



2026 MARCH MANIA

32 MARCHES. 4 WEEKS. 1 CHAMPION.

MUSIC NOTES



JOHN PHILIP SOUSA BIOGRAPHY

John Philip Sousa was born in 1854 in southeast Washington, D.C., near the Marine Barracks where his father Antonio played trombone in the Marine Band. Sousa studied piano and most orchestral instruments, excelling on the violin. When at age 13 young Sousa was almost persuaded to join a circus band, his father intervened, enlisting him as an apprentice musician in the Marine Band. Sousa remained in the band until he was 20, only to return five years later as the 17th Director. Sousa led “The President’s Own” from 1880 to 1892. Perhaps more than anyone else, Sousa is responsible for bringing the United States Marine Band to the level of excellence upheld today.



MARCH, “THE LIBERTY BELL”

John Philip Sousa

For \$500 more, this march probably would have been named “The Devil’s Deputy.” Sousa was composing music for an operetta of that name at the request of the celebrated comedian Francis Wilson. Sousa asked \$1,500 for the work, but Wilson offered \$1,000. When they could not come to an agreement, Sousa withdrew with his partially completed manuscript, which included a lively march.

Sousa and George Frederick Hinton, one of the band’s managers, were in Chicago witnessing a spectacle called *America* when a backdrop, with a huge painting of the Liberty Bell, was lowered. Hinton suggested that “The Liberty Bell” would be a good title for Sousa’s new march. By coincidence, the next morning Sousa received a letter from his wife in which she told how their son had marched in his first parade in Philadelphia—a parade honoring the return of the Liberty Bell, which had been on tour. The new march was then christened “The Liberty Bell.” It was one of the first marches Sousa sold to the John Church Company and was the first composition to bring Sousa a substantial financial reward.

According to a story told by the Sousa Band’s first soprano, Marcella Lindh, she contributed one of the themes of the march. Sousa had heard her whistling a catchy tune of her own and had asked her permission to incorporate it into one of his marches. Several years later she heard “The Liberty Bell” march being performed by a band in Europe and recognized her own melody in the march.

Paul E. Bierley, The Works of John Philip Sousa (Westerville, Ohio: Integrity Press, 1984), 67. Used by permission.

[Listen to the march](#)

[“The Liberty Bell” is part of The Complete Marches of John Philip Sousa: Volume 3](#)



MARCH, "THE CHIMES OF LIBERTY"

Edwin Franko Goldman

Edwin Franko Goldman studied composition with Antonín Dvořák and performed as the solo cornetist of the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra before forming the New York Military Band in 1911. One of the founding members of the American Bandmasters Association, Goldman created his concert band to "help raise the standards of bands and band music." Later known as the Goldman Band, it was one of the finest professional concert bands in America.

One of his most popular marches, "The Chimes of Liberty" reflected Goldman's pride in his country. His concern for other countries and world peace was evident as well: the march was written in 1922 to commemorate the Washington Conference for the Limitation of Armaments. The chimes are featured prominently, carrying the melody in the trio. The march also boasts a piccolo solo that rivals the piccolo solo in John Philip Sousa's march "The Stars and Stripes Forever."

[Listen to the march](#)



MARCH, "GEORGE WASHINGTON BICENTENNIAL"

John Philip Sousa

A special commission was formed in Washington, D.C., in 1930 to coordinate the celebration of the 200th anniversary of George Washington's birth. John Philip Sousa was approached to take part in the climactic ceremony to be held at the Capitol Plaza and was asked to compose a special march for the occasion. He obliged with the aptly named "George Washington Bicentennial," which was premiered at the ceremony on February 22, 1932. Sousa personally conducted the performance of the combined premier bands of the U.S. Army, Navy, and Marine Corps, making this the last time he conducted the Marine Band in public. After an incredibly prolific career as a bandmaster, composer, teacher and musical celebrity, John Philip Sousa passed away just a few weeks later on March 6, 1932.

[Listen to the march](#)

["George Washington Bicentennial" is part of The Complete Marches of John Philip Sousa: Volume 7](#)



MARCH, "THOMAS JEFFERSON"

William H. Santelmann

Directors of the United States Marine Band often arranged, transcribed, or composed original music for the ensemble throughout its unique history. Leaders such as John Bourgeois, Jack Kline, Taylor Branson, William H. Santelmann and especially John Philip Sousa contributed to the wind literature in this meaningful way. Frequently, their original compositions were created for specific events or celebrations. Such was the case for Santelmann's march "Thomas Jefferson" which was composed in 1903 and dedicated to the Thomas Jefferson Memorial Association of the United States, an organization formed to honor our nation's founding father and third president.

