

## U.S. MARINE BAND'S FREE COUNTRY ACOUSTIC QUARTET

### ARTIST BIOS

#### **Master Sergeant Alan Prather, *guitar***

Guitarist Master Sergeant **Alan Prather** joined "The President's Own" United States Marine Band in July 1999. Master Sgt. Prather began his musical training on the guitar at the age of eight. After graduating in 1986 from Cuyahoga Falls High School, he attended the University of Akron in Ohio where he earned a bachelor's degree in music education in 1991. In 2012, he earned his master's degree in music education from Kent State University in Kent, OH. Prior to joining "The President's Own," Master Sgt. Prather taught instrumental music in Nordonia Hills City School District in Ohio and freelanced with various ensembles.

#### **Master Gunnery Sergeant Glenn Dewey, *bass***

Double bassist Master Gunnery Sergeant Glenn Dewey joined "The President's Own" United States Marine Band and Marine Chamber Orchestra in May 1994. Master Gunnery Sgt. Dewey began his musical training at the age of nine, initially studying piano and then double bass while in high school. After graduating from Duluth Central High School in 1981, he studied music at the University of Minnesota at Duluth for two years. In 1983, he transferred to the University of Illinois (UI) at Urbana-Champaign where he earned a bachelor's degree in music (bass performance) in 1987. He continued his studies at Northwestern University in Evanston, IL, where in 1991 he earned a master's degree in music (bass performance). His double bass instructors included Michael Cameron of UI and Jeff Bradetich of Northwestern University. Prior to joining "The President's Own," Master Gunnery Sgt. Dewey was a double bass and electric bass instructor at Millikin University in Decatur, IL. In 1994, he commissioned and performed the world premiere of "The Eclectic Heartland" by David Burdick with the Millikin-Decatur Symphony Orchestra. Master Gunnery Sgt. Dewey also toured Europe with the Peoria Symphony Orchestra of Illinois.

#### **Master Gunnery Sergeant Kevin Bennear, *baritone vocalist***

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. Master Gunnery Sgt. Bennear began his musical instruction at the age of nine. After graduating in 1990 from Elk Garden High School in Elk Garden, WV, he attended Potomac State College in Keyser, WV, and earned a bachelor's degree in music in 1996 from West Virginia University (WVU) in Morgantown, where he studied with Peter Lightfoot. In 1999, he earned a master's degree in vocal performance 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 Zimbali of The Metropolitan Opera. He also taught voice as a graduate teaching assistant at UT.

#### **Gunnery Sergeant Sara Sheffield, *mezzo-soprano vocalist***

Mezzo-soprano vocalist and concert moderator Gunnery Sergeant Sara Sheffield joined "The President's Own" United States Marine Band in May 2005, becoming the first featured female vocal soloist in Marine Band history. Gunnery Sgt. Sheffield began her musical instruction on piano at the age of nine and voice at age 16. After graduating from Jacksonville High School in 1997, she attended the University of North Texas in Denton and earned a bachelor's degree in vocal performance in 2001. In 2008 she was named a regional finalist in the Mid-Atlantic Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions. She earned an executive master's in business administration from George Mason University in 2016 in Fairfax, VA. Prior to joining "The President's Own," Gunnery Sgt. Sheffield was a member of the U.S. Army Band's Army Chorale at Fort Myer in Arlington, VA.

As Marine Band vocalists and concert moderators, Master Sgt. Bennear and Gunnery Sgt. Sheffield are soloists at White House State Dinners and the Commandant of the Marine Corps' residence, and featured performers in the annual musical productions of Washington's Gridiron Club and Military Order of the Carabao. They perform regularly in the Washington, D.C., area and across the country during the band's annual concert tour.