



Lieutenant Colonel Ryan Nowlin, Director

UNITED STATES MARINE BAND
Wednesday, August 26, 2026 at 7:00 P.M.
U.S. Capitol, West Terrace
Thursday, August 27, 2026 at 7:00 P.M.
National Museum of the Marine Corps
Lieutenant Colonel Ryan Nowlin, conducting

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

March, “Semper Fidelis”

James Stephenson (b. 1969)

Spirit of America (2026)

Arthur Pryor (1870–1942)

Blue Bells of Scotland

GySgt Russell Sharp, trombone soloist

Edwin Franko Goldman (1878–1956)

March, “The Chimes of Liberty”

George Gershwin (1898–1937)
lyrics by Ira Gershwin
arranged by GySgt Scott Nimmer*

The First Lady of Song

“They Can’t Take That Away from Me”

“Embraceable You”

“I Got Rhythm”

SSgt Hannah Davis, soprano

Alan Silvestri (b. 1950)
arranged by Jay Bocook

Back to the Future

SSgt Hannah Davis, concert moderator

*Member, U.S. Marine Band

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PROGRAM NOTES

March, “Semper Fidelis”

John Philip Sousa* (1854–1932)

edited by The United States Marine Band

It is unfortunate that President Chester A. Arthur, the man responsible for this march, did not live to hear it. In a conversation with Sousa, then leader of the U.S. Marine Band, he expressed his displeasure at the official use of the song “Hail to the Chief.” When Sousa stated that it was actually an old Scottish boating song, the President suggested that he compose more appropriate music. Sousa responded with two pieces, not one. First he composed “Presidential Polonaise” (1886). Then, two years after Arthur’s death, he wrote “Semper Fidelis.”

The march takes its title from the motto of the U.S. Marine Corps: “Semper Fidelis”—“Always Faithful.” The trio is an extension of an earlier Sousa composition, “With Steady Step,” one of eight brief trumpet and drum pieces he wrote for *The Trumpet and Drum* (1886). It was dedicated to those who inspired it—the officers and men of the U.S. Marine Corps. In Sousa’s own words: “I wrote ‘Semper Fidelis’ one night while in tears, after my comrades of the Marine Corps had sung their famous hymn at Quantico.”

For the first performance, Sousa demonstrated his flair for theatrics:

We were marching down Pennsylvania Avenue, and had turned the corner at the Treasury Building. On the reviewing stand were President Harrison, many members of the diplomatic corps, a large part of the House and Senate, and an immense number of invited guests besides. I had so timed our playing of the march that the “trumpet” theme would be heard for the first time, just as we got to the front of the reviewing stand.

Suddenly, ten extra trumpets were shot in the air, and the “theme” was pealed out in unison. Nothing like it had ever been heard there before—when the great throng on the stand had recovered its surprise, it rose in a body, and led by the President himself, showed its pleasure in a mighty swell of applause. It was a proud moment for us all.

“Semper Fidelis” subsequently gained recognition as the official march of the U.S. Marine Corps. Sousa regarded it as his best march, musically speaking. It became one of his most popular marches, and he once stated that it was the favorite march of Kaiser Wilhelm II of Germany—before World War I, of course. It was played by the Sousa Band in many foreign countries and always received acclaim as a well-known composition. Few knew that it had been sold outright to the publisher for the unbelievably low sum of \$35.

Paul E. Bierley, *The Works of John Philip Sousa* (Westerville, Ohio: Integrity Press, 1984), 83. Used by permission.

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.”](#)

Spirit of America (2026)

James Stephenson (b. 1969)

James Stephenson is an American composer whose music has earned widespread acclaim for its expressive lyricism, vibrant orchestration, and audience appeal. After a successful career as a professional trumpeter, Stephenson turned his focus to composition and quickly became one of the most frequently commissioned composers in the United States. His catalog includes works for orchestra, wind ensemble, chamber ensembles, and solo instruments, many of which have been performed by leading professional orchestras, military bands, and educational ensembles. Known for blending contemporary musical language with accessible melodies and emotional depth, Stephenson continues to contribute significantly to the American concert music landscape.

Spirit of America was composed by Stephenson in celebration of America's 250th anniversary, and was premiered by the Boston Pops as part of their historic July 4 Fireworks Spectacular in 2026. According to the composer, the piece includes references to "My Country, 'Tis of Thee" and pays "homage to those who came before us and who lived and died to protect the truths we hold self-evident."

Blue Bells of Scotland

Arthur Pryor (1870–1942)

Arthur Pryor was born in Missouri and began his musical training early. His father, Samuel Pryor, started teaching Arthur piano and cornet at age six. Pryor studied many other instruments at home, eventually landing on the trombone. By age eleven, he was billed as the "boy wonder from Missouri" when he soloed on valve trombone with the Pryor Band, a professional ensemble led by his father. Pryor joined the Sousa band in 1893 on slide trombone and performed an incredible 10,000 solos during his twelve years as a member of John Philip Sousa's ensemble.

