

“THE PRESIDENT’S OWN” UNITED STATES MARINE BAND

Lieutenant Colonel Ryan Nowlin, Director



AMERICAN BANDMASTERS ASSOCIATION
91ST ANNUAL CONVENTION | HARRIS THEATER CHICAGO
FRIDAY, MARCH 6, 2026 | 7:30 PM



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THE JOAN W. AND IRVING B. HARRIS THEATER FOR MUSIC AND DANCE
205 E RANDOLPH STREET, CHICAGO, IL



HARRIS THEATER
MILLENNIUM PARK

“THE PRESIDENT’S OWN” UNITED STATES MARINE BAND

INTERMISSION

FRIDAY, MARCH 6, 2026 | 7:30 PM
THE JOAN W. AND IRVING B. HARRIS THEATER FOR MUSIC AND DANCE

Calixa Lavallée (1842–91)
John Stafford Smith (1750–1836)

Canadian National Anthem, “O Canada”
National Anthem, “The Star-Spangled Banner”
Roy Holder, conducting
ABA President
Director of Bands (Ret.), Lake Braddock Secondary School

James Reese Europe (1881–1919)
arranged by GySgt Lucia Disano*

The Clef Club March
James Swearingen, conducting
Professor for Music Emeritus, Capital University

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

March, “The Belle of Chicago”
Grant Okamura, conducting
Professor Emeritus, University of Hawai‘i

Erika Svanoë (b. 1976)

Adventures in Wonderland (2025)
II. The Garden & The Chesire Cat
III. A Mad Tea Party
world première
Dr. Russel C. Mikkelson, conducting
Director of Bands, The Ohio State University
American Bandmasters Association Consortium Commission

Leonard Bernstein (1918–90)
arranged by Clare Grundman

Overture to *Candide*
Col Michael J. Colburn, USMC (Ret.), conducting
Former Director, U.S. Marine Band
ABA Past President

arranged by GySgt Scott Nimmer*

Dear Arturo
GySgt Tyler Lindsay, trumpet soloist
Thomas Leslie, conducting
Director, Division of Wind Band Studies and Professor of
Conducting, University of Nevada, Las Vegas

Jennifer Higdon (b. 1962)
transcribed by LtCol Ryan Nowlin*

blue cathedral
Col Jason K. Fettig, USMC (Ret.), conducting
Former Director, U.S. Marine Band
Director of Bands, University of Michigan

Viet Cuong (b. 1990)

The Truest Course (2026)
world première
LtCol Ryan Nowlin, conducting
Director, U.S. Marine Band

Piotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky (1840–93)
transcribed by John R. Bourgeois*

Dance of the Actors from *The Maid of Orleans*
Col John R. Bourgeois, USMC (Ret.), conducting
Director Emeritus, U.S. Marine Band
ABA Past President and Honorary Life President

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

March, “The Stars and Stripes Forever”
Dennis Fisher, conducting
Emeritus Professor of Music, University of North Texas

James Stephenson (b. 1969)

You Have Reached the City Limits (2024)
transcription world première
Capt Darren Y. Lin, conducting
Associate Director, U.S. Marine Band

arranged by **Thomas Knox*** (1937–2004)

A Salute to the Armed Forces of the
United States of America
LtCol Ryan Nowlin, conducting
Director, U.S. Marine Band

*Member, U.S. Marine Band

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CANADIAN NATIONAL ANTHEM, “O CANADA”

CALIXA LAVALLÉE

O Canada! Our home and native land!
 True patriot love in all of us command.
 With glowing hearts we see thee rise,
 The True North strong and free!
 From far and wide,
 O Canada, we stand on guard for thee.
 God keep our land glorious and free!
 O Canada, we stand on guard for thee.
 O Canada, we stand on guard for thee.

NATIONAL ANTHEM, “THE STAR-SPANGLED BANNER”

JOHN STAFFORD SMITH (1750–1836)

Oh, say, can you see, by the dawn’s early light,
 What so proudly we hail’d at the twilight’s last gleaming?
 Whose broad stripes and bright stars, thro’ the perilous fight,
 O’er the ramparts we watch’d, were so gallantly streaming?
 And the rockets’ red glare, the bombs bursting in air,
 Gave proof thro’ the night that our flag was still there.
 O say, does that star-spangled banner yet wave
 O’er the land of the free and the home of the brave?



