (guest), piano
- Selected Works for String Bass Trio. **Cyndy Elliott**, **Chris Kosky** (guest), and **John Nazdin** (guest), double basses (The Layhill Bass Trio)
- Bach-Busoni: *Chaconne in D Minor*. Rachmaninoff-Tchaikovsky: Lullaby, op. 16, no. 1. **Luke Ratcliffe**, piano

Friday December 11 @ 12pm, at St. George's Episcopal Church

- Ravel: String Quartet in F Major. **Nathan Giguere**, violin; **Sarah Connelly**, violin; **Reed Trevelyan**, viola; **Kurt Usowski**, cello
- Shostakovich: Sonata for Viola and Piano. **Hyejin Kim**, viola; **Topher Ruggiero**, piano

Friday, December 18 @ 12pm at Live! at 10th & G

- Leon Kirchner: *Five Pieces for Piano – To Be Played in One Movement*. **Jared Yoakem**, piano
- Brahms: Piano Quartet in G Minor, op. 25. **Erin Ryan**, violin; **Corby Johnson**, viola; **Curtis Shugart**, cello; **John Sutherland Earle**, piano
-

Friday, December 30 @ 1pm at the Friendship Heights Community Center

The FMMC Student Division presents several of our student musicians in recital.

Thursday, January 7 @ 1pm at the Strathmore Mansion

- Beethoven: Quintet for Piano and Winds, op. 16. **Luke Ratcliffe**, piano; **Bryan Cook** (guest), oboe; **Albert Hunt**, clarinet; **Jay Chadwick**, horn; **Christopher McFarlane**, bassoon
- Mozart: Piano Sonata in B-flat Major, K. 570. **Charles Timbrell**, piano

Friday, January 8 @ 12pm at St. George's Episcopal Church

The FMMC Composers Group presents works by member composers Leslie Bennett, Jonathan Newmark, and Steven Schwarz.

Sunday, January 10 @ 3pm at Collington Retirement Community

- J.S. Bach: Solo Partita No. 1, selections. **Makiko Taguchi**, violin
- Franz Biber: Rosary Sonata No. 16, "The Guardian Angel," Passacaglia, arranged for Solo Viola, **Jane Vourlekis**, viola
- Mozart: *Parto! Ma Tu Ben Mio* from *La Clemenza di Tito*. **Maggie Ramsey**, mezzo-soprano; **Andy Tangborn**, clarinet; **Susan Alexander**, piano

VENUES

Collington Retirement Community
10450 Lottsford Rd.
Mitchellville, MD

Ingleside Retirement Community
701 King Farm Blvd.
Rockville, MD

Friendship Heights Community Center
4433 S. Park Ave.
Chevy Chase, MD
Metro: Friendship Heights

Live! at 10th & G
945 G St., NW
Washington, DC
Metro: Gallery Place or Metro Center

St. George's Episcopal Church
915 N. Oakland St.
Arlington, VA
Metro: Virginia Square GMU

Strathmore Mansion
10701 Rockville Pike
N. Bethesda, MD
Metro: Grosvenor

Woman's Club of Chevy Chase
7931 Connecticut Ave.
Chevy Chase, MD

The Arioso Chorale and Orchestra Trip to Italy and Preparation for the January Concert

Peter Baum

After a successful concert in early October, the Arioso Chorale, augmented by several singers from Texas and California and members of the Arioso Orchestra, traveled to Salerno, Italy, to perform the Leavitt *Stabat Mater* in its European premier.

With 47 singers in the Chorale and fronted by the Amalfi Coast Music Festival Orchestra (40 instrumentalists including 5 members of the Arioso Orchestra), the group presented two concerts. One was given at the Basilica di San Giovanni in Naples (sponsored by Rotary International Chapters of Naples) and the second at the Chiesa di San Domenico in Maiori (sponsored by the Cimini Family in honor of Beniamino Cimini). Both concerts were well attended with the concert in Maiori "standing room only."