Pryor was widely regarded as one of the greatest trombone virtuosos, due to his impeccable technique and exquisite sound. In Pryor's time, the trombone was considered a limited instrument which could not perform technical acrobatics in its repertoire. To combat this stigma and showcase his impressive talents, he composed some 300 works, including enduring concert favorites such as the *Blue Bells of Scotland*. Pryor's compositions added tremendously to the trombone's repertoire, reigniting interest in the trombone as a solo instrument.

Gunnery Sergeant Russell Sharp, trombone soloist

Trombonist Gunnery Sergeant Russell Sharp of Mustang, Oklahoma, joined "The President's Own" United States Marine Band in January 2017. Gunnery Sgt. Sharp began his musical instruction on trombone at age eleven and graduated in 2001 from Mustang High School. He earned a bachelor's degree in trombone performance in 2006 from the University of Central Oklahoma in Edmond where he studied with Kent Kidwell, retired principal trombone of the Oklahoma City Philharmonic. He earned a master's degree in trombone performance from Oklahoma City University's Wanda L. Bass School of Music in 2007. He also studied with Lee Rogers, principal trombone with the Washington National Opera in Washington, D.C. Prior to joining the band, he was the principal trombone with the U.S. Naval Academy Band in

Annapolis, Maryland from 2007 to 2016. He has also substituted with the National Symphony Orchestra and Kennedy Center Opera Orchestra in Washington, D.C.; the Harrisburg Symphony Orchestra in Pennsylvania; the Oklahoma City Philharmonic; and the Annapolis Symphony in Maryland.

March, “The Chimes of Liberty”

Edwin Franko Goldman (1878–1956)

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.”

The First Lady of Song

George Gershwin (1898–1937)

lyrics by Ira Gershwin

arranged by GySgt Scott Ninmer*

George Gershwin was one of America’s most influential composers, celebrated for bridging the worlds of classical music and jazz. Born in Brooklyn, New York, he rose to prominence as a songwriter for Broadway before achieving international acclaim with concert works such as *Rhapsody in Blue*, *An American in Paris*, and the opera *Porgy and Bess*. Gershwin’s music captured the energy, diversity, and optimism of early twentieth-century America, blending sophisticated orchestral writing with the rhythms, harmonies, and improvisatory spirit of jazz. Though his life was cut short at age thirty-eight, his innovative works continue to shape American music and remain beloved by audiences around the world.

The collection *The First Lady of Song* contains three of Gershwin’s most iconic songs in arrangements inspired by those performed by Ella Fitzgerald. “They Can’t Take That Away from Me” was written for the 1937 film *Shall We Dance* and was introduced by Fred Astaire. Rather than focusing on grand declarations of love, the song celebrates cherished memories and the small personal details that remain long after a relationship has changed. Both “Embraceable You” and “I Got Rhythm” are featured in the 1930 Broadway musical *Girl Crazy*. With its graceful melody and heartfelt lyrics, “Embraceable You” expresses a simple yet profound longing for closeness and affection. “I Got Rhythm” is driven by its energetic syncopation and memorable four-note rhythmic motif. Its lively harmonic progression, known as “rhythm changes,” became a foundational framework for countless jazz compositions.

Staff Sergeant Hannah Davis, soprano

Soprano vocalist and concert moderator Staff Sergeant Hannah Davis of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania joined “The President’s Own” United States Marine Band in September 2023. She is the band’s second official female vocalist. Staff Sgt. Davis began her musical instruction at age eight. After graduating from Moon Area High School in Moon Township, Pennsylvania, in 2017, she attended West Virginia University (WVU) where she studied under Hope Koehler and earned a bachelor’s degree in music in 2021. Prior to joining “The President’s Own,” she performed with the West Virginia Symphony Orchestra and WVU Opera Theatre and was a private voice instructor.

Back to the Future

Alan Silvestri (b. 1950)

arranged by Jay Bocook

Few film scores have captured the spirit of adventure and wonder as memorably as Alan Silvestri’s music for *Back to the Future*. Written to accompany the time-travel exploits of Marty McFly and Doc Brown, the score combines bold fanfares, sweeping melodies, and driving rhythmic energy to create a sense of excitement and discovery. Silvestri’s music became an essential part of the film’s enduring appeal, helping to elevate its story from science-fiction comedy to modern cinematic classic.

In this concert arrangement by Jay Bocook, the score’s most recognizable themes are brought together in a thrilling symphonic showcase. Audiences will hear the triumphant main theme alongside music that evokes the suspense, humor, and exhilaration of the film’s unforgettable journey through time.