ROY HOLDER

ABA PRESIDENT
 DIRECTOR OF BANDS (RET.), LAKE BRADDOCK SECONDARY SCHOOL

Roy Holder serves as the current president of the American Bandmasters Association (ABA). He received both bachelor and master of science degrees in music education from the University of Tennessee, Knoxville and taught as a high school band director for forty-two years in the public schools of Tennessee, Georgia, and Virginia.

Holder has held offices in professional organizations of both Tennessee and Virginia. He is a past president of the National Band Association (NBA) and the Founding President of the Virginia chapter of Phi Beta Mu International. Additionally, Holder is vice-president of operations for the John Philip Sousa Foundation and serves on their Legion of Honor Committee and as chair of the Sudler Flag of Honor Committee. Prior to his selection as ABA President Holder served as chair of the ABA School Bands Task Force, facilitating such projects as the ABA COVID Response Document and the “Stars and Stripes Together” project in conjunction with the United States Marine Band. Holder has been recognized for professional honors by the Alcoa City Schools, Knox County Schools, East Tennessee School Band and Orchestra Association, Virginia Band and Orchestra Directors Association (VBDOA), Phi Beta Mu, Fairfax County Board of Directors, Fairfax County Public Schools, Phi Mu Alpha, Wolf Trap Foundation for the Performing Arts, Who’s Who Among American Teachers, NBA, John Philip Sousa Foundation, United States Army Band, and National Symphony Orchestra.

In December 2021 he was recognized as a recipient of the NBA “Al and Gladys Wright Distinguished Legacy Award,” and in February 2025 he was inducted into the NBA Hall of Fame of Distinguished Conductors. The accomplishments of the Lake Braddock Band program have twice been read into the official record of the United States Congress. Holder is an inducted member of the East Tennessee School Band and Orchestra Hall of Fame, VBDOA Hall of Fame, Phi Beta Mu Hall of Fame, and Virginia Honor Band Hall of Fame. In June 2011, the Lake Braddock Secondary School Bands were awarded the VBODA Thirty-Year Honor Band Plaque for their accomplishments at state concert festival and marching festival adjudication for thirty consecutive years. This is the only school in the state to ever accomplish this.

Ensembles under Holder’s direction have performed for the National Commission on Aging; 50th Anniversary of the National Savings Bond Campaign at the Federal Reserve; Armed Forces National Family week at the Pentagon; John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts with the National Chamber Symphony; as an American Youth Performs Selected Ensemble; Music For All National Concert Festival; Virginia Music Educators Association In-Service Conference; Midwest International Band and Orchestra Clinic; ABA convention; and completed a concert tour of China under the sponsorship of the US-China Cultural and Education Foundation. Holder has been published in the *NBA Journal* and *The Instrumentalist* as well as teacher-resource books, such as *The Band Director’s Cookbook*, *Rehearsing the High School Band*, and *Inspiring a Love of Music*.

In addition to the responsibilities of his professional offices Holder continues to keep a busy schedule of adjudication and guest conducting. Having conducted throughout the United States, Canada, Europe, China, and Japan, his favorite professional pastime is still traveling with his wife, June, as they both visit band rooms to assist in rehearsals, lead weekend concert camps, and present professional development sessions for school bands and music departments. Always strong advocates for the importance of band and band music, the Holders enjoy the opportunity to continue to help people succeed in this wonderful profession. At the 75th Midwest International Band and Orchestra Clinic, Roy and June Holder were introduced by the Midwest Board of Directors as “Midwest Clinic Legends,” recognizing Outstanding Lifetime Contributions to Music Education.

March, “The Belle of Chicago”

JOHN PHILIP SOUSA (1854–1932)

edited by The United States Marine Band

Perhaps 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 beloved marches in the repertoire; as Director, he was an innovator who shaped the future of the Marine Band.