With its return to Washington, the Chorale and Orchestra are now focused on preparations for concerts on January 29 and 31. The concerts again will be held at the Church of the Epiphany in the heart of DC. The principal work on the program will be Felix Mendessohn's Oratorio, *Elijah*. The Chorale will present just Part 1 of the work in January and Part 2 of the work on the Chorale's final concerts in May.

Even though rehearsals are on-going, the Chorale welcomes new singers who wish to participate in the concerts in both January and May. Instrumentalists are always welcome, with string players particularly needed. People interested in joining Arioso or the orchestra should contact Peter Baum at Chorale@fmmc.org.

Community Events

Connie Schulz





In another reflection of our outstanding community concerts, an FMMC outreach concert was held at the Collington CCRC retirement community in Bowie on October 18 to an audience of more than 50 residents. Collington, opened in October 1988, has been a part of the FMMC outreach program of concerts for nearly 40 years. Over the years, a number of Collington residents have been members of the FMMC; currently three members are residents. The concert on October 18 was the first of three to be held at Collington this season, coordinated by Makiko Taguchi [solo violin] for the FMMC chamber program and Constance [Connie] Schulz [chamber violin], a Collington resident. These two photos are of two performing groups: the string trio of Johnson, Chen, and Shugart; and the soprano and piano duo of Ramsey and Sutherland. This is just another reflection of the wonderful musical performances in our communities.

The program included:

- Makiko Taguchi, violin: *Bourree* from Solo Violin Partita No.1 by J.S. Bach (1685-1750)
- Maggie Ramsey, Mezzo-Soprano: *Frauenliebe und Leben* by Robert Schumann (1810-1856), with John Sutherland Earle, piano
- Corby Johnson, viola; Sherry Chen, violin; and Curtis Shugart, cello: Serenade for String Trio, op. 10 by Ernst von Dohnányi (1877-1960)

Celebrating 140 Years: The Women of FMMC



Alice S. Byrnes, FMMC president from 1919 to 1942, joined the club in 1897 and became Musical Director by 1901. Born into a family deeply rooted in Washington's religious, civic, and musical life, she began performing as a child organist at the Christian Church, founded in her grandparents' home on Massachusetts Avenue. She studied piano with prominent local musicians, including Mamie Simon and Anton Gloetzner, played with the Georgetown Amateur Orchestra, and studied piano in Berlin before marrying Eugene Byrnes, a patent attorney.

In 1921, the FMMC Board amended its bylaws to allow Mrs. Byrnes unlimited tenure, beginning her long reign as "perennial" president. Under her leadership, the club helped establish the National Symphony Orchestra, contributing $5,000 as a founding supporter in 1931. Byrnes resigned in 1942 and died in September 1943, remembered by members as "our beloved president." [Information taken from *The First Hundred Years of the Friday Morning Music Club of Washington, DC*, by Charlotte Shear]

In Remembrance

Simon Finlow

Albert Hunt and Daryl Yoder

FMMC and the FMMC Foundation lost a cherished friend on October 31 with the passing of Simon Finlow. A gifted pianist and generous colleague, Simon will be remembered for his warmth, curiosity, and quiet dedication to our musical community.

Simon began playing piano at four and later studied with Imogen Cooper. He attended Oxford University before earning a PhD in musicology at King's College, Cambridge. His chapter on Chopin's etudes in the 1992 Cambridge Companion to Chopin remains a resource for scholars today.

At King's, he met Leslie, an American musicology student. They married in the college chapel, with friends from its famous choir singing for the occasion. They later made their home in Washington, DC, raising a family while Simon earned a master's degree in computer science and pursued a career in IT.

After nearly 30 years away from serious piano playing, Simon returned to the instrument in 2014, studying with Michael Adcock at the Washington Conservatory. He performed throughout the Washington area, competed twice in the Cliburn International Amateur Piano Competition, and participated in masterclasses with Brian Ganz, Olga Kern, and other distinguished artists.

Simon joined FMMC in 2014 and the Foundation Board in 2020. Generous with his time, expertise, and financial support, he chaired the 2024 Washington International Competition for Piano. Behind the scenes, he helped manage applications, work through repertoire questions, and tend to countless details.

