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2025-2026 Season

“An American Tribute”

Jorge Martinez-Rios

Music Director/Conductor

Performing:

Gould, Copland, Sousa, Custer
Gershwin, and Grant Still

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Sunday, February 15, 2026, at 3:00p.m.

Atkinson Recital Hall
NMSU, Las Cruces

Jorge Martinez-Rios

Music Director and Conductor



A Grammy Award-winning artist nominated for two other Grammys, conductor Jorge Martinez-Rios studied viola and piano at the Conservatorio de las Rosas in Morelia, Mexico. In 2003, he completed his Master of Music degree in Viola Performance at Western Michigan University. In 2007, he completed another Master of Music Degree in chamber music and studied conducting under the instruction of Dr. Frank Wiley. Jorge Martinez-Rios has conducted the Contemporary Music Ensemble in Morelia Mexico, Conservatorio de Las Rosas Chamber Orchestra, Camerata de Coahuila, and the NMSU Philharmonic Orchestra.

Martinez specializes in chamber music and he is the violist and founding member of the La Catrina Quartet, which has been hailed by Yo-Yo Ma as "wonderful ambassadors for music." He has performed in Germany, the United Kingdom, Mexico, Chile, Colombia, Aruba, El Salvador, and all over the United States. Recent appearances include Carnegie Hall, Merkin Hall, and Symphony Space in New York City; Meany Hall World-Series in Seattle; Chicago Center for the Arts; UCLA Concert Series; Festival Internacional in Chihuahua, Mexico; Palacio de Bellas Artes and National Center for the Arts in Mexico City; San Miguel de Allende Music Festival and Festival Internacional Cervantino in Guanajuato, Mexico.

He has recorded over 10 albums. In 2012, he was a featured artist on the Latin Grammy Winning Recording of Seresta for Double Quartet by Brazilian composer Francisco Mignone with the Cuarteto Latinoamericano. During the same year, he was invited by the National Endowment for the Arts in Mexico to record the String Trio and the Sonata for Viola and Piano as part of the Moncayo Compilation Project. In 2014, he was nominated for another Latin Grammy for the recording of String Quartet No. 2 by Cuban Composer Yalil Guerra. He is currently nominated for a 2018 Latin Grammy for the recording of String Quartet No. 3 (In Memoriam Ludwig van Beethoven) by the same composer.

Martinez is Associate Professor at the New Mexico State University Department of Music, principal violist of the Las Cruces Symphony and the San Antonio Chamber Orchestra, and he has a busy performing, conducting, and recording agenda.

New Horizons Symphony Orchestra

Personnel

Dr. Jorge Martinez-Rios, Music Director / Conductor

Violin I

Gordon Butler, *Concertmaster*
Carol Eberhart
Stephanie Ho
Ellen Michnovicz
Debbie Eckles
Rose Hoffman
Stephanie Shaurette
Don McCracken

Violin II

Paola Gabbi-Madrid, *Principal*
Alexandra Glowacki
Ann Siewert
Gay Lenzo
Robert Wojcikiewicz
George Orozco
Rachel Williams
Sabrina Montoya
Phyllis Williams

Viola

Barbara Creider, *Principal*
Susan Neumann
Kristian Finlator
Kathryn Ray
Leigh Mayers

Cello

Cesar Camarena, *Principal*
Charlene Debus
Greg Lenzo
Samantha Meadors
Alexis Sifuentes
Erica Christensen
Steve St. John

Bass

Christopher Blount, *Principal*
Dan McCurley
Anne Foltz
Ross Palmer
Jeff Bruner
(Banjo on Afro-American Symphony, III)

Flute

Nancy Christmore, *Principal*
Vicki Kuyper
Molly Molloy, *flute/piccolo*

Oboe

Ann Berman, *Principal*
Michele Lang

Clarinet

Laurel (Kitt) Brandi, *Principal*
Kayla Matheison
Abrianna Garcia
Jason Ford, *Bass Clarinet*

Bassoon

Rusty Smith, *Principal*
Norah Talbot

French Horn

Jim Patterson, *Principal*
Cora Patterson
Bill Kuyper
Megan Fas
Adriana Urquidi

Trumpet

Benjamin Pinkham
Dalton Pendergrass
Benjamin Posey

Trombone

John Alberts
Lynn Enright
Greg Taylor

Tuba

Johnny Lang, *Principal*

Timpani

MaryKay McDonald

Percussion

Adrian Gonzalez
Zachary Dunlap

New Horizons Symphony Board of Directors

Ann Berman, *President*
Vicki Kuyper, *Vice-President*
Charlene Debus, *Secretary*
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Dan McCurley
Laurel (Kitt) Brandi
Kayla Matheison
Kathryn Ray

Jorge Martinez-Rios, *ex officio*
Gordon Butler, *ex officio*

His musical talent brought him to the attention of W.C. Handy, and Still moved to Memphis to begin working with Mr. Handy, the creator of St. Louis Blues. Soon thereafter, he enrolled in Oberlin College and, after military service in World War I, rejoined W.C. Handy's band, then based in New York City.