Sousa was born in southeast Washington, DC, near the Marine Barracks where his father, Antonio, was a musician in the Marine Band. Sousa studied piano and most orchestral instruments, but his first love was the violin. He became very proficient on the instrument, and at age thirteen was almost persuaded to join a circus band. His father intervened, however, and enlisted him as an apprentice musician in the Marine Band. Sousa remained in the band until he was twenty, and after a short stint as a professional musician in Philadelphia, returned to accept a position as the seventeenth director of the band in 1880.

“The Belle of Chicago” was performed in 1892 at the dedication of the World’s Columbian Exposition, the Chicago World’s Fair. This specially assembled orchestra of 190 players was conducted by Theodore Thomas, who founded the Chicago Symphony Orchestra a year before. Sousa composed this piece for his engagements in the city and, more importantly, as a tribute to its ladies. The rousing march apparently had something other than the desired effect after one local journalist stated, “Mr. Sousa evidently regards the Chicago belle as a powerful creature, with the swinging stride of a giant, a voice like a foghorn, and feet like sugar-cured hams.”

Sousa completed the full score of “The Belle of Chicago” on July 23, 1892, in Washington, DC, one week before his discharge from the Marine Corps to form his own civilian band, which, incidentally, was based in Chicago.



GRANT OKAMURA

PROFESSOR EMERITUS, UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII

Grant Okamura was director of bands from 1985 to 2009 and is now professor emeritus at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa. Okamura's Symphonic Wind Ensemble at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa's performance at the 1996 College Band Directors National Association (CBDNA) Western/Northwestern Division Convention and the 1994 ABA elicited many letters regarding their outstanding performances. His Wind Ensemble was selected to perform at the World Association of School Band Ensembles in Valencia, Spain and the Coups de Vents band festival in France in 1993.

Okamura conducts the Oahu Civic Orchestra and has served as Assistant Conductor of the Honolulu Symphony Orchestra. He has also formed and conducted the Honolulu Symphony Orchestra's Symphonic Wind Ensemble, an ensemble comprised of musicians of the Honolulu Symphony Orchestra and students at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa. He served as the music director of the Hawai'i Youth Symphony between 1979 and 1985. He has served as guest conductor at Oregon State University, Illinois State University, the University of Saskatchewan Wind Orchestra, and most recently the Florida State Wind Ensemble.

Okamura is a member of the prestigious ABA. In 1994, he hosted a joint convention of ABA and the Japan Band Directors Association in Hawai'i. He is an active member of the O'ahu Band Directors Association, Hawai'i Music Educators Association, CBDNA, Hawai'i Band Directors Association, and the Music Educators National Conference (MENC). He served as president of the O'ahu Band Directors Association from 1996 to 1997 and president of the Hawai'i Music Educators Association from 1988 to 1990.

Overture to *Candide*

LEONARD BERNSTEIN (1918–90)

arranged by Clare Grundman

Few figures have shaped American musical life as profoundly as Leonard Bernstein. Equally at home as a conductor, composer, pianist, and educator, Bernstein forged a career that bridged the worlds of concert music, Broadway, film, and television. He was among the first American-born conductors to achieve international prominence, serving as music director of the New York Philharmonic and reaching a broad public through his landmark televised *Young People's Concerts*. As a composer, Bernstein moved fluently between classical and popular idioms, creating works that remain central to both the concert hall and the musical theater.

Bernstein composed *Candide* between 1953 and 1956, basing the work on Voltaire's satirical novella *Candide*, or *Optimism* (1759). Conceived as an operetta, *Candide* blends wit, irony, and exuberance with moments of genuine lyricism, reflecting Bernstein's gift for combining theatrical immediacy with sophisticated musical craft. Although the work underwent numerous revisions over the course of its performance history, its score has long been admired for its stylistic range, clarity, and theatrical flair.

The Overture to *Candide* quickly took on an independent life beyond the stage. Compact, energetic, and tightly constructed, it draws upon several of the operetta's most memorable musical ideas, including material from “Oh, Happy We” and Cunégonde's showpiece aria “Glitter and Be Gay.” Far more than a simple medley, the overture distills the spirit of the larger work into a vivid concert opener, characterized by sparkling orchestration, rhythmic drive, and a sense of irrepressible optimism.