[Listen to the march](#)



MARCH, "THE CIRCUS BEE"

Henry Fillmore

As the composer of at least 256 works and the arranger of 774 others, Henry Fillmore was one of the most prolific writers in the history of band music. The sheer volume of his musical output prompted him to take the unusual step of publishing his compositions under seven different pseudonyms in addition to his given name to avoid saturating the sheet music market. Fillmore also had a reputation for flamboyant showmanship as conductor of his own bands. In the words of a friend, "No one enjoyed his performances more than Henry himself." Published in 1908, "The Circus Bee" was considered at the time to be the most difficult piece Fillmore had composed to date. This march is named after an imaginary circus newspaper of Fillmore's making, reflecting his lifelong interest in the circus.

[Listen to the march](#)



BARNUM AND BAILEY'S FAVORITE

Karl L. King - arranged by MGySgt Donald Patterson

Raised in Canton, Ohio, Karl L. King was undoubtedly influenced both by the rich tradition of band music of the Midwest as well as the most popular form of entertainment at the time, the circus. Very much a self-made man, King began his musical education with the purchase of a cornet, paid for with money earned from a paper route. As a young musician, he played several brass instruments as well as the piano, but ultimately settled on the baritone, which he played in several circus bands between 1910 and 1913, among them the Barnum and Bailey Band. It was during this time that King became well known for his ability to compose circus marches quickly (often by oil lamp in crowded circus tents). At the beginning of the twentieth century, there were very few compositions that fit the rhythm and pacing of circus performances, and composers were in demand. King composed more than 188 marches and rousing circus “screamers,” and he was considered to have done for the circus march what John Philip Sousa did for the patriotic march. King began a long conducting career in 1914, initially directing circus bands and ultimately becoming the Bandmaster of the Fort Dodge Municipal Band, all the while continuing to compose.

King was performing with the Barnum and Bailey Band in 1913 under Ned Brill when Brill asked him to write a special march. “Barnum and Bailey’s Favorite,” dedicated to Brill, became King’s most famous march as well as the theme music of the circus. The piece unsurprisingly has a lively baritone part and, like most of his other circus marches, is considered to be among the more difficult compositions in the body of American march music.

[Listen to the march](#)



“AMERICAN SALUTE”

Morton Gould - transcribed by Philip Lang

Composing is my life blood.... That is basically me, and although I have done many things in my life—conducting, playing piano, and so on—what is fundamental is my being a composer. – Morton Gould

Originally written for orchestra, “American Salute” is now a concert band favorite. Gould created a brilliant fantasy on the familiar tune “When Johnny Comes Marching Home” as the sole melodic resource, demonstrating his skill in thematic development. Written in 1942 during the early days of World War II, the piece was composed at the request of a government radio program producer who wanted a “salute to America.” The composer insisted that he had no idea that the work was destined to 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.” A million may be an exaggeration, but not by much. Gould’s compositional pace at that time was astounding. By his own account he composed and scored “American Salute” in less than eight hours, starting at 6 p.m. the evening before it was due (with copyists standing by) and finishing at 2 a.m. The score and parts were on the stand in time for rehearsal that morning and ready for broadcast that evening.

[Listen to the march](#)



MARCH, “AMERICAN PATROL”

Frank W. Meacham

Born in Buffalo, New York, Frank W. Meacham began his professional music career at age 10, having secured the publication of his first song. During Meacham’s lifetime, most of his original compositions failed to gain recognition, but he became known as one of the country’s most skilled arrangers. However, he did eventually achieve success as a composer of martial music, most notably with his famous march entitled “American Patrol,” first copyrighted as a piano score in 1885 and subsequently arranged for band in 1891. As with many “patrol” marches of the era, this work imitates the sound of a military band approaching and then marching off into the distance. It begins softly with a snare drum cadence followed by a two-part theme in the upper winds, which constitutes Meacham’s only original melodic contribution.

The rest of the march is a medley of three popular patriotic songs: “Columbia, the Gem of the Ocean,” “Dixie” (followed by a drum cadence and a recapitulation of the original theme), and finally “Yankee Doodle.” “American Patrol” remains a favorite in the concert band repertoire and has been recorded by numerous ensembles, including the Glenn Miller Band and the Sousa Band.