Harlem Renaissance

The Harlem Renaissance was an African American philosophical, literary, and artistic movement that developed in New York City toward the end of World War I. The war created the conditions for the Great Migration, in which job opportunities drew many people from the rural South to northern cities in search of decent-paying work. This produced a concentration of Black Americans in Harlem, creating a ready market for entertainment and a willingness to share ideas in creative exploration.

The entertainment in Harlem's clubs and theaters drew audiences from across New York and, for a time, lowered racial barriers. Langston Hughes, in his 1940 autobiography *The Big Sea*, described the scene:

“What a crowd! All classes and colors meet face to face—ultra aristocrats, bourgeois, Communists, Park Avenue galore, bookers, publishers, Broadway celebrities, and Harlemites giving each other the once-over.”

But the Harlem Renaissance extended beyond entertainment into intellectual explorations of poetry, drama, visual art, and music. W.E.B. Du Bois wrote in *The Souls of Black Folk* of works exploring “the double consciousness of the African American experience.” Art forms were needed to express this complex experience of opportunity, rejection, and frustration.

One frequent literary theme of the Harlem Renaissance was the emotional experience of Black Americans under segregation. Still's *Afro-American Symphony*, written in 1930, brings this idea into music. Each movement is subtitled with an emotional reference:

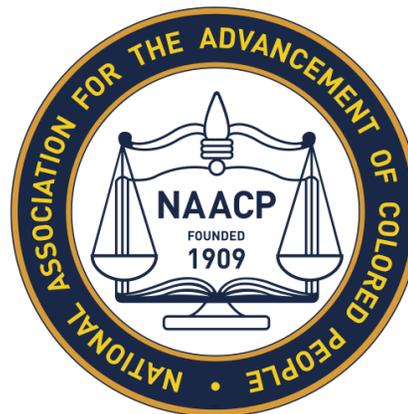
- **I. Longing** (Moderato assai): Opens with a bluesy theme, often described as call-and-response.
- **II. Sorrow** (Adagio): Reflects the emotional weight of a spiritual.
- **III. Humor** (Animato): A lively scherzo featuring banjo.
- **IV. Aspiration** (Lento, con risoluzione): A hopeful finale blending previous themes.

Still intended these movements to evoke the spirit of African American life, incorporating blues, spirituals, and jazz-influenced elements into a traditional symphonic form.

After its performance, Still selected fragments of poetry by Paul Laurence Dunbar to accompany the movements.

Still composed over 200 works, including symphonies, operas, ballets, choral works, and film music. Despite barriers created by segregation, he became a pioneering figure in American concert music. He later worked in film and television in Los Angeles, where he died in 1978.

Concert Benefactor:



NAACP

Doña Ana County Branch

Founded in 1909, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) is the nation's oldest and largest civil rights organization. Its mission is to ensure the political, educational, social, and economic equality of rights of all persons and to eliminate race-based discrimination.

For more than a century, the NAACP has stood at the forefront of advocacy, education, and community engagement—shaping the American narrative by elevating voices that call for justice while celebrating the cultural contributions that define our shared national identity.

The Doña Ana County Branch of the NAACP proudly carries this legacy forward at the local level through civic leadership, educational outreach, and meaningful partnerships. Central to its work is the belief that the arts are not only a reflection of society, but a powerful force for dialogue, understanding, and change.

The branch's partnership in this concert, *An American Tribute*, exemplifies that commitment. This evening's featured work, the *Afro-American Symphony* by William Grant Still, stands as a landmark achievement in American music. Premiered in 1931, the symphony blends classical tradition with blues and spiritual influences, offering a deeply human portrait of the African American experience. Each movement is framed by poetry from Paul Laurence Dunbar, whose words give voice to struggle, perseverance, sorrow, and hope. The Doña Ana County NAACP has provided significant financial support for this performance and has curated the multimedia presentation that accompanies the symphony, enriching the audience's experience and deepening the historical and cultural context of the work. In doing so, the organization helps ensure that this important American voice is not only heard, but fully understood. Through its leadership and generosity, the Doña Ana County NAACP continues to honor the past while actively shaping a more inclusive cultural future—affirming that music, history, and community remain inseparable threads in the American story.

Learn more at <https://naacpdac.org>





Dr. Bobbie Green
President,
Doña Ana County NAACP

Dr. Bobbie Green is a professor, social activist, writer, lecturer, and public speaker whose career reflects a lifelong commitment to education, community leadership, and cultural expression. With more than twenty years in higher education, she has taught thousands of students and created hundreds of recorded lectures, establishing herself as a dynamic and influential voice in both academic and public spheres.

