FADO IS A TRADITIONAL FORM OF MUSIC IN PORTUGAL KNOWN FOR EVOKING AN INESCAPABLE sense of longing. Fado also translates beautifully into fate, fortune and destiny!

In that spirit, we are pleased to announce that the Charlottesville High School String Ensemble has been invited to perform in the prestigious Lisbon International Youth Music Festival. This festival features more than 30 concerts in the best halls and open-air venues in Portugal and celebrates youth orchestras, choirs, symphonic bands and ensembles from all over the world. Young musicians will gather to build friendships and share uplifting performances with 15,000+ music lovers.

In addition to their time in Lisbon, the String Ensemble will travel to Spain to experience the art, history and splendor of Madrid culminating with an evening performance in a sacred venue such as the Baroque church of San Millan y San Cayetano or the Basilica de Jesus de Medinaceli. Perhaps most importantly, CHSO musicians will serve as ambassadors — a vital reminder of music’s power to unite and inspire.

An invitation of this magnitude is an honor not to be missed. We hope that you will join us by making a contribution to ensure that Charlottesville’s talented youth are able to fulfill their destiny!

“For many years, the music of the Charlottesville High School Orchestra, under the direction of Laura Mulligan Thomas, has nourished our souls, renewed our spirit, and captivated our imagination. For the school division, our community, and the Commonwealth, the Orchestra continues to be a source of great pride — and we need that now more than ever before.”

—David J. Toscano, Delegate, Virginia House District 57

Music fulfills an important educational function because, above all, it cultivates the spirit.
— Spanish composer, Joaquin Rodrigo (1901-1999)

A Musical Journey

Pictured on the cover: Ben Brantley, cello  Facing page: Penelope Tingely, violin
Rising to the International Stage

“The preeminence of the CHSO String Ensemble continues to demonstrate the power that
music and the arts have to enrich the lives of our students, school, and community. The
members of the CHSO String Ensemble, led by Laura Mulligan Thomas, are talented
ambassadors that share the joy of music with the world. The support they receive from their
community is not only an investment in the lives of these wonderful students—it also allows for
their music to inspire another generation of musicians.”

—Dr. Eric Irizarry, Principal of Charlottesville High School

THE STUDENTS IN THE CHARLOTTESVILLE HIGH SCHOOL ORCHESTRA’S STRING ENSEMBLE
have earned their reputation, and this world-class opportunity, through hard work, talent, and superb instruction.
Their is a success story that makes our entire community proud.

With a level of skill comparable to many professional orchestras, the String Ensemble has become renowned
for its stellar performances including concerts at the International Youth and Music Festival in Vienna, Austria in
International Youth Orchestra Festival in 2011; a standing-only crowd in Charlottesville’s sister city of Besançon,
the American Cathedral in Paris, and the Chartres Cathedral in France in 2014. Most recently, the group traveled
to Ireland where the students performed at Galway Cathedral in the lively and bustling university town of Galway,
St. Mary’s Church in quaint Killarney, and culminated with an inspirational finale in the glorious Christ Church
Cathedral in Dublin.

Students who participate in these international excursions are enriched by travel and gain worldwide
recognition for their skilled musicianship. These experiences light the spark of cultural understanding and
compassion, attributes that are increasingly important in today’s world.

OVERHEARD IN THE ORCHESTRA ROOM:

“Music surrounds us in the world. … Having intimate knowledge of the musical process allows
us to express ourselves and make more sense of the world.”

“When we travel, I hope audiences see how similar we are to them and that despite our
differences … music can bring anyone and everyone together no matter what.”

