



UNITED STATES MARINE BAND
Sunday, April 14, 2024 at 2:00 P.M.
Rachel M. Schlesinger Concert Hall and Arts Center
Northern Virginia Community College
Alexandria Campus
Captain Darren Y. Lin, conducting

Lieutenant Colonel Ryan Nowlin, Director

John Philip Sousa* (1854–1932)
edited by The United States Marine Band

March, “The Gladiator”

Dmitri Shostakovich (1906–75)
edited by H. Robert Reynolds

Folk Dances

Karl L. King (1891–1971)

March, “Cyrus the Great”

Alfred Reed (1921–2005)

El Camino Real
1stLt Jose D. Toranzo, conducting

INTERMISSION

Claude Debussy (1862–1918)

Syrinx
GySgt Heather Zenobia, flute soloist

John Mackey (b. 1973)

Wine-Dark Sea (2014)
Hubris
Immortal thread, so weak
The attention of souls

*Member, U.S. Marine Band

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PROGRAM NOTES

March, “The Gladiator”

John Philip Sousa* (1854–1932)

edited by The United States Marine Band

Nothing among John Philip Sousa’s memoirs reveals the identity of the “gladiator,” but the first printing of the sheet music carried a dedication to Charles F. Towle of Boston. Towle was a journalist who was editor of the *Boston Traveler* at the time this march was written, but the nature of his association with Sousa is not known. Sousa’s daughter Helen conjectured that her father might have been inspired by a literary account of some particular gladiator. It is unlikely that he would have dedicated a march to gladiators in general because of their ferocity and deeds of inhumanity, but perhaps one noble gladiator who had been a victim of circumstances might have been his inspiration. There has also been speculation that the march had some Masonic significance, inasmuch as it was written at the time he was “knighted” in Columbia Commandery No. 2, Knights Templar, but this lacks substantiation.

For Sousa, “The Gladiator” brought back both happy and unhappy memories. In 1885 he had written the dirge “The Honored Dead” for Stopper and Fisk, a music publisher in Williamsport, Pennsylvania. They were so pleased that they asked him to write a quickstep march. He responded with “The Gladiator,” but they rejected it. Their shortsightedness cost them dearly; Sousa then sold it to Harry Coleman of Philadelphia, and the march eventually sold more than a million copies.

“The Gladiator” was the first Sousa composition to reach such wide circulation. He himself was unaware of its popularity until its strains startled him one day while in Philadelphia on business. Many years later he gave this dramatic account:

“I was taking a stroll along Broad Street. At a corner a hand-organ man was grinding out a melody which, somehow, seemed strangely familiar. As I listened more intently, I was surprised to recognize it as my own “Gladiator” march. I believe that was one of the proudest moments of my life, as I stood there on the street.”

A recording of this march, the full score and parts, and a video of the score synchronized with the audio are available in Volume 2 of [“The Complete Marches of John Philip Sousa.”](#)

Paul E. Bierley, *The Works of John Philip Sousa* (Westerville, Ohio: Integrity Press, 1984), 56. Used by permission.

Folk Dances

Dmitri Shostakovich (1906–75)

edited by H. Robert Reynolds

When Josef Stalin died on March 5, 1953, the creative oppression he imposed on Soviet poets, painters, composers, authors, and artists was lifted. At this point, Dimitri Shostakovich was internationally recognized as one of his nation’s première musical talents. However, his personal and professional life was incessantly plagued by the Communist Soviet regime’s censorship. His works were closely scrutinized under the justification of Vladimir Lenin’s

dictum, “art belongs to the people,” and Shostakovich was often forced to either withhold compositions that he suspected would not meet government favor or to conceal the true meaning of his works. Miraculously, despite a string of works denounced in the 1930s, Shostakovich’s life was spared during the Great Terror of 1936 through 1938 where many of his friends and family were imprisoned or killed. Shostakovich was denounced by the Stalinist regime a second time in 1948 as part of the Zhdanov decree, for writing music that was “anti-democratic” and “alien to the Soviet People.” After Stalin’s death, Shostakovich began to freely unpack his emotions through his music. No longer bound by fear, his works became increasingly honest and personal, often expressing the desperate anguish or biting conflict he had experienced for so many years.

Some works, such as the Folk Dances, expressed entirely different emotions: light-heartedness, frivolity, and joy. Lev Lebedinsky, a director of Moscow’s Bolshoi, once observed Shostakovich working on a piece and wrote that:

... when [Shostakovich] wrote light music, he was able to talk, make jokes, and compose simultaneously, like the legendary Mozart. He laughed and chuckled and in the meanwhile, work was underway and the music was being written down.