Since its first concert performances in the late 1950s, the overture has become one of the most frequently performed works by an American composer of the twentieth century, appearing regularly on programs for orchestra and wind band alike. Clare Grundman's transcription has played a significant role in bringing Bernstein's music into the wind ensemble repertoire, preserving the momentum of the original while adapting it to the sonorities of the concert band. Today, the Overture to *Candide* remains a staple of the repertoire, valued for its vitality, craftsmanship, and unmistakable Bernstein voice.



COLONEL MICHAEL J. COLBURN, USMC (RET.)

FORMER DIRECTOR, U.S. MARINE BAND

ABA PAST PRESIDENT

Michael J. Colburn is a freelance conductor and clinician who regularly leads professional and student ensembles in festivals, residencies, and a variety of other settings throughout the country. In June 2024 he was appointed music director and conductor of the Orchestra of Northern New York, a professional ensemble based in Potsdam, New York. He is also the music director and conductor of the Me2/ Orchestra in Burlington, Vermont, a classical music organization devoted to erasing the stigma of mental illness through supportive rehearsals and inspiring performances. Colburn is currently serving as the visiting director of orchestras at the Crane School of Music at the State University of New York (SUNY) at Potsdam and is an affiliate artist at the University of Vermont, where he teaches euphonium. In 2024, he became a member of the educational consultant team at the Conn Selmer Division of Education. From 2014 to 2022, Colburn was director of bands at Butler University in Indianapolis, Indiana, where he conducted the Butler University Wind Ensemble and offered instruction in conducting, euphonium, and the history and literature of the wind band. Before his tenure at Butler, Colburn served for twenty-seven years in “The President's Own” United States Marine Band, holding a variety of positions including principal euphonium, Assistant Director, and Director. As Director, Colburn was music adviser to the White House and regularly conducted the Marine Band and Chamber Orchestra at the Executive Mansion and at the presidential inaugurations of George W. Bush and Barack Obama. He was promoted to Colonel by President Bush in a private Oval Office ceremony in 2007. In 2014, he was awarded the Distinguished Service Medal by General James Amos and the Midwest International Band and Orchestra Clinic Medal of Honor. He has served as chair of the Sousa-ABA-Ostwald Award and as an adjudicator for the Sudler Award, Barlow Endowment, Music for All, and the Col. George S. Howard Award for Excellence in Military Bands. Colburn is a past president of ABA, has been a board member of NBA, and currently serves as Vice President for Project Enhancement for the John Philip Sousa Foundation.

blue cathedral

JENNIFER HIGDON (B. 1962)

transcribed by LtCol Ryan Nowlin*

Jennifer Higdon is among the most widely performed American composers of her generation. She received the Pulitzer Prize in Music in 2010 for her Violin Concerto and has earned multiple GRAMMY Awards for her concert works, including her Percussion Concerto, Viola Concerto, and Harp Concerto. Her music is frequently performed by major orchestras and wind ensembles in the United States and abroad, and *blue cathedral* has become one of the most frequently programmed contemporary orchestral works of the past two decades. Higdon's compositions have been recorded extensively, including a recording of her Percussion Concerto by "The President's Own" United States Marine Band. Higdon wrote the following words about this composition:

Blue...like the sky. Where all possibilities soar. Cathedrals...a place of thought, growth, spiritual expression...serving as a symbolic doorway in to and out of this world. Blue represents all potential and the progression of journeys. Cathedrals represent a place of beginnings, endings, solitude, fellowship, contemplation, knowledge and growth. As I was writing this piece, I found myself imagining a journey through a glass cathedral in the sky. Because the walls would be transparent, I saw the image of clouds and blueness permeating from the outside of this church. In my mind's eye the listener would enter from the back of the sanctuary, floating along the corridor amongst giant crystal pillars, moving in a contemplative stance. The stained glass windows' figures would start moving with song, singing a heavenly music. The listener would float down the aisle, slowly moving upward at first and then progressing at a quicker pace, rising towards an immense ceiling which would open to the sky...as this journey progressed, the speed of the traveler would increase, rushing forward and upward. I wanted to create the sensation of contemplation and quiet peace at the beginning, moving towards the feeling of celebration and ecstatic expansion of the soul, all the while singing along with that heavenly music.