Facing page: Sam Bowling, violin, and Jake Bowling, cello
Awards and Honors

2019 Two Gold Medals, Two Adjudicators’ Awards, Outstanding Orchestra Award, Instrumental Sweepstakes Award, and Overall Grand Championship, WorldStrides Heritage Festival of Music in Atlanta

2018 Two Gold Medals, First Place in AA Division, First Place in AAA Division, Two Adjudicators’ Awards, Outstanding Orchestra Award, and Instrumental Sweepstakes Award, WorldStrides Heritage Festival of Music in Orlando

2017 Two Superior Ratings, First Place in Division V, First Place in Division VI, Soloist Awards, Adjudicator Award, Overall Orchestra Championship, and Overall Grand Championship, Williamsburg Fiesta-Val

CHSO String Ensemble performed in Galway Cathedral, St. Mary’s Church in Killarney, and Christ Church Cathedral in Dublin, Ireland.

2016 Two Superior Ratings, First Place in Division V, First Place in Division VI, six Soloist Awards, Adjudicators’ Award, Overall Orchestra Champions, and Overall Grand Champions, Nashville Fiesta-Val

2015 Two Gold Medals; Second Place in AA Division, Second Place in AAA Division, two Adjudicators’ Awards, and Maestro Award, WorldStrides Heritage Festival of Music in Boston

2014 Two Gold Medals, First Place in AA Division, First Place in AAA Division, two Adjudicators’ Awards, Outstanding Orchestra Award, Maestro Award, and Instrumental Grand Championship, WorldStrides Heritage Festival of Music in Annapolis

CHSO String Ensemble performed in Chartres Cathedral, the American Cathedral in Paris, and in Charlottesville’s sister city of Besançon, France

2013 Two Gold Medals: First Place in AA Division, Second Place in AAA Division, two Adjudicators’ Awards, and Maestro Award, WorldStrides Heritage Festival of Music in New York City

2012 Two Gold Medals, First Place in AA Division, First Place in AAA Division, Adjudicators’ Award, Instrumental Grand Champions, and Festival Sweepstakes (Grand Champions), Orlando WorldStrides Heritage Festival of Music

2011 Two Superior Ratings; First Place in Division V, First Place in Division VI, and Instrumental Grand Champions, Virginia Beach Fiesta-Val

CHSO String Ensemble performed in the Florence International Youth Festival, as well as Tarquinia, and Charlottesville’s sister city of Poggio a Caiano

2010 Two Gold Medals, First Place in AA Division, and First Place in AAA Division, Overall Orchestra Award, Adjudicators’ Award for top scores, and Festival Sweepstakes (Grand Champions), Boston Heritage Festival of Music

2009 Two Superior Ratings; First Place in Division V, and First Place in Division VI, Myrtle Beach Fiesta-Val

Continued on the CHSO website: www.chsorchestra.org

CHSO Director

LAURA MULLIGAN THOMAS HAS SERVED AS THE DIRECTOR OF THE CHARLOTTESVILLE HIGH School Orchestra for nearly four decades. She came to CHS after graduating with honors from James Madison University in 1982 and began immediately to develop the orchestra program from the eight students she inherited into the award-winning group of 115 that exists today. Many CHSO graduates have become professional musicians who perform with orchestras and pop, rock, and country artists in the U.S. and Europe. Still other alumni have followed in her footsteps and pursued careers in music education.

Numerous additional awards for her work with young musicians include Charlottesville’s Distinguished Teacher Award, the Golden Apple Award, the Piedmont Council of the Arts Award, and Outstanding Educator in Central Virginia awarded by Phi Delta Kappa. In 2002, Shenandoah University honored her with its first graduate Alumna of Excellence Award, and in 2013 she was recognized as the James Madison University Outstanding Music Educator Alumna. During that same year, Ms. Thomas was a featured speaker at the inaugural Charlottesville TEDx event at which the CHSO was also invited to perform.

Honored as Charlottesville’s Woman of the Year in 1999 by the Virginia Women’s Forum, Ms. Thomas was also named one of the Charlottesville Top 25 Citizens by G-calfe. Ms. Thomas studied orchestral conducting with Thomas Wilkins, Carl Roskott, and Ray Fowler, and earned her master’s degree from Shenandoah Conservatory in 1996.

