

# Aurea Ensemble School Performance

Monday, January 27, 9:00 - 10:00 am  
Alvarez High School, Providence



**Breaking boundaries between words and music, this performance ensemble with a superb string quartet at its core calls us to listen closely to some of America's most eloquent composers, poets and writers, pointing us to a deeper understanding of our natural world.**

Highly praised for its transcendent quality, "Of Nature Composed" premiered in 2016 to celebrate the centennial of the Pulitzer Prize through an exploration of nature, science, the arts and humanities.

This deftly arranged concert program features music by Pulitzer Prize winner John Luther Adams, "one of the most original musical thinkers of the new century" (The New Yorker), composers Charles Griffes, John Cage, Lou Harrison, and Charles Ives; Pulitzer Prize-winning poet Galway Kinnell; former U.S. Poet Laureate Ted Kooser; and naturalists Henry David Thoreau and John Muir.

## Featuring:

**Nigel Gore**, spoken word  
**Chris Turner**, harmonica, spoken word  
**Mina Lacheva, Alexey Shabalin**, violins  
**Consuelo Sherba**, viola  
**Emmanuel Feldman**, cello

*Presented as part of FirstWorks Earth First programming. Originally commissioned by Rhode Island Council for the Humanities in 2016 to celebrate the centennial of the Pulitzer Prize.*

## FirstWorks Earth First

### Earth First

*Launched during the 2018-19 15th anniversary season, FirstWorks continues environmentally-themed Arts Learning programming through Earth First; leveraging the power of world-class arts to create awareness about sustainability, climate change, and the stewardship of outdoor spaces.*

A key component of FirstWorks is its dedication to providing transformative arts experiences to youth across Rhode Island. The 2018-19 season marked the launch of our *Earth First* initiative linking the arts with environmental awareness. Aurea Ensemble's performance of *Of Nature Composed*, along with an introduction by NOAA Scientist Catalina Martinez, supports this idea by presenting a deeper performance experience. Many thanks to [The National Grid Foundation](#) the [CDQ Trust](#) and [Nordson Corporation Foundation](#) for making these *Earth First* programs possible.



**FirstWorks is pleased to welcome NOAA Scientist Catalina Martinez who will introduce the *Of Nature Composed* performance to 11th grade science students at Dr. Jorge Alvarez High School in Providence. Alvarez High School has a strong science program due to its proximity to Mashapaug Pond and its construction on the former Gorham Manufacturing site. Students have participated in water testing experiments in science class and have integrated the pond in visual art classes. This musical experience supports and expands the STEAM approach to learning in place at Alvarez HS.**

Catalina Martinez is the Regional Program Manager for the NOAA Office of Ocean Exploration and Research (OER), with an office on the URI Graduate School of Oceanography (GSO) Campus. A certified diversity professional with three graduate degrees from URI (MS Oceanography, MMA Marine Affairs, MBA), Ms. Martinez began her ocean science career with NOAA in 2002 working on ship operations and logistics, as well as education and outreach initiatives associated with expeditions to explore little known and unknown ocean areas. Ms. Martinez spent many years sailing on research vessels as Expedition Coordinator for NOAA OER, and currently spends most of her time managing the joint efforts associated with multiple important collaborations at URI, and as regional liaison for the program.

Ms. Martinez also works on a variety of local, regional, and national efforts to face the barriers to entry for underrepresented individuals into STEM fields, and was honored with the URI Diversity Award for Staff/Administrator Excellence in Leadership and Service in 2010 for this work. She consistently seeks to increase potential for life success for individuals born to challenging circumstances, and was recognized by the YWCA as one of their 2015 Women of Achievement in Rhode Island for promoting peace, justice, freedom and dignity. Ms. Martinez also received the 2016 NOAA Oceanic and Atmospheric Research EEO/Diversity Award for Exemplary Service for dedication to improving the representation of women and minorities in STEM. Most recently, Ms. Martinez was honored with the 2019 Women of Color in STEM Diversity Leadership in Government Award for demonstrating sustained leadership in creating a more diverse, equitable, and inclusive Federal workforce.

# LESSON 4 - The American Renaissance and Transcendentalism



## The American Renaissance and Transcendentalism

By Thomas Hampson and Carla Maria Verdino-Süllwold, PBS I Hear America Singing

Transcendentalism was a visionary way of thinking that was widespread in 19th-century American art and thinking. Among those associated with the movement were Emerson, Thoreau, and the Alcotts. Composers who were influenced by Transcendentalist thinking include Edward MacDowell, Charles Ives, and Charles Griffes.