Music remained part of Simon's life through his final illness. His last performance was on October 9, playing the Brahms Clarinet Trio in the FMMC Chamber Music Series at St. George's Episcopal Church in Arlington.



Simon finlow

Simon made many friends through music, and his curiosity reached far beyond it—to astrophysics, high-performance cars, sports, and his beloved cats. We will deeply miss his artistry, friendship, and gentle presence. Our heartfelt condolences go to Leslie, Robert, and Mia.

Lois Jones

Leslie Luxemburg

Lois Smith Jones, who passed away recently at the age of 90, epitomized the very best of what it means to be a member of FMMC. A consummate pianist and musician who performed as a soloist and accompanist, she was also an enthusiastic chamber musician during her many years of membership. Lois was a devoted and highly respected private piano teacher as well, with an active studio until very recently.

But Lois gave much more than her musical gifts. She was one of those special members who took her FMMC participation to a whole different level, by filling various leadership roles that are so crucial for maintaining an essentially all-volunteer organization such as ours. From serving as FMMC President for four years, to accepting and carrying out myriad roles on the FMMC Foundation Board, Lois was always willing to step up and assume even the less visible but equally important tasks that keep an organization like ours thriving.

Throughout it all, Lois displayed her warmth and enthusiasm in an always modest manner. She was a truly special colleague and dear friend to many of us. We will miss her.



Lois seated on the right with her close friend Ann Joseph

Foundation News

Daryl Yoder
Director, Washington & Johansen International Competitions
FMMC Foundation

In early November, I had the great pleasure of attending the Avanti Orchestra concert which included the Tchaikovsky *Violin Concerto*, featuring the 2025 Johansen International Competition 2nd place prize winner, Jiwoo Son. While still only 17 years old, her technical mastery, musicality and sense of drama made for a stunning and assured performance. We don't often have the opportunity to hear participants from either of our competitions performing in person after the events are over – they disperse to the four corners of the country and beyond – which, in many ways, means we never get to hear them in their natural habitat, outside of the somewhat artificial setting of a competition. This is one reason why we are especially grateful to have a sister organization in the FMMC: the Avanti Orchestra does its best to bring one or more prize winners from the Johansen or the Washington International Competitions back each season to perform as soloists. In March, our 2026 WIC winner, mezzo-soprano Michelle Mariposa, will join the orchestra for Mahler's Lieder *Eines fahrenden Gesellen*. This longstanding partnership, of course, doesn't exist just to give us the treat of hearing these young and emerging artists again. More importantly, it gives them the experience of a full performance with orchestra of a significant piece from the repertoire – experience which is extremely valuable at the early stages of their professional development and which can be very hard to come by.

What a partnership between two organizations really means, though, is that individual people are making things happen. In the case of the November concert, Avanti's conductor, Chi-Yuan Lin, and Michael Casassa, who chaired the committee which organized the 2025 Johansen Competition, are two examples among many. And for many other Foundation undertakings of various kinds over the last five years, Simon Finlow was one of those people. Simon was the de facto manager of the WIC online application system, running test submissions and helping preliminary judges navigate things. He created spreadsheets of results and formulas for scoring, consulted on questions of repertoire, performed on fundraising concerts, turned pages on stage for pianists, transported jury members around Washington, and much more. When something needed to be done, more often than not, Simon was there, being considerate, kind and quietly competent. We will miss him enormously.

As we enter this holiday season of gratitude and gift giving, take a moment to think about the individuals who make things that you appreciate happen. And then perhaps take another moment to let them know that you are grateful, as I am for all of the FMMC and Foundation family.

The 2027 Washington International Competition for Piano will be dedicated to the memory of Simon Finlow.

Johansen International Competition News

Danielle Stoebe, Administrative Director

JIC News: We plan to announce applications starting in early 2027 and will open the competition for applications on March 1, 2027.

Updates on Winners

Emad Zolfaghari (2022 JIC, second prize viola) was announced as the winner of the Windsor Festival International String Competition, becoming the first violist in WFISC history to take first prize. He received a £5,000 cash prize, a solo recording with Champs Hill Records, a performance in Windsor Castle during the 2027 Windsor Festival with Associate Orchestra, a concerto commission, as well as recital opportunities.