Ms. Thomas spent her early years in Alexandria, Virginia, where she studied piano with National Symphony pianist Marion Herrett and learned cello in the Alexandria City Schools’ string program. She has guest-conducted dozens of youth orchestras throughout Virginia, and serves on the executive board of the Virginia Band and Orchestra Directors Association. She is the chair of the Fine Arts department at Charlottesville High School, and for three years directed the University of Richmond Orchestra. An active performer, Ms. Thomas plays piano and cello with several Charlottesville chamber ensembles, and whenever possible performs with her three siblings as the Mulligan String Quartet.

We are fortunate to live in this extraordinary community that wholeheartedly supports arts and education. The CHSO String Ensemble and I are eager to represent Charlottesville, Virginia, and the United States in Portugal and Spain this June. I am so proud of the accomplishments of our young people, and know that they will be exemplary ambassadors. — Laura Mulligan Thomas
Evolution to Excellence

UNDER THE LEADERSHIP OF LAURA MULLIGAN THOMAS, THE CHSO HAS GROWN FROM EIGHT string players in 1982 to 115 this year, making it one of our nation's largest high school orchestras. Past and present musicians have come from countries including India, Somalia, Liberia, Ghana, Sudan, the Philippines and Mexico.

Its three compilation CDs, Lieve!, Take 2, and At Last have sold more than 3,000 copies. The CHSO has gained a national reputation for excellence, garnering top prizes at music festivals in New York City, Chicago, Atlanta, Boston, Orlando, Dallas and Nashville.

The 53-member auditioned, advanced CHSO String Ensemble is comprised of sophomores, juniors, and seniors. Each year, students dedicate thousands of hours — through daily rehearsals, individual practice and formal concerts — to hone their craft. Locally, the group performs in a variety of venues including the Paramount Theater and the Charlottesville Omni Hotel as well as their home stage in the Martin Luther King Jr. Performing Arts Center. The CHSO's reputation for superb musicianship has sparked numerous collaborative performances including with New York Philharmonic Conductor Loren Maazel, Leonard Bernstein's daughter Jamie Bernstein, Black Panther drummer Massamba Diop, Australian Aboriginal didgeridoo player William Barton, and the Stevie Wonder Band.

In January 2019, the CHSO and CHS Choir won three national gold medals for the collaborative, hope-filled music video they produced with Nashville student musicians in the wake of the violence in Charlottesville in August 2017. The video, “Right Now (We Need One Another)” was shown to more than 50,000 people at the Stevie Wonder Band Concert for Charlottesville in September 2017.

Now with your support the CHSO String Ensemble will take the stage in Lisbon, Portugal, and Madrid, Spain, to serve as a new generation of ambassadors for our community and our country:

Help These Hardworking, Talented Kids Put Charlottesville on the Map

THE CHARLOTTESVILLE HIGH SCHOOL ORCHESTRA IS A shining example of what is right with our community. It vividly reminds us that our schools can nourish and expect excellence of the highest order. It is cause for celebration that a group of students from diverse backgrounds can work together to meet an ambitious challenge. These teenagers are Charlottesville’s best possible representatives to the world.

Performing in Spain and Portugal will have a life-long impact on the students — many of whom have never traveled abroad — as well as on local families and young listeners who are inspired to follow in their footsteps. What an incredible opportunity for students to experience the vibrant culture of Madrid, perform in historic venues in Lisbon, and build friendships with students from around the globe.

As author John O'Donohue once wrote, “In claiming the heart so swiftly and totally, the beauty of music crosses all psychological and cultural frontiers. There is a profound sense in which music opens a secret door in time and reaches into the eternal.”

This is the impact that this journey will have upon the hearts of all who travel to play and all who gather to listen.

Financial Overview

THE CHSO STRING ENSEMBLE’S EIGHT-DAY TRIP to Lisbon and Madrid represents a fundraising challenge that will require significant community support. CHSO students and parents aim to raise a substantial portion of the necessary funds through student-directed activities such as concession sales at athletic events, quartet performances, poinsettia sales, and a benefit concert. Each student has pledged to raise $1,000 through student activities. The String Ensemble hopes to raise the remaining funds through support from foundations and compassionate community members who understand the power of music to unite and travel to illuminate. Funds raised will also support our scholarship fund to specifically help students in financial need. Donations to the general campaign and to the scholarship fund are all 100% tax-deductible.