Folk Dances was composed in this light style and overflows with the joy and exuberance of the Russian people expressed through their folk melodies. These tunes are presented in a continuous flow that gathers energy and excitement leading to a rousing finish.

March, “Cyrus the Great”

Karl L. King (1891-1971)

Raised in Canton, Ohio during the turn of the twentieth century, Karl L. King was influenced both by the rich tradition of band music in the Midwest and the circus, the most popular form of entertainment at the time. As a young musician, he played multiple brass instruments and piano. He ultimately settled on the baritone as a principal instrument which he played in several circus bands, including the Barnum and Bailey Band, between 1910 and 1913. During this time King became known for his ability to quickly compose circus marches. This was an in-demand skill because there were very few compositions that fit the rhythm and pacing of circus performances. He was prolific over the course of his career, composing more than 188 marches and circus “screamers,” and he is considered to have done for the circus march what John Philip Sousa did for the patriotic march.

King composed the march “Cyrus the Great,” subtitled “Persian March,” as a tribute to his friend “Cy” Tremain. However, he likely drew musical inspiration from the titular emperor, who founded the Persian Empire around 550 B.C.E. The march begins with an introductory brass fanfare leading into a descending low brass theme that recurs throughout the first strain. King made the less common choice to use the low brass section as the lead melodic voice for a muscular second strain. The trio moves to a celebratory major tonality, with each of its three iterations separated by a traditionally low brass-heavy breakup strain.

El Camino Real
Alfred Reed (1921–2005)

Alfred Reed, born Alfred Friedman on January 25th, 1921, grew up in New York City and was exposed to symphonic and operatic repertoire from an early age. His home was filled with music as his parents made music listening part of their daily lives. Reed began formal music training at age ten as a trumpeter and started playing professionally while still in high school. In 1938, Reed became a staff composer, arranger and assistant conductor for the Radio Workshop, New York while still a teenager. He held that position for over three years until he joined the military during World War II and served as associate conductor of the 529th U.S. Air Force Band and became deeply interested in concert band music. At war's end, Reed enrolled at the Juilliard School of Music to study composition under Vittorio Giannini. In 1948, he became a staff composer and arranger with NBC, where he wrote and arranged music for radio and television. He followed that position with a similar one at ABC. He became conductor of the Baylor University Symphony Orchestra in 1953, and earned the bachelor's of music and master's of music at that institution. He relocated from New York City to Miami, Florida in 1960. From 1966 to 1993 he taught theory, composition, music marketing and music education at the University of Miami. Reed resided in Miami until his death on September 16, 2005.

Reed published over 250 works during his lifetime, many of which have become standards in the concert band repertoire. *El Camino Real* (*The Royal Road* or *The King's Highway*) was composed in 1986 and commissioned by the 581st Air Force Band. This fantasy is based on a series of Spanish folk melodies and underscored by chord progressions often used in flamenco music. The work follows a familiar fast-slow-fast pattern, with a first section based on the triple-metered dance form known as the *jota*, and a second contrasting section derived from the *fandango*. The piece is brought to a rousing conclusion with a recapitulation of the opening *jota*, characterized by driving percussion and brilliant flourishes in the brass.

Syrinx
Claude Debussy (1862–1918)

Syrinx refers to both the Greek folk instrument known as the pan flute or panpipes, and the Greek myth of Syrinx and her romantic pursuit by Pan. In an attempt to avoid Pan, Syrinx changes herself into a water-reed and hides in the marshes. Pan, drawn to the sound of the wind blowing through the reeds, cuts the reeds to fashion a pan flute and inadvertently killing her in the process.

Debussy's composition *Syrinx* was originally titled *Flûte de Pan* and was written as part of incidental music to *Psyché*, a play by Gabriel Mourey. The work became standard repertoire for the flute when Louis Fleury, the flutist of the original production, began to perform it regularly in concert.

Gunnery Sergeant Heather Zenobia, flute

Flutist Gunnery Sergeant Heather Zenobia of Louisville, Kentucky joined "The President's Own" United States Marine Band in September 2006. Gunnery Sgt. Zenobia began her musical instruction on piano at age six and flute at age nine. After graduating in 1997 from

Youth Performing Arts School in Louisville, she earned her bachelor's degree in music from Cleveland Institute of Music in 2001. She earned her master's degree in flute performance in 2006 from New England Conservatory in Boston, Massachusetts. Her notable instructors included Elizabeth Rowe, principal flute of the Boston Symphony Orchestra; Jeanne Baxtresser, former principal flute of the New York Philharmonic; and Joshua Smith, principal flute of the Cleveland Orchestra. Prior to joining "The President's Own," Gunnery Sgt. Zenobia was co-principal flute with the Hingham Symphony in Hingham, Massachusetts, and was a member of the National Repertory Orchestra in Breckenridge, Colorado. She also was a fellow at Tanglewood Music Center in Lenox, Massachusetts, and a member of the National Orchestral Institute in College Park, Maryland.