[Listen to the march](#)



MARCH, “THE MAN OF THE HOUR”

Henry Fillmore

Henry Fillmore’s “The Man of the Hour” is a vibrant and energetic march that exemplifies his mastery of the genre. Composed in 1924, this piece is a testament to Fillmore’s ability to craft memorable melodies and driving rhythms that have captivated audiences for generations. The march was dedicated to Charles Phelps Taft, a prominent attorney, politician, and newspaper editor from Cincinnati, Ohio. Taft, the half-brother of President William Howard Taft, was a significant figure in Cincinnati’s civic life. At various times, he represented Ohio in the U.S. House of Representatives, served as editor of the Cincinnati Times-Star, and even owned the Chicago Cubs and Philadelphia Phillies. Fillmore, who was born and educated in Cincinnati, was residing in the city and conducting the Syrian Temple Shrine Band of Cincinnati at the time he composed the march.

Written in 6/8 time, “The Man of the Hour” is characterized by its infectious energy and memorable themes. The piece showcases Fillmore’s signature style, with strong brass fanfares, lyrical woodwind passages, and a forceful percussion line. It is a classic example of an American march, designed to be both entertaining and inspiring.

[Listen to the march](#)



“HAIL TO THE CHIEF”

James Sanderson - arranged by Thomas Knox

It is interesting to note that one of the most recognizable American musical staples actually began its life as a theater song from a Scottish play. “Hail to the Chief” was first performed for a president by the Marine Band for Andrew Jackson, at the Independence Day ceremony to commemorate the laying of the cornerstone of the Chesapeake and Ohio (C&O) Canal, which took place in 1829 in Washington, D.C. At the time, the tune was known simply as a popular air, not as music associated with the presidency. The original song was written around 1811 by James Sanderson for a theater production of the seminal work by Sir Walter Scott entitled *The Lady of the Lake*. The production made its way to America in the years that followed, and “Hail to the Chief” soon spread through the public consciousness—so much so that most Americans assumed the song was from their own country.

After the Marine Band’s first performance of “Hail to the Chief” for President Jackson, there was no continued association of the tune with the presidency until the administrations of Presidents John Tyler and James Polk, whose wives each asked the Marine Band to play the song to announce their husbands into the room for functions. Thus began an unofficial tradition of using “Hail to the Chief” to introduce the president. It has been played for every President as such since Chester Arthur (who, incidentally, did not like it and asked John Philip Sousa to compose an alternative piece), but “Hail to the Chief” did not officially become musical honors to the President of the United States until 1954.

[Listen to the march](#)



PRESIDENTIAL POLONAISE

John Philip Sousa - revised by Paul Henneburg

Before rising to international prominence as a band leader and composer, John Philip Sousa assumed the helm of the Marine Band as its seventeenth Director in 1880 at age 25. He served five presidents over his 12 year term as Director, leaving in 1892 to form his own civilian band and forging his status as “The March King.” Sousa composed “Presidential Polonaise” in 1886 at the request of President Chester Arthur. At the time “Hail to the Chief” was used to announce the arrival of the President but was not formalized as official honors to the president as it is today. President Arthur asked Sousa about the origins of “Hail to the Chief” at a White House event. Sousa replied that the tune was based on a Scottish boating song written by James Sanderson. As the song did not have an American origin, Arthur requested a replacement composed by Sousa. Sousa wrote two different options for Arthur. The first, the Presidential Polonaise, was intended for presidential honors at indoor events. While the piece was not completed in time to be performed for Arthur, the Marine Band performed the work at President Benjamin Harrison’s Inaugural Ball on March 4, 1889.

The Presidential Polonaise was short-lived as honors for the president as the Marine Band resumed use “Hail to the Chief” after the Arthur administration. The work remains both an excellent piece for the concert stage and fascinating footnote in the history of presidential music.

[Listen to the march](#)



MARCH, “WHO’S WHO IN NAVY BLUE”

John Philip Sousa - edited by the United States Marine Band

Until a cache of old letters was recently discovered among Sousa family holdings in 1975, there was no proof of a request for this march coming from the student body of the U.S. Naval Academy. From the letters it was learned that a request had been made by Midshipman W. A. Ingram, president of the class of 1920. At that time, it was customary for each class to have its own new song or march to be performed at graduation exercises.

The manner of choosing a title for the march bordered on the comical. Midshipman T. R. Wirth suggested “Ex Scientia Tridens” (“From Science to Sea Power”). Sousa’s response to this was that it sounded like a remedy for the flu or a breakfast cereal. He suggested an alternate, “Admirals By and By.” Wirth stood firm with his proposal and pointed out that one of Sousa’s most famous marches was “Semper Fidelis,” also taken from the Latin.