Dr. Green has served as the conductor of the New Mexico State University Gospel Choir for the past fifteen years, performing at concerts and public events throughout New Mexico. Her work in music reflects a deep understanding of its power to inspire, preserve history, and bring communities together—values that resonate strongly with tonight’s performance.

Her civic leadership includes appointment as a Commissioner with the New Mexico Martin Luther King Jr. State Commission by Mary Kay Papen in 2017, and service on the Law Enforcement Academy Board following her 2019 appointment by Michelle Lujan-Grisham. She currently serves as President of the Doña Ana County NAACP, where she continues to advocate for equity, education, and justice within the community.

A native of Las Cruces, Dr. Green is presently a faculty member at the City University of New York. She is married to Howard Guion, a Project Engineer for the Department of the Army at White Sands Missile Range.

In this performance, Dr. Green joins the orchestra on stage to read the epigraphs by Paul Laurence Dunbar that introduce each movement of Still’s Afro-American Symphony. Her participation brings a powerful and personal dimension to the work—uniting music, poetry, scholarship, and lived experience in a moment that honors both artistic excellence and the enduring American pursuit of justice.

George Gershwin (1898–1937)

Rhapsody in Blue (1924)

Arranged by Jerry Brubaker

Premiered in 1924, Rhapsody in Blue is one of the most influential and recognizable works in American music. George Gershwin composed the piece as a bold fusion of classical structure and jazz idioms, capturing the energy, diversity, and restless momentum of early 20th-century America.

Gershwin, born in Brooklyn, New York, rose to prominence through popular songs and Broadway productions before making a groundbreaking impact on the concert stage. Rhapsody in Blue was written for bandleader Paul Whiteman’s concert titled “An Experiment in Modern Music.” Gershwin reportedly composed much of the work in just a few weeks after seeing a newspaper announcement about the upcoming premiere—a commission he had nearly forgotten.

The piece opens with its famous clarinet glissando—one of the most unmistakable gestures in American music—immediately establishing its jazz-inflected character. Throughout the work, Gershwin blends syncopated rhythms, blues harmonies, and sweeping lyrical melodies, moving fluidly between exuberance and introspection. Rather than following a strict concerto form, the music unfolds freely, shifting between rhythmic vitality and expansive romantic themes.

Often described as a musical portrait of 1920s New York, the work evokes bustling city streets, moments of reflection, and bursts of celebratory energy—skyscrapers rising, traffic surging, cultures intersecting. The version heard today, arranged by Jerry Brubaker, preserves the spirit and rhythmic vitality of Gershwin’s original while adapting it for full symphonic performance. More than a century after its premiere, Rhapsody in Blue remains a defining symbol of American creativity.

William Grant Still

Symphony No. 1, Afro-American Symphony

William Grant Still was born in Woodville, Mississippi, in 1895 to Carrie Lena Fambro Still and William Grant Still Sr. Still Sr. passed away from tuberculosis three months after his son was born. The family moved to Little Rock, Arkansas, where his mother taught high school for many decades. She remarried Charles Shepperson, who brought his love of opera and a phonograph into the household. Shepperson took his stepson to attend concerts and, through this, nourished a deep knowledge and love of music in the boy.

At age 15, in 1910, William Grant Still tried to build a violin out of a cigar box, and his family provided him with a real violin and lessons. At age 16, he graduated from high school as class valedictorian. He learned the violin, cello, and oboe and attended Wilberforce University in Ohio with the goal of becoming a medical doctor. However, he found himself involved in music to the point that he changed his career goals.

Hoe-Down (from Rodeo, 1942)

“Hoe-Down” is a lively and energetic piece composed in 1942 as part of Copland’s ballet Rodeo, and it remains one of his most popular works. The movement was inspired by a recording of Kentucky fiddler Bill Stepp playing the traditional square dance tune “Bonaparte’s Retreat.” Copland was so impressed by Stepp’s playing that he decided to incorporate the tune into “Hoe-Down.”

John Philip Sousa “The Fairest of the Fair” (1908)

John Philip Sousa (November 6, 1854 – March 6, 1932) was an American bandmaster and composer of military marches. “The Fairest of the Fair” is generally regarded as one of Sousa’s finest and most melodic marches. Its inspiration came from the sight of a young woman he admired but did not know personally. The piece was an immediate success and remains one of his most popular compositions.

The Boston Food Fair was an annual exposition and music jubilee held by the Boston Retail Grocers’ Association. The Sousa Band was the main musical attraction for several seasons, and in 1908 Sousa wrote this march to honor the sponsors.