Wine-Dark Sea (2014)

John Mackey (b. 1973)

The composer offers the following program note regarding this composition:

For the past 10 years, I've written all of my music in collaboration with my wife, Abby. She titles nearly all of my pieces, a process that usually involves my writing the music, then playing it for her, after which she tells me what the piece is about. Without her help, *Aurora Awakes* would be "Slow Music Then Fast Music #7 in E-flat." Sometimes she'll hear a piece halfway through my writing process and tell me what the music evokes to her, and that can take the piece in a different (and better) direction than I had originally intended. I've learned that the earlier she is involved in the process, the better the piece turns out. So with *Wine-Dark Sea*, my symphony for band, I asked for her help months before I ever wrote a note of music.

The commission, from Jerry Junkin and The University of Texas Wind Ensemble, in honor of the 100th anniversary of the Sarah and Ernest Butler School of Music, was for a piece lasting approximately 30 minutes. How could I put together a piece that large? Abby had an idea. Why not write something programmatic, and let the story determine the structure? We had taken a similar approach with *Harvest: Concerto for Trombone*, my trombone concerto about Dionysus, the Greek god of wine. Why not return to the Greek myths for this symphony? And since this story needed to be big (epic, even), I'd use the original, truly epic tale of Odysseus, as told thousands of years ago by Homer in *The Odyssey*.

The full *Odyssey*, it turned out, was too large, so Abby picked some of the "greatest hits" from the epic poem. She wrote a truncated version of the story, and I attempted to set her telling to music. Here is the story the way Abby outlined it (in three movements), and I set it:

After ten years of bloody siege, the Trojan War was won because of Odysseus's gambit: A horse full of soldiers, disguised as an offering. The people of Troy took it in as a trophy, and were slaughtered.

Odysseus gave the Greeks victory, and they left the alien shores for home. But Odysseus's journey would take as long as the war itself. Homer called the ocean on which Odysseus sailed a wine-dark sea, and for the Greek king it was as murky and disorienting as its name; he would not find his way across it without first losing himself.

I. Hubris

Odysseus filled his ship with the spoils of war, but he carried another, more dangerous, cargo: pride. This movement opens with his triumphal march, and continues as he and his crew maraud through every port of call on their way home.

But the arrogance of a conquering mortal has one sure consequence in this world: a demonstration of that mortal's insignificance, courtesy of the gods. Odysseus offends; Zeus strikes down his ship. The sailors drown. Odysseus is shipwrecked. The sea takes them all.

II. Immortal thread, so weak

This movement is the song of the beautiful and immortal nymph Kalypso, who finds Odysseus near death, washed up on the shore of the island where she lives all alone. She nurses him back to health, and sings as she moves back and forth with a golden shuttle at her loom. Odysseus shares her bed; seven years pass. The tapestry she began when she nursed him becomes a record of their love.

But one day Odysseus remembers his home. He tells Kalypso he wants to leave her, to return to his wife and son. He scoffs at all she has given him. Kalypso is heartbroken.

And yet, that night, Kalypso again paces at her loom. She unravels her tapestry and weaves it into a sail for Odysseus. In the morning, she shows Odysseus a raft, equipped with the sail she has made and stocked with bread and wine, and calls up a gentle and steady wind to carry him home. Shattered, she watches him go; he does not look back.

III. The attentions of souls

But other immortals are not finished with Odysseus yet. Before he can reach his home, he must sail to the end of the earth, and make a sacrifice to the dead. And so, this movement takes place at the gates of the underworld, where it is always night.

When Odysseus cuts the throats of the sacrificial animals, the spirits of the dead swarm up. They cajole him, begging for blood. They accuse him, indicting him for his sins. They taunt him, mocking his inability to get home. The spirit of his own mother does not recognize him; he tries to touch her, but she is immaterial. He sees the ghosts of the great and the humble, all hungry, all grasping.

Finally, the prophet Teiresias tells Odysseus what he must do to get home. And so Odysseus passes through a gauntlet beyond the edge of the world, beset by the surging, shrieking souls of the dead. But in the darkness he can at last see the light of home ahead.

Wine-Dark Sea is dedicated to Jerry Junkin, without whom the piece would not exist. The second movement, “Immortal thread, so weak,” telling of Kalypso's broken heart, is dedicated to Abby, without whom none of my music over the past ten years would exist.