At this point, Sousa apparently was inclined to withdraw his offer to compose the march, but Wirth pleaded with him not to take this course of action. Wirth tried to compromise on a title, offering such names as “Gentlemen Sailors,” “Seafarers,” and “Admirals All.” Sousa did some compromising of his own, and “Who’s Who in Navy Blue” became the title.

In recognition of Sousa’s contribution to the Navy during World War I—and presumably in appreciation for this composition—he was presented a miniature class ring and made an honorary member of the graduating class of 1921.

Paul E. Bierley, The Works of John Philip Sousa (Westerville, Ohio: Integrity Press, 1984), 96. Used by permission.

[Listen to the march](#)

[“Who’s Who in Navy Blue” is part of The Complete Marches of John Philip Sousa: Volume 5](#)



MARCH, “THE GLORY OF THE YANKEE NAVY”

John Philip Sousa

After 12 years as the 17th Director of “The President’s Own” from 1880 to 1892, John Philip Sousa (1854–1932) went on to form his own civilian band at the urging of concert promoter David Blakely. Sousa enjoyed tremendous success with his Sousa Band, traveling extensively throughout the continental United States and abroad.

By the early part of the twentieth century, Sousa had become a household name and musical organizations and event organizers clamored to be associated with the famous composer and bandleader. In 1909, a musical comedy called *The Yankee Girl* opened in Atlantic City, New Jersey, featuring the popular Vaudeville star Blanche Ring. The show was in desperate need of a hit number, and Sousa was asked to provide one. He composed a brilliant march to which words were added and sung by Ring and the chorus. The march was also dedicated to the show’s star.

The name of the march was in flux for some time after its composition. Originally called “Uncle Sam’s Navy,” and later referred to as “The Honor of the Yankee Navy,” or “The Glory of the American Navy,” Sousa finally settled on the present title. “The Glory of the Yankee Navy” was received enthusiastically and became a headlining feature in the show’s publicity. Although it has not achieved the immense popularity of many of his other works, this march is widely considered to be among Sousa’s finest.

[Listen to the march](#)

[“Glory of the Yankee Navy” is part of The Complete Marches of John Philip Sousa: Volume 4](#)



MARCH, “THE INVINCIBLE EAGLE”

John Philip Sousa

John Philip Sousa began composing this rousing march during a late-night train ride from Buffalo to New York in 1901. Blanche Duffeld, soprano soloist with the Sousa Band at the time, described a scene in which the composer was flailing away at the pages of his notebook and playing an imaginary violin in a fit of inspiration. Sousa described the finished product as:

One of my “sunshine” marches. Some of my heavy marches are intended to convey the impression of the stir and strife of warfare, but “The Invincible Eagle” shows the military spirit at its lightest and brightest—the parade spirit, in fact, with the bravery of the uniform, the sheen of silken standards and the gleam of polished steel and all its other picturesque features.

Written for and dedicated to the Pan-American Exposition held in Buffalo in the summer of 1901, Sousa initially thought that “The Invincible Eagle” could eclipse the popularity of “The Stars and Stripes Forever.” While it never reached the storied heights of the future official national march of the United States, a Washington Post review of the debut of “The Invincible Eagle” at the White House for President McKinley describes the new march as, “a good one...full of the twists and turns that reveal the popular composer’s master hand.”

Paul E. Bierley, The Works of John Philip Sousa (Westerville, Ohio: Integrity Press, 1984), 64. Used by permission.

[Listen to the march](#)

[“The Invincible Eagle” is part of The Complete Marches of John Philip Sousa: Volume 4](#)



MARCH, “NATIONAL EMBLEM”

Edwin E. Bagley

Edwin E. Bagley is best known for the march “National Emblem,” which he began composing in 1902. The first rehearsal was believed to have taken place in the baggage car of a train en route from Bellows Falls, Vermont, to Greenfield, New Hampshire. The première was given in New Hampshire by the Keene City Band, which Bagley directed from 1915 to 1917.

Bagley used “The Star-Spangled Banner” as inspiration for the melodic material in the first strain of the march, but it was the herds of buffalo he saw while crossing the western prairies in the late 1800s that inspired the heavy, repeated beats in the trio section. The march’s trio may sound very familiar because it has been used for many years to “advance and retire the colors” at military flag ceremonies. Conductor Frederick Fennell described “National Emblem” as being “as perfect as a march can be.”