Because of an oversight, the march nearly missed its premiere. Although Sousa had completed a full conductor’s score, the individual band parts had not been prepared. Louis Morris, the band’s copyist, worked through the night on a train to Boston to prepare them. Thanks to his extraordinary effort, the premiere proceeded successfully on September 28, 1908. Sousa later rewarded Morris with two extra weeks’ salary.

(Adapted from Paul E. Bierley, The Works of John Philip Sousa, 1984.)

Calvin Custer Star Trek Through the Years

There have been many composers associated with Star Trek, making attribution complex. Numerous composers have contributed to its television series and films. Jerry Goldsmith composed several of the feature film scores, while the original and most recognizable television themes (1966) were written by American composer Alexander Courage (1919–2008). These iconic themes were repeated in many subsequent film soundtracks.

Star Trek is an American story of optimism, honor, and the willingness to work together with diverse people for the good of all. The music evokes its many dimensions: inspirational, romantic, heroic, and filled with pomp and fanfare. Arranger Calvin Custer has assembled this medley of themes.

(Adapted from program notes by Matt Ward.)

The New Horizons Symphony at NMSU, Inc.

February 15, 2026

“An American Tribute”

Dr. Jorge Martinez-Rios, Music Director / Conductor

Program

American Salute Morton Gould
(1913–1996)

An Outdoor Overture Aaron Copland
(1900–1990)

Hoe-Down Aaron Copland
from “Rodeo”

The Fairest of the Fair John Phillip Sousa
(1854 - 1932)

Star Trek Through the Years Calvin Custer
(b. 1939)

Intermission

Rhapsody in Blue George Gershwin
(1898–1937)
arr. by Jerry Brubaker

Afro-American Symphony William Grant Still
(1895–1978)

Dr. Bobbie Green, vocals

Please silence all cell phones and refrain from flash photography

About Our Orchestra

The New Horizons Symphony at New Mexico State University, Inc. is a member of the New Horizons International Music Association, an international organization dedicated to supporting lifelong musical engagement for adults. The New Horizons movement affirms that music-making remains a vital and enriching pursuit at every stage of life.

Founded in 2003 as a string orchestra, the New Horizons Symphony at NMSU has grown into a full symphony orchestra of approximately 60 players. Musicians come from across the region to rehearse weekly on the campus of New Mexico State University, working together in a collaborative environment that values musical growth, dedication, and shared artistry.

The orchestra is committed to presenting high-quality performances that are accessible to the entire community. Concerts are offered free of charge to the public, reflecting a belief in the importance of making orchestral music widely available and fostering meaningful cultural connections.

The New Horizons Symphony at NMSU is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization and is sustained through the generosity of patrons, donors, and community partners. Their support allows the orchestra to continue enriching the cultural life of Southern New Mexico while providing dedicated musicians the opportunity to perform, connect, and contribute through music.

For more information, please visit our website.

www.nhsocruces.com



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Program Notes

Written by Barbara Creider, Viola

Morton Gould American Salute (1942)

Morton Gould was born in Richmond Hill, New York. He was recognized early as a child prodigy with abilities in improvisation and composition; his first composition was published at age six. Gould studied at the Institute of Musical Art in New York.

Written in 1942 during the early days of World War II, American Salute was composed at the request of a government radio program producer who wanted a “salute to America.” The piece is a brilliant setting of “When Johnny Comes Marching Home.”

Gould had no idea the work would become a classic: “It was years before I knew it was a classic setting. What amazes me is that critics say it is a minor masterpiece, a gem. To me, it was just a setting. I was doing a million of those things.” By his own account, he composed and scored American Salute in less than eight hours, beginning at 6:00 p.m. the evening before it was due (with copyists standing by) and finishing at 2:00 a.m. Although the ink could hardly have been dry, the score and parts were ready for rehearsal the next morning and broadcast that evening.

Aaron Copland (1900–1990)

Aaron Copland was an American composer, critic, writer, teacher, pianist, and conductor of his own and other American music. He was referred to by his peers and critics as the “Dean of American Music.”

Born: November 14, 1900, Brooklyn, New York

Died: December 2, 1990, Sleepy Hollow, New York

Two works by Aaron Copland appear on this concert.

Outdoor Overture (1938)

Outdoor Overture was written in 1938 for a performance in the auditorium of the High School of Music and Art in New York City. Alexander Richter, the school orchestra conductor, asked Copland for a composition to begin a project called “American Music for American Youth.” Copland wrote this overture and, in the same year, produced the ballet Billy the Kid.

The melodic materials are the essence of simplicity, beginning with a main theme that proceeds from a descending C-major triad and contains straightforward scale passages, leading to a rousing march tune.
(Adapted from a program note by Orrin Howard.)