While the Charlottesville City Schools’ support of the arts is outstanding, the CHSO budget does not include funds for student travel. The musicians in the ensemble represent the diversity of the larger school population where 42% of students are economically disadvantaged. Please help us make this world-class opportunity a reality for our young performers. By sustaining and challenging our youth, we nurture our future.

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Since joining the CHS orchestra in freshman year, I have learned many things. I have learned how to work with others to create something beautiful. Ever since I joined I have felt a sense of community and comfort within the orchestra, and I believe that this same feeling will travel with me to Europe. I am excited to travel to foreign lands to share the music that we will have worked on this year. I am very thankful that the CHS orchestra allowed me to be a part of this amazing opportunity.

JACK DREESEN-HIGGINBOTHAM, SENIOR VIOLIST

Joining the orchestra and getting to work under the direction of Mrs. Thomas has made me extremely grateful for the music program at CHS. I feel very lucky to be a part of such a supportive community. I look forward to coming to orchestra each day, and I leave the orchestra room feeling satisfied and inspired. Traveling to Europe is such an exciting opportunity. My classmates and I will get to grow as musicians as well as seeing the world. Young musicians don’t often get this sort of opportunity, so we should take full advantage of it. In addition to learning lots, the trip will obviously be fun.

SARAH MEYER, SOPHOMORE VIOLINIST

My experience with the orchestra has been really great. I traveled with CHSO to Atlanta and now I am excited about the trip overseas to Portugal and Spain. I am looking forward to really learning the music we will play and for the opportunity to perform abroad.

KAYMIN HESTER, SOPHOMORE VIOLINIST

I want people to know Americans aren’t all about fast food and video games, we are working hard here to create something beautiful. Each piece of music we perform tells a different story. I think the invitation to the Lisbon Festival is really cool, and I am excited to share our music with an international audience.

DANTE WALKER, 11TH GRADE VIOLINIST/PIANIST

OVERHEARD IN THE ORCHESTRA ROOM:

“As a kid, I used to stop on the street anywhere we were to listen to street violinists play. In second grade when we had the opportunity to choose an instrument, I knew I had to pick violin.”

“I have never left the country before, so I’m excited to share music, experience other cultures, and enjoy the views.”

“I hope that our audience can see the collaboration and shared spirit that goes into our music.”

What the Students Say about Music and Going to Spain and Portugal

For the past three years, the CHSO has been one of the best parts of my life. Every day, I walk into a community of people who love music and inspire one another. Throughout this time, we have not only harmonized as an orchestral unit, but we have become a tight knit family. That is the beauty of music: no matter what language you speak, where you come from, or who you are, music has the capability to unite and inspire. When I moved here from upstate New York, orchestra soon became one of the best parts of my day and helped me make some of my best friends. I hope that traveling to Spain will continue to spread the hope and love that Mrs. Thomas has fostered within all of us.

ELLIE DETER, SENIOR VIOLINIST

I traveled to Atlanta with the Charlottesville High School Orchestra. The trip was a super bonding experience for me and my fellow orchestra students. The orchestra did well and brought home a lot of trophies. Traveling with the orchestra is fun and worth all the hard work.

SOFIA LEE, SOPHOMORE VIOLINIST

I’ve been looking forward to my chance to travel abroad since freshman year, when the orchestra went to Ireland. I’m so excited for this year’s trip because we get the chance to not only visit two new and beautiful countries, but also to bring our music with us.

AMARA GREEN, SENIOR CELLIST

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“We are so proud to have the Charlottesville High School Orchestra serve as ambassadors across our community, state, country, and even the globe. Guided by the leadership, musicianship, and heart of Laura Mulligan Thomas, our students remind us of the healing and connecting power of music. We’re excited to send them off to Portugal and Spain!” —Rosa S. Atkins, Superintendent, Charlottesville City Schools