There is a great article on *Teng Li* (2000 JIC, first prize viola). She will be giving the North American premiere of Anders Hillborg's *Viola Concerto* as part of Esprit Orchestra's FAST program at Toronto's Koerner Hall on November 29th.

https://myscena.org/catherine-kustanczy/teng-li-the-violist-brings-anders-hillborgs-concerto-to-esprit-orchestra/

New England Conservatory announced that cellist and alumnus *Nicholas Canellakis* (2000 JIC, second prize cello) will join its faculty in the Fall 2027 semester.

Maya Buchanan (2015 JIC, third prize violin), *Romain-Olivier Gray* (2022 JIC, second prize cello), and Hao Yang (guitar) each performed as alumni of the Curtis Institute of Music for a sold-out crowd in the Field Concert Hall.

https://www.thestrad.com/reviews/concert-review-maya-anjali-buchanan-violin-romain-olivier-gray-cello-hao-yang-guitar/21852.article

Alexander Zhou, Ella Xu, and *Elizabeth Poppy Song* (2025 JIC, third prize violin) were all named Gold Medalists of the 32nd Annual Paul & Loti Christensen Young Artist Competition. These winners will perform their winning selections with the Vancouver Symphony Orchestra on January 16th and 17th.

Olivia Marckx (2015 JIC, semifinalist cello) and *Emad Zolfaghari* (2022 JIC, second prize viola) were named semifinalists for a chance to join the Young Concert Artists' roster.


Emad Zolfaghari


Nicholas Canellakis

Encore Learning Chamber Music Club

Rhoda Ritzenberg

On November 13, the Encore Learning Chamber Music Club attended a performance of Antonin Dvorak's "Dumky Trio," for piano, violin and cello. A "dumka" (plural of "dumky") is a Slavic folk song.

Dvorak was riding high in 1891 after the dumky was first performed, including by esteemed American orchestras. While others were writing music that sounded "classical," he was composing pieces that reflected his Czech heritage. A year later, Dvorak arrived in New York City to head the National Conservatory of Music of America, a brainchild of the philanthropist Jeannette Thurber. Thurber was a visionary. She hired Dvorak because he shared her sensibility that music should sound like the country it came from and she opened the Conservatory to talented musicians regardless of race, gender, creed or physical disability.

In 1890, shortly before Dvorak arrived, Thurber was busy seeking support for his arrival. She held a reception at the Shoreham Hotel in Washington to introduce American composers. Women from the newly formed Friday Morning Music Club (FMMC) attended. A few months later, the FMMC women voted to give $4 apiece annually to finance a student at the conservatory. (With 25 members, the total came to $100).

In a 1918 *New York Times* article Mrs. Thurber said: "From its inception, the plan of the National Conservatory of Music of America has been to establish a national conservatory of music in Washington with branches [outside the city]."

Did the FMMC founders understand how revolutionary Mrs. Thurber's ideas were? I think so. Did they believe or hope Washington would become a mecca for music? I'll let you answer that.

While Mrs. Thurber's ideas for a national conservatory in Washington didn't come to fruition, her conservatory opened the door to composers from varied backgrounds and encouraged the writing of American music.

If you are interested in learning more about Encore Learning, visit our fact page at FAQ/Resource page or email us at info@encorelearning.net.



In Full Swing: FMMC's Year-End Campaign!

Our halls are filled with listening ears, our stages with beautiful music, and our community with warmth. FMMC is a welcoming social community where members connect, contribute, and make friends along the way.

Our concerts across DC, Maryland, and Virginia are free for everyone, but they take real resources to bring to life. Membership dues cover only 7% of our operating expenses, so we count on friends like you to close the gap. Your gift keeps the music playing, and it tells our community and the foundations that support us that FMMC is something special.