“We will walk on our own feet; we will work with our own hands; we will speak our own minds... A nation of men will for the first time exist, because each believes himself inspired by the Divine Soul which also inspires all men.”

With this fiery challenge Ralph Waldo Emerson concluded his 1837 Harvard Phi Beta Kappa Address “The American Scholar”, which was received with great enthusiasm. Emerson argued not only for a new American culture, freed from European bondage, but also for a rebirth of an intellectual and artistic life that was inextricably bound up with the life of the

spirit. Before long, Emerson and his circle of writers, reformers, and artists would christen those ideals which governed the spirit of “Transcendentalism”.

The Transcendentalists stood at the heart of the American Renaissance – the flowering of our nation’s thought in literature, poetry, painting, sculpture, architecture, and music in the period roughly from 1835 to 1880. Transcendentalism was concentrated in Boston and in Concord, Massachusetts, which was the home of many of its literary members, such as Emerson, Thoreau, Hawthorne, Margaret Fuller, the Alcotts, Theodore Parker, Jones Very, George Ripley, the Peabody Sisters, and the Channings. But Transcendentalism was far broader than a geographical phenomenon or a select club (though Ripley and Emerson founded the Transcendental Club in 1836). Rather, it was a faith shared by such diverse minds in such diverse places as those of Walt Whitman in Brooklyn, Emily Dickenson in Amherst, and the Hudson River School of painters in New York. It was a visionary bent, a way, as the English Romantic poet William Wordsworth once described his mission, “of seeing into the life of things”, and it permeated the best of American thought and art throughout much of the 19th century. Even those artists of the American Renaissance who would find difficulty with the optimism of the Transcendentalists – Hawthorne and Melville among them – were forced to focus on and respond to the existential issues the movement raised.

The term Transcendentalism was derived from the philosopher Kant, who called “all knowledge transcendental which is concerned not with objects but with our mode of knowing objects.” The roots of the American philosophy ran deep into German and English Romanticism. From German philosophers such as Fichte and Herder it received its mystic impulse; from Goethe, Novalis, Jean-Paul, Heine, and the other great German Romantic poets it acquired its imagistic language and themes. German thought was by and large filtered through English translations – Coleridge and Carlyle’s among the best. The English Romantics who enriched the Americans’ perspectives included Blake, Wordsworth, Shelley, Keats, and Byron.

In his 1842 address delivered at Boston’s Masonic Temple, which was later reprinted in *The Dial*, Emerson attempted to define the philosophy in simple terms: “What is popularly called Transcendentalism among us, is Idealism; Idealism as it appears in 1842.” In reality it was a far more complex collection of beliefs: that the spark of divinity lies within man; that everything in the world is a microcosm of existence; that the individual soul is identical to the world soul, or Over-Soul, as Emerson called it. This belief in the Inner Light led to an emphasis on the authority of the Self – to Walt Whitman’s “I”, to the Emersonian doctrine of Self-Reliance, to Thoreau’s civil disobedience, and to the Utopian communities at Brook Farm and Fruitlands. By meditation, by communing with nature, through work and art, man could transcend his senses and attain an understanding of beauty and goodness and truth.

Transcendentalism dominated the thinking of the American Renaissance, and its resonances reverberated through American life well into the 20th century. In one way or another our most creative minds were drawn into its thrall, attracted not only to its practicable messages of confident self-identity, spiritual progress, and social justice, but also by its aesthetics, which celebrated, in landscape and mindscape, the immense grandeur of the American soul.

Image: Ralph Waldo Emerson, Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, Digital ID; pga 01425

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## Of Nature Composed

### RESOURCES

Aurea Ensemble: <https://aureaensemble.org/>

URI Coastal Resources Center: [https://www.crc.uri.edu/activities\\_page/resilience-tools/](https://www.crc.uri.edu/activities_page/resilience-tools/)

NOAA Ocean Acidification: <https://www.pmel.noaa.gov/co2/story/Ocean+Acidification>

NOAA Educational Programming: <https://www.noaa.gov/education/resource-collections>

NOAA Climate Education Resources: <https://www.noaa.gov/education/resource-collections/climate-education-resources>

NOAA Ocean Exploration & Research Lesson Plans: <https://oceanexplorer.noaa.gov/edu/lessonplans/lessonplans.html>

NOAA Ocean Exploration & Research Expedition Education Modules: <https://oceanexplorer.noaa.gov/edu/modules/welcome.html>

NOAA Ocean Explorer site: <https://oceanexplorer.noaa.gov/>

### Catalina Martinez

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Articles: [Narragansett Times](#): *Narragansett resident wins STEM award*

[Providence Journal Bulletin](#): *Once a high-school dropout, now honored for promoting STEM diversity*