



BUFFALO  
PHILHARMONIC  
ORCHESTRA

Buffalo  
United  
Community  
Choir

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Buffalo United Community Choir to perform National Anthem at final regular season Bills game in current Highmark Stadium**



The Buffalo United Community Choir (BUCC) has been chosen to perform "The Star-Spangled Banner" before the Buffalo Bills' final regular season home game at the current Highmark Stadium on January 4, inspiring unity and community pride in a significant moment of the team's Farewell Season. 75 singers from the Buffalo United Community Choir—representing 46 churches and organizations across Buffalo and Western New York—will perform an original gospel arrangement of the National Anthem by BUCC co-music director and conductor, Karen Saxon.

The Buffalo United Community Choir was founded in 2023 by the Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra (BPO) Diversity Council, led by Ella E. Robinson, whose vision and connections brought the community-centered initiative to life in the aftermath of the May 14, 2022 Tops tragedy. Created to unite singers from across the region through music, reflection, and shared purpose, BUCC maintains a close artistic relationship with the BPO, collaborating annually in a Gospel Symphony Celebration and

the orchestra's Concert for Unity—a free summer performance led by BPO music director JoAnn Falletta, programmed to uplift and connect audiences in an accessible way. BUCC has three music directors, each beloved figures in the Western New York music community: Ella E. Robinson, Karen Saxon, and George Brown.

Honoring the Farewell Season at Highmark Stadium, the Bills chose to spotlight a local ensemble whose roots are deeply connected to Buffalo's resilience, diversity, and community strength. Brian Haberkorn, Buffalo Bills Director of Game Presentation, stated: "As we get ready for the final regular season game at the current Highmark Stadium, we wanted the National Anthem to come from Buffalo itself, from voices that sound like home. When I learned about the Buffalo United Community Choir and how it brings singers together from so many churches and neighborhoods, it immediately felt right. BUCC embodies the spirit of the City of Good Neighbors, and we're honored to have them with us for this historic moment."

Karen Saxon's gospel setting of the National Anthem was created specifically for this performance and moment in Buffalo's history. A distinguished music educator, accomplished musician, and community leader, Saxon has spent over 25 years shaping the next generation of artists through her work in Buffalo Public Schools, City Honors School, and at Buffalo State University. She also serves as Minister of Music at First Shiloh Baptist Church, sits on the board of the Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra, and chairs the NAACP ACT-SO Committee, where she mentors youth in the arts and academics.

Saxon shared: "The opportunity to create a gospel arrangement of our National Anthem carries profound responsibility, especially in light of the challenges we are navigating together. Arranging the Anthem for the BUCC is both a joy and a deep honor, as it allows me to give back to a community that continually offers joy through its unwavering presence and commitment to our shared mission of spreading love and healing through unity in song."

A professional vocalist herself, Saxon continued: "Bringing my gospel arrangement of the national anthem to the NFL stage is far beyond anything I could have imagined. While performing the anthem had long been a personal goal, this moment transcends that aspiration, marking the close of an era in a cherished space where we have come together to celebrate our beloved hometown team."

The BUCC's performance will precede the Buffalo Bills week 18 matchup against the New York Jets on January 4, 2026.

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#### ***About the Buffalo United Community Choir:***

*The Buffalo United Community Choir (BUCC) was founded in January 2023 by the BPO Diversity Council with a powerful mission: to unite the Buffalo-Niagara region through the transformative power of music. Drawing voices from across the area, this dynamic 100+ member choir brings together individuals from 46 local churches and organizations, embodying the strength, spirit, and diversity of the Buffalo community.*

*Under the artistic leadership of esteemed music directors Ella E. Robinson, Karen Saxon, and George Brown, BUCC made its debut at Buffalo United for Black History at First Shiloh Baptist Church. Since then, the choir has delivered stirring performances, including a featured appearance at the May 14th Remembrance event at the Johnnie B. Wiley Sports Pavilion, and collaborative performances with the Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra at Kleinhans Music Hall and throughout the region.*

*The Buffalo United Community Choir proudly lives by its motto: "We lift our voices in song as ONE community."*

**About the Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra:**

*The Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra Society, Inc. provides a resident, professional, major symphony orchestra of artistic excellence and integrity to enrich the quality of life in Western New York through the presentation of live symphonic music and other musical events, which educate and entertain the broadest possible audiences within and beyond the WNY region. Since 1940, the orchestra's permanent home has been Kleinhans Music Hall, a National Historic Landmark designed by Eliel and Eero Saarinen with an international reputation as one of the finest concert halls in the United States. Since its inception in 1935, the BPO has served as Buffalo's cultural ambassador. JoAnn Falletta is the Music Director of the GRAMMY Award-winning orchestra, which presents more than 120 Classics, Pops, Rock, Kids, and Youth concerts each year.*

*To learn more about the BPO's storied history, [distinguished conductors and world-class musicians](#), and commitment to [IDEA](#), visit the [Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra](#).*



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