[Listen to the march](#)



MARCH FROM SUPERMAN

John Williams - arranged by Paul Lavender

When the movie version of Superman was released in 1978, the most famous of superheroes was brought to life in spectacular fashion. As one of the very first big-budget comic book movies, the film paved the way for countless other classic characters to make their way to the silver screen. For John Williams, the opportunity to work on the project was a chance of a lifetime:

Growing up in my generation meant that you avidly followed the exploits of Superman in the syndicated comic strips that regularly appeared in newspapers across the country. It was a time when Superman fired the imaginations of all of our youngsters, and I was no exception.

Many years later, when director Richard Donner asked me to compose the score for his feature-length film of Superman, I was thrilled. I truly felt that I was revisiting a formative part of my childhood. I remember how excited I was when Mr. Donner showed me his wonderful film with actors Christopher Reeve and Margot Kidder flying high above the Statue of Liberty in one of the movie’s many memorable moments. I began by writing this piece, which formed the basis of the musical score for the film.

The movie's great success wouldn't have been possible without Christopher Reeve, who embodied every characteristic of what we imagined Superman to be. Without him, this music would never have seen the light of day.

[Listen to the march](#)



MARCH, "THE NATIONAL GAME"

John Philip Sousa

Judge Kenesaw Mountain Landis, baseball's high commissioner, asked Sousa to compose this march on the occasion of the National League's fiftieth anniversary. Earlier the two had met in Havana. No doubt Sousa told him of his enthusiasm for the game and of the Sousa Band's own team.

Paul E. Bierley, The Works of John Philip Sousa (Westerville, Ohio: Integrity Press, 1984), 73. Used by permission.

[Listen to the march](#)

["The National Game" is part of The Complete Marches of John Philip Sousa: Volume 6](#)



MARCH, "THE SPIRIT OF INDEPENDENCE"

Abe Holzmann - arranged by Charles Benter

Born in New York City, Abe Holzmann studied music both in Germany and at the New York Conservatory of Music, which led him to a career as a performing musician, composer and music industry administrator. He became a member of the American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers (ASCAP) in 1923 and served as the staff composer and pianist for the music publishing firm owned by Leo Feist. Holzmann primarily wrote marches, rags, cakewalks and waltzes, all of which were very popular around the turn of the century. "The Spirit of Independence" was written around 1912 and was recorded by Conway's Band on the Victor label. This military march and two-step became a hit during World War I.

[Listen to the march](#)



MARCH, "HAIL TO THE SPIRIT OF LIBERTY"

John Philip Sousa

More than anyone else, John Philip Sousa is responsible for bringing the United States Marine Band to the level of excellence upheld today. As a composer, he wrote the best known and most loved marches in the repertoire; as Director, he was an innovator who shaped the future of the Marine Band.

John Philip Sousa was born in southeast Washington, D.C., near Marine Barracks Washington, where his father Antonio played trombone in the Marine Band. Sousa studied piano and most of the orchestral instruments, especially excelling on the violin. He was almost persuaded to join a circus band at age thirteen, but his father intervened and enlisted him as an apprentice musician in the Marine Band. Sousa remained in the band until he was 20 and then left to embark on a civilian career as a performer, only to return five years later at the request of the Commandant of the Marine Corps to become the seventeenth Director of "The President's Own." He led "The President's Own" until 1892, and shortly after, formed the civilian Sousa Band, which toured extensively for the next four decades, both in the United States and abroad.

In 1900, Sousa and his band traveled abroad to perform at the Paris Exposition. Sousa was a great patriot and relished this opportunity to represent his country at such a significant international event. This was also the very first overseas tour for the Sousa Band, and the group was welcomed with tremendous enthusiasm across Europe. During the Exposition, an impressive statue of Major General the Marquis de Lafayette was unveiled on July 4, 1900. The monument was presented “on behalf of the children of the United States” and depicted Lafayette on horseback offering his sword in support of the Americans during the Revolutionary War. For the unveiling, the statue was draped in an enormous American flag. Sousa composed “Hail to the Spirit of Liberty” specifically for the grand occasion.