These were my thoughts when The Curtis Institute of Music commissioned me to write a work to commemorate its 75th anniversary. Curtis is a house of knowledge—a place to reach towards that beautiful expression of the soul which comes through music. I began writing this piece at a unique juncture in my life and found myself pondering the question of what makes a life. The recent loss of my younger brother, Andrew Blue, made me reflect on the amazing journeys that we all make in our lives, crossing paths with so many individuals singularly and collectively, learning and growing each step of the way. This piece represents the expression of the individual and the group...our inner travels and the places our souls carry us, the lessons we learn, and the growth we experience. In tribute to my brother, I feature solos for the clarinet (the instrument he played) and the flute (the instrument I play). Because I am the older sibling, it is the flute that appears first in this dialog. At the end of the work, the two instruments continue their dialogue, but it is the flute that drops out and the clarinet that continues on in the upward progressing journey.

This is a story that commemorates living and passing through places of knowledge and of sharing and of that song called life.



COLONEL JASON K. FETTIG, USMC (RET.)

FORMER DIRECTOR, U.S. MARINE BAND

DIRECTOR OF BANDS, UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

ABA PAST PRESIDENT

Jason K. Fettig has been the director of university bands at the University of Michigan – Ann Arbor (U-M) since January 2024. He leads all aspects of the historic and diverse band program, conducts the flagship Symphony Band, and directs the comprehensive graduate program in wind conducting. Prior to joining the faculty at U-M, Fettig was the 28th Director of "The President's Own" United States Marine Band in Washington, D.C., where he served as music adviser to three U.S. Presidents. He conducted the inaugurations of Presidents Donald Trump and Joseph Biden and the State Funeral of President George H.W. Bush. Fettig has appeared in concert performances in forty-nine states and abroad at major venues including Carnegie Hall, Severance Hall, Chicago Symphony Center, and the Kennedy Center, and live performances under his baton are frequently heard on National Public Radio. While leading the Marine Band, Fettig took the ensemble to international festivals in Japan, the Czech Republic, Austria, and the Netherlands, and he spearheaded several internationally recognized programs and

projects including ten produced albums and the re-recording of the complete marches of John Philip Sousa, accompanied by free, publicly available performance editions. He has commissioned and/or conducted the world premières of more than sixty works for winds and has collaborated with world class artists ranging from pianist Jean-Yves Thibaudet, violinist Joshua Bell, legendary composer and conductor John Williams, and contemporary chamber ensemble Eighth Blackbird, to Broadway and pop superstars Gloria Estefan, Lea Salonga, Jon Baptiste, and Lady Gaga.

Throughout his career, Fettig has been deeply involved in music education and has served as a clinician or visiting instructor at over forty colleges and universities and countless secondary schools across the nation. He implemented several innovative programs through the Marine Band, including the popular "Digital Rehearsal Hall" series, expanded student outreach on national tours, and developed a robust reputation for commissioning new music. He has brought many of these successful initiatives to the program at Michigan and in his first years has led performances and tours domestically and internationally and been involved in more than thirty commissioning projects. Fettig currently serves on the Board of Directors of ABA and is also a past president of ABA. He is the recipient of many awards and honors, including the Distinguished Service Medal of the Armed Forces, the 2023 Medal of Honor from the Midwest Clinic, the Kappa Kappa Psi-Tau Beta Sigma Distinguished Service to Music Award, a New York Emmy Award, and an honorary doctorate in fine arts from his alma mater, the University of Massachusetts, Amherst.

Dance of the Actors from *The Maid of Orleans*

PIOTR ILYICH TCHAIKOVSKY (1840–93)

transcribed by John R. Bourgeois*

Piotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky composed his opera *The Maid of Orleans* between 1878 and 1879, drawing on Friedrich Schiller's play of the same name and the historical figure of Joan of Arc. Confident that the work would secure his reputation as an operatic composer, Tchaikovsky regarded the opera as one of his most ambitious stage projects. Although it has remained less familiar than *Eugene Onegin* and *The Queen of Spades*, *The Maid of Orleans* remains a distinctive representation in his output for its grand scale, dramatic intensity, and its engagement with French historical subject matter.