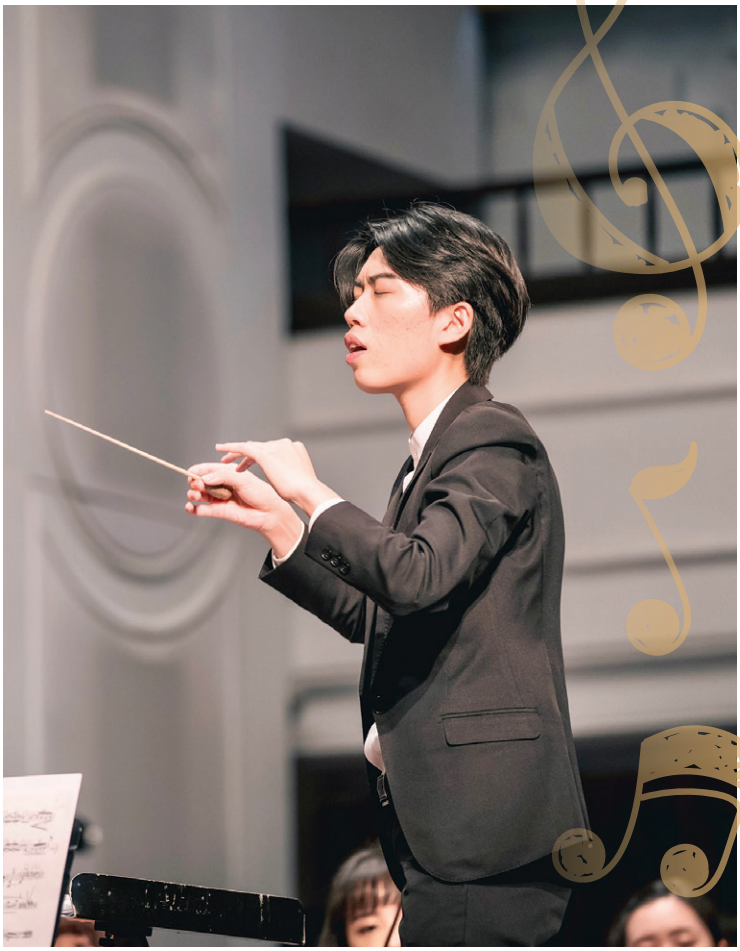
Help us reach $50,000 by January 1, 2027. Every gift, whatever the size, brings us one step closer. Donate today and help keep the music in full swing!

Giving takes just a minute: fmmc.org/donate. Every donation is fully tax-deductible.

Avanti Orchestra Members in Action







Membership Update

The following members have joined or renewed since the publication of the FMMC *Yearbook & Directory* in September 2026.

John Buche (Arioso Chorale Bass/Baritone), Washington, DC
Deborah Chen (Chamber Cello), Fulton, MD
Ken Ding (Solo Cello), Potomac, MD
Jacqueline Epstein (Associate Piano), Washington, DC
Leon Fay (Associate), Washington, DC
Pamela Fisher (Associate), Arlington, VA
Ann Hoopes (Associate Piano), Chevy Chase, MD
William Hsieh (Student Piano), Chevy Chase, MD
Ellen Hwangbo (Solo Piano), Potomac, MD
Lee Rucker Keiser (Associate Viola), Bethesda, MD
Jennifer Klein (Associate Violin), Rockville, MD
Matt Kupferman (Avanti Orchestra Viola), Arlington, VA
Sylvia Lagerquist (Associate Piano), Hyattsville, MD
Beth Lilienstein (Associate Cello), Potomac, MD
Christopher McFarlane (Avanti Orchestra Bassoon), Alexandria, VA
Bruce McWhirter (Associate French Horn), Centreville, VA
Marie McWhirter (Associate Clarinet), Centreville, VA
William Ross (Associate), Arlington, VA
Virginia Sircy (Solo Organ, Solo Piano), Arlington, VA
Richard (Rick) Smith (Chamber Clarinet), Triangle, VA
Nancy Switkes (Associate Bassoon), Boyds, MD
Keith Wall (Associate), Arlington, VA
Linda Zebooker (Arioso Chorale Soprano), Silver Spring, MD

Friday Morning Music Club
755 8th Street, NW
Washington, DC 20001

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DC COMMISSION ON THE ARTS & HUMANITIES

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