[Listen to the march](#)

[“Hail to the Spirit of Liberty” is part of The Complete Marches of John Philip Sousa: Volume 4](#)



MARCH, “A CENTURY OF PROGRESS”

John Philip Sousa

The theme of the 1933 Chicago World’s Fair was “A Century of Progress,” celebrating technological innovation. The exposition was design to look and feel modern, in stark contrast to the neoclassical style utilized for “The Columbian Exposition,” the 1893 World’s Fair hosted by Chicago. John Philip Sousa’s music linked the two fairs. He wrote The Salute of the Nations, a fantasy based on the patriotic music of the countries represented at the fair in 1893. Sousa composed “A Century of Progress” two years before the fair opened, capturing the optimism of the upcoming event.

In addition to asking Sousa to compose a march for the fair, organizers planned to contract the Sousa Band as the official band for the exposition. Unfortunately, that did not come to pass. Sousa died in 1932 at age 77. Without its leader, the Sousa Band quickly dissolved, and no other band was hired for the 1933 World’s Fair. Sousa’s composition was still recognized as the official march, largely thanks to the efforts of Lennox Lohr, the general manager of the fair and cousin to John Philip Sousa.

[Listen to the march](#)

[“A Century of Progress” is part of The Complete Marches of John Philip Sousa: Volume 7](#)



COSMOPOLITAN AMERICA

Helen May Butler - arranged by James Lamb

Helen May Butler was an American bandleader who helped establish careers for women musicians and led an all-women’s band from 1898 to 1912 to widespread acclaim. She began her musical journey as a violinist, studying with the concertmaster of the Boston Symphony Orchestra. In 1891 she formed her own orchestra, the Talma Ladies Orchestra, which primarily performed at homes and private events of wealthy families. However, she wanted to lead a band that could perform in public venues. The popular military bands of the time had developed from a male tradition and generally excluded women well into the twentieth century, so in 1898, Butler formed her new group, called the U.S. Talma Ladies Military Band.

The band was an immediate success and was eventually renamed Helen May Butler and Her Ladies’ Military Band. They billed themselves as performing music “by American composers, played by American girls.” They were immensely popular and performed all over the nation. For one stretch in 1903 and 1904, the band performed a concert a day for thirteen months straight.

Butler’s band was invited to perform at the St. Louis World’s Fair in 1904 alongside many other bands, to include John Philip Sousa’s. It was there she earned her nickname “The female Sousa.” This march was selected as the official march of the Republican Party during Theodore Roosevelt’s presidential campaign in 1904; Butler and her band performed it at the Republican National Convention.

[Listen to the march](#)



“YANKEE DOODLE”

Morton Gould - transcribed by Philip Lang

In 1945, the final year of World War II, Gould created a joyful setting of a tune that can be traced back to the very founding of our country and beyond: the iconic “Yankee Doodle.” Although there is incontrovertible evidence that the tune was in use at the time of the Revolution, its origins remain shrouded in mystery. Countries including England, France, Holland and the United States have laid claim to it, and a definitive answer as to the source of the melody itself may never be known. The lyrics, however, can be traced back to the French and Indian War (1754–63). Although the British were fighting alongside colonial soldiers in this conflict, they had nothing but contempt for the unprofessional appearance and undisciplined bearing of their American cousins. Dr. Richard Schuckburgh, a British Army surgeon assigned to duty with the colonials in Albany, New York, found their shabby appearance so amusing that he penned the lyrics most associated with the melody today. His words were designed to insult the Yankees: “Doodle” is a Low German word meaning “fool,” by the time of the Revolutionary War Americans had come to embrace the song as their own. According to Moore’s Encyclopedia of Music, “When the battle of Concord and Lexington began the war, the English, when advancing in triumph, played along the road ‘God Save the King;’ but on their disastrous retreat, the Americans struck up ‘Yankee Doodle.’”

[Listen to the march](#)



“YOU’RE A GRAND OLD FLAG”

George M. Cohan

A true multi-hyphenate, George M. Cohan wore every hat in show business: performer, songwriter, playwright, theater owner, and producer. As a child, Cohan toured with his parents and sister as a vaudeville act known as the Four Cohans. He and his sister made their Broadway debuts in 1893. His first Broadway hit was Little Johnny Jones in 1904, a show that he starred in and for which he wrote the music, lyrics, and book. Incredibly, “Give My Regards to Broadway” and “The Yankee Doodle Boy,” two of his most enduring and popular songs, were written in this first show.

“You’re a Grand Old Flag” was written for Cohan’s 1906 show, George Washington Jr. The concept of the song stemmed from a chance encounter with a Civil War veteran who fought at Gettysburg. The veteran had an old and ragged flag and told Cohan that “She’s a grand old rag.” The first version of the song kept the veteran’s words, but after complaints from the public, Cohan renamed it. The song was an enormous popular success in its time, becoming the first song from a musical to sell more than a million copies of its sheet music.