Dance of the Actors is the final of three dances from Act II of the opera. They are set at the court of King Charles VII at Chinon. In this scene, the distracted monarch is entertained by a succession of costumed performers as France faces continued military crisis. Tchaikovsky uses the episode as an opportunity to contrast sharply differentiated musical characters, assigning each dance its own color and affect while maintaining a sense of theatrical continuity. This dance, a lively and exuberant movement that brings the scene to a spirited close, animated by bright orchestration and rhythmic drive.

This transcription was prepared by Colonel John R. Bourgeois, USMC (Ret.), the twenty-fifth director of the United States Marine Band. Bourgeois joined "The President's Own" in 1958 as a French horn player and arranger and served as director from 1979 until his retirement in 1996, a tenure spanning nine presidential administrations. His transcriptions and arrangements form a significant part of the Marine Band's modern repertoire, reflecting a deep understanding of both orchestral sources and the expressive capabilities of the wind ensemble.



COLONEL JOHN R. BOURGEOIS, USMC (RET.)

DIRECTOR EMERITUS, U.S. MARINE BAND

ABA PAST PRESIDENT AND HONORARY LIFE PRESIDENT

John R. Bourgeois, Director Emeritus, U.S. Marine Band and honorary life president of ABA was the 25th Director of "The President's Own" United States Marine Band from 1979 to 1996. His acclaimed career spanned nine presidential administrations, from Presidents Eisenhower to Clinton, and upon his retirement he was awarded the Distinguished Service Medal. Bourgeois served as president and CEO of the John Philip Sousa Foundation for over twenty years, past president of ABA and past president of NBA. Among the many honors and awards Bourgeois has received are the 1986 Phi Beta Mu Outstanding Bandmaster Award and the 1987 Kappa Kappa Psi Distinguished Service Award. In 1993, he was awarded

the Midwest International Band and Orchestra Clinic Medal of Honor. In 1991, Bourgeois was elected to NBA's Academy of Wind and Percussion Artists. In August 2000, Bourgeois was named "American Man of Music" for the triennium 2000 to 2003 by Phi Mu Alpha Sinfonia. In December 2000, he was elected to the NBA's Hall of Fame of Distinguished Band Conductors. In March 2005, he was installed as a Lowell Mason fellow of MENC, and in May he was awarded a Doctor of Music, *honoris causa* from Loyola University, New Orleans. In his retirement, Bourgeois stays busy as a guest conductor-clinician and as artist-in-residence at Loyola University, New Orleans in a chair endowed in his name. He continues to produce wind band arrangements and editions for Wingert-Jones in a series known as "The Bourgeois Editions." Also, he has authored a chapter on the history of the United States Marine Band titled "The President's Own" in the book, *The Marines*. In 2021, GIA published his autobiography, *Play On!*

You Have Reached the City Limits (2024)

JAMES STEPHENSON (B.1969)

Chicago has long embraced music as a civic good, integrating concert life into the fabric of the city itself. One of the clearest expressions of that ideal is the Grant Park Music Festival, founded in 1935 with the promise that high-quality symphonic music would be freely available to all. Presented each summer in Chicago's lakefront parks, the Festival has endured through economic hardship, war, and social change, remaining one of the few large-scale, free outdoor classical music series in the United States. Since 1944, performances have been given by the Grant Park Orchestra, a resident ensemble whose members are drawn from leading orchestras and musical institutions across the country and who convene each summer for an intensive season of rehearsals and concerts.

James Stephenson's *You Have Reached the City Limits* was written for the Grant Park Orchestra and the Grant Park Music Festival (GPMF), drawing direct inspiration from the city of Chicago and the unique atmosphere of music-making in an open, urban setting. The present performance marks the transcription world première, prepared by the composer himself for the United States Marine Band, further extending Stephenson's longstanding collaborative relationship with "The President's Own." The work's Chicago roots resonate especially strongly within the context of the American Bandmasters Association (ABA) Convention being held in the city, offering a portrait of a place shaped by sound, history, and lived experience. Rather than attempting to shut out the surrounding environment, the piece embraces the energy of the city itself, incorporating stylistic references and narrative gestures that reflect Chicago's musical identity. The composer has written the following about this work:

"I'm a proud Chicagoan, through and through. I was born here, and later in life, when the opportunity came about to relocate, there was no doubt that the Chicago area would become home. As such, I've been to hear the Grant Park Symphony many times, and when the opportunity arose to write a piece for the festival, I couldn't have been more thrilled.

I wanted to write a piece that would recognize the venue and orchestra for which I was writing, as well as the city I call home. One can't help but notice when attending a GPMF concert that any performance might be accompanied by people chatting, sirens wailing, unexpected weather, and more. I wanted to write a piece that might embrace that, rather than worry about it. Also, I've long known (as we all have) that Chicago is well-known for its blues tradition. From the early 1920s with the Red Hot Peppers, through Muddy Waters a few decades later, through today, Chicago is famous for its down-home and gritty blues. *You Have Reached the City Limits* explores the idea of a young couple deciding to "hit the town." The protagonist (the saxophone section in the band transcription) eggs their partner along to have some fun, and make a night of it. The partner (trumpet) complains and hesitates. Finally, they head out, and dash through the city, and happen upon two blues clubs. The first represents the blues from the 1920s, viewed through a smoky lens of history. A solo clarinet, piano, trumpet, and trombone remind us of what that might have sounded like. A little bit later, they enter a club playing the mid-century gritty blues. The music gets a bit edgier, with harmonica-like sounds and again a solo piano representing that era.

Finally they are off again on their own, having a great time, and when the orchestra swells to a giant climax, the truth is revealed that all they needed to do was spend some time together, enjoying one another's company, to satisfy their urge for fun.

James Stephenson is a Chicago-based composer whose music has been performed by leading orchestras, soloists, and wind ensembles throughout the United States and abroad. His works are characterized by a strong

sense of melody and tonal clarity, shaped by a contemporary harmonic language and an acute sensitivity to occasion and audience. Before turning to composition full-time, Stephenson trained as a trumpet player at the New England Conservatory and performed for seventeen seasons with the Naples Philharmonic, an experience that has profoundly informed his instrumental writing.

Stephenson maintains a close and distinguished relationship with the United States Marine Band. Under the direction of Colonel Jason Fettig, "The President's Own" commissioned and premiered his Symphony No. 2, VOICES, at the Midwest Clinic in 2016 and later recorded the work. That symphony went on to receive both the National Band Association's (NBA) Revelli Award and the ABA's Sousa Ostwald Award, the two most prestigious honors in the wind band repertoire. In addition to his work with the Marine Band, Stephenson has been commissioned by major American orchestras, including the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, Minnesota Orchestra, and San Francisco Ballet, and his extensive catalog includes concertos, and chamber works for nearly every instrument.

Rooted in the city that shaped him and written for one of Chicago's most enduring cultural institutions, *You Have Reached the City Limits* reflects Stephenson's ability to translate place, history, and lived experience into music that speaks directly to performers and listeners alike.



CAPTAIN DARREN Y. LIN

ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR, U.S. MARINE BAND

Captain Darren Y. Lin joined "The President's Own" United States Marine Band in July 2019 as a percussionist. He was appointed Assistant Director in July 2021 and commissioned to the rank of First Lieutenant in January 2022. He was promoted to his current rank in September 2023 and appointed Associate Director in December 2023.

Lin is a 2009 graduate of Hershey High School in Pennsylvania. He earned a bachelor's degree in percussion performance and a teacher's certificate in 2014 from the the University of Michigan-Ann Arbor (U-M); received a master's degree in percussion performance and literature in 2016 from the Eastman School of Music at the University of Rochester in New York; and pursued additional studies at the New England Conservatory in Boston. His principal percussion teachers were J. William Hudgins of the Boston Symphony Orchestra, Michael Burritt of the Eastman School of Music, and Joseph Gramley and Jonathan Ovalle of U-M. He also has studied conducting with Christopher James Lees, Michael Haithcock, and Rodney Dorsey.

Prior to joining "The President's Own," Lin was an active educator and performer. He was the adjunct instructor of percussion at Lebanon Valley College in Annville, Pennsylvania, and performed frequently with the Buffalo Philharmonic in New York, the New Haven Symphony in Connecticut, and the New World Symphony in Miami. He has performed under the batons of conductors such as Valery Gergiev, Michael Tilson Thomas, Andris Nelsons, and JoAnn Falletta. Lin is at home performing contemporary music, having performed with the NakedEye Ensemble and both founding and leading the group [sunflower]. He has worked closely with composers Steve Reich and John Luther Adams and has premiered works by Dave Hollinden, Molly Joyce, Angélica Negrón, Randall Woolf, and Chris Vu.