[Listen to the march](#)



MARCH, “FROM MAINE TO OREGON”

John Philip Sousa

Sousa’s “All American” operetta, *The American Maid (The Glass Blowers)*, contains one recurring march theme, the title of which does not appear in the list of songs. Perhaps the publishers made this arrangement so that “reprise” would not appear so many times. The theme is the nucleus around which Sousa built the march “From Maine to Oregon.” The march, like the operetta, met with only limited success.

Paul E. Bierley, The Works of John Philip Sousa (Westerville, Ohio: Integrity Press, 1984), 43. Used by permission.

[Listen to the march](#)

[“From Maine to Oregon” is part of The Complete Marches of John Philip Sousa: Volume 4](#)



COUNTRY BAND MARCH

Charles Ives - arranged by John Sinclair

Charles Ives is recognized as one of the greatest American composers of the twentieth century, but he did not receive such accolades during most of his lifetime. In fact, he made his living as a successful insurance salesman. When his unique and progressive music finally saw the light of day, he earned a Pulitzer Prize in 1947 for his Third Symphony. Ives was born in Danbury, Connecticut, where his father, George Ives, was a Civil War bandmaster and leader of the Danbury Cornet Band. Ives attended Yale University, studying organ and composition, but both his father's influence and his own early musical experiences in Danbury had as much impact on his musical sensibilities as his formal education. The elder Ives was intrigued by unplanned musical moments, like two bands playing in unrelated keys as they marched down the street in a parade, and George would often encourage Charles to explore unconventional sounds such as playing the accompaniment of a tune in one key on the piano while singing the melody in an unrelated key.

Some of these unusual sounds are found in Ives' *Country Band March*, the composer's affectionate valentine to the enthusiastic haphazardness of the community bands he heard as a young man in Danbury. Ives reveled in the cacophony produced by these amateur musicians making early entrances, playing "wrong notes," and cheerfully but inappropriately blurting out quotations of popular songs of the day, including "Arkansas Traveler," "Battle Cry of Freedom," "The British Grenadiers," "The Girl I Left Behind Me," "London Bridge," "Marching Through Georgia," "My Old Kentucky Home," "Yankee Doodle" and quotes of two very familiar John Philip Sousa marches. This dense but exuberant music often has simultaneous melodies competing for the audience's attention, and the percussionists bringing up the rear frequently add or drop beats as the group struggles to stay together.

[Listen to the march](#)



MIDWAY MARCH

John Williams - transcribed by Paul Lavender

The 1976 feature film *Midway* chronicles the incredible Battle of Midway, which was a turning point in the Pacific during World War II. Until this critical stand and victory, the Imperial Japanese Navy had been undefeated in battle for nearly eighty years. The film highlighted the remarkable American strategy and success against all odds with an all-star cast including Charlton Heston, James Coburn, and Henry Fonda, who played the part of legendary Admiral Chester Nimitz. Several scenes in the film were shot using the USS *Lexington*, the last Essex-class aircraft carrier from World War II in service at the time of production. The movie also employed a special sound mix called Sensurround. This early technique of enveloping the audience in the sonic action of the movie was used in only four films of the era and required special speakers to be installed in theaters where they were shown.

John Williams provided the dramatic and visceral musical score for the movie. Williams had recently won his first Academy Award for his score to *Jaws* in 1974 and was quickly becoming one of the most sought after composers in Hollywood at the time of *Midway's* release. Right after his work on this film, he composed the now-iconic music to the first installment of *Star Wars*.

[Listen to the march](#)



MARCH FROM 1941

John Williams - transcribed by Paul Lavender

In Steven Spielberg's 1979 comedic film *1941*, residents of Los Angeles, California, mistakenly believe they are under attack from the Japanese in the aftermath of the assault on Pearl Harbor. The late John Belushi plays "Wild" Bill Kelso, a somewhat unstable yet affable Air Force pilot at the center of the action. According to John Williams, Kelso's antics "seemed to require a musical accompaniment that had humor and rhythmic vitality. As a result, I set myself the task of writing a zany patriotic march, that upon hearing, we might be moved to tap our feet to an imaginary parade going by, and have fun doing it."

The March from *1941* is indeed a fun-filled romp from beginning to end and is most certainly among Williams' best efforts in the genre of martial music. The première performance of this concert band transcription was given by the Marine Band in 2003, conducted by the composer.

[Listen to the march](#)



WASHINGTON GRAYS

Claudio S. Grafulla

Claudio S. Grafulla's "Washington Grays" is a quintessential American march, celebrated for its spirited character and enduring popularity. Grafulla was a prominent nineteenth-century composer, born in Menorca, Spain. After immigrating to the United States, he joined the New York Brass Band of New York City. This band was attached to the 7th Regiment of the New York National Guard, which was honored in 1922 by John Philip Sousa's march, "The Gallant Seventh." Grafulla dedicated his life to music and ultimately became the director of the 7th Regiment band for twenty years.

The march is a masterwork of the genre and a staple of military and concert band repertoire. Grafulla blends influences from both Italian and German traditions. Though it is a departure from the standard march formula of the day, it nonetheless became a beloved classic. Frederick Fennell wrote "Masterfully simple, effectively contrasting, its incessant flow of musical ideas is overwhelming convincing. It is a march of great passion—no introduction, no break strain, no singer. A real indoor rouser from 1861."

[Listen to the march](#)



MARCH, "FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT"

William H. Woodin - arranged by Mayhew L. Lake

William H. Woodin is best known as President Franklin D. Roosevelt's first Secretary of the Treasury, but also moonlit as an amateur composer. Woodin served as Treasury Secretary for only nine months in 1933, but oversaw one of the most decisive actions of Roosevelt's early presidency. The United States was in the heights of the Great Depression, a time of widespread economic hardship and uncertainty. As part of the Roosevelt's "New Deal," he was heavily involved with the declaration of a week-long national bank holiday so bank examiners could determine which banks were sound enough to reopen. The swift passage of the Emergency Banking Act of 1933 ended the bank holiday and helped restore some public confidence in the financial system.

During this time, Woodin wrote the "Franklin D. Roosevelt" march in honor of the President. In stark contrast to the atmosphere of crisis and change, the work is celebratory and optimistic. Featuring quotations of American folk songs like "Arkansas Traveler" and a brief quote of "Hail to the Chief," the march serves as a bright spot during one of our country's darkest chapters.

[Listen to the march](#)



MARCH, "SONS OF UNCLE SAM"

Earl E. McCoy

Born in Indianapolis, Earl E. McCoy spent most of his life in Texas before attending the University of Illinois to study music under its legendary Director of Bands Albert Austin Harding. Shortly after, McCoy was offered the choice of a staff position with the university's band or a national tour with a musical production. He chose to join the tour, and the majority of his career was spent touring with and conducting theater orchestras and traveling productions, including a 10-year engagement with the Majestic Theater Circuit. Toward the end of his life, McCoy co-founded the El Paso Symphony Orchestra, the Dallas Symphony Orchestra and the Dallas Band.

McCoy composed several marches during his career and was in the process of composing a symphony at the time of his death. He wrote the march “Sons of Uncle Sam” in 1917, which was the year that the United States joined World War I. The piece likely served as a patriotic composition to bolster the American spirit during the tumultuous period that engulfed the entire world.

[Listen to the march](#)



”OVER THERE”

George M. Cohan

Songwriter, playwright, performer, theater owner and producer George M. Cohan is credited with writing some of the most quintessential patriotic American songs for both the stage and screen. Recognizable songs by Cohan include “You’re a Grand Old Flag,” “Give My Regards to Broadway and “I’m A Yankee Doodle Dandy.” “Over There” was written on April 7, 1917, the day after the United States declared war on Germany and entered World War I. President Woodrow Wilson described the song as “a genuine inspiration to all American manhood.” The song was an immediate hit selling over two million copies of the sheet music before the end of the war through a popular 78 rpm record.

[Listen to the march](#)



MARCH, “DEFENDERS OF FREEDOM”

Kenneth Douse

Kenneth Douse was born in England and joined the Marine Band Symphony Orchestra as a violinist in 1926. He began taking saxophone lessons prior to joining the band, and he continued to teach himself the instrument, eventually becoming a solo saxophonist with the Marine Band. Douse held this prestigious position until 1950, performing many times as a featured soloist with the band on concerts, tours and radio broadcasts. After he retired from the Marine Band, he joined the National Symphony Orchestra as both a violinist and a saxophonist, where he remained until 1968.

In addition to his active performing career, Douse was a composer and wrote several marches and saxophone solos during his time in the Marine Band. The march “Defenders of Freedom” was published in 1949, and its title symbolized the spirit of the Americans who fought to ensure the preservation of liberties during the Revolutionary War at battles such as Bunker Hill and Yorktown.