As Associate Director, Lin's responsibilities include conducting the Marine Band and Chamber Orchestra in their winter and spring concert series and summer concerts on the National Mall, as well as at ceremonies in the national capital region and at the White House.

The Clef Club March

JAMES REESE EUROPE (1881-1919)

arranged by GySgt Lucia Disano*

James Reese Europe was a pioneering Black composer, bandleader, and arranger whose work played a crucial role in shaping early twentieth-century American music. His compositions blended elements of ragtime, marches, blues, and minstrel songs, foreshadowing the evolution of jazz. During World War I, Europe led the 369th Infantry Regiment's "Harlem Hellfighters Band," and introduced the sound of the jazz big band to European audiences. In his music, Europe bridged African American musical traditions with mainstream American culture, and helped establish jazz as an essential part of the American cultural landscape.

The Clef Club March was written in 1910 for the Clef Club, a trade union that Europe founded that was the first of its kind for New York City's Black performers. The march became one of the signature pieces performed by Europe's Clef Club Orchestra, and was featured at a concert in Carnegie Hall in 1912, marking the first performance of a Black ensemble at that storied concert hall. James Weldon Johnson, a writer, ambassador, professor, and civil rights leader of the Harlem Renaissance wrote of the march: "New York had not yet become accustomed to jazz; so when the Clef Club opened its concert with a syncopated march, playing it with a biting attack and an infectious rhythm, and on the finale bursting into singing, the effect can be imagined. The applause became a tumult"



JAMES SWEARINGEN

PROFESSOR OF MUSIC EMERITUS, CAPITAL UNIVERSITY

James Swearingen's talents as a performer, composer/arranger, and educator reflect a background of extensive training and experience. He has earned degrees from Bowling Green State University and The Ohio State University. In recognition of distinguished contributions, Swearingen was recently accorded the title of Professor Emeritus from Capital University located in Columbus, Ohio. Prior to his appointment at Capital in 1987, he spent eighteen years teaching instrumental music in the public schools of central Ohio. His first teaching assignment took him to the community of Sunbury, Ohio. He then spent fourteen years as Director of Instrumental Music at Grove City High School, where his marching, concert, and jazz bands all received acclaim for their high standards of performing excellence.

Swearingen currently serves as a staff arranger for the famed Ohio State University Marching Band. In addition to his arranging responsibilities, Swearingen manages to be very active as a guest conductor, adjudicator, and educational clinician. Appearances have included trips throughout the United States and Europe, as well as Australia, Canada, Japan, Norway, Taiwan, and Singapore.

School directors, student performers and audiences worldwide have enthusiastically received Swearingen's numerous contributions for band. With just over 700 published works, he has written band compositions and arrangements that reflect a variety of musical forms and styles. Many of his pieces, including 125 commissioned works, have been chosen for contest and festival lists. He is a recipient of several ASCAP awards for published compositions and in 1992 was selected as an Accomplished Graduate of the Fine and Performing Arts from Bowling Green State University. In March of 2000, he was invited to join ABA, considered to be the most prestigious bandmaster organization in the world. Swearingen received the 2002 Community Music Educator Award given annually by the Columbus Symphony Orchestra. In that same year, he became conductor of the Grove City Community Winds. This highly talented ensemble consists of many fine musicians from the central Ohio area. On June 20, 2009, The American School Band Directors Association, Inc. (ASBDA), presented Swearingen with the A. Austin Harding Award. This prestigious award is presented annually by the organization and is reflective of valuable and dedicated service to the school bands of America. In 2011, he received the Hall of Fame Award presented by the Ohio Chapter (Mu) of Phi Beta Mu. The Ohio Music Education Association (OMEA) Distinguished Service Award was presented to him at the 2014 OMEA Professional Development Conference. Later that year, he was presented the Signature Sinfonian Award by Phi Mu Alpha Sinfonia. On April 21, 2015, The Ohio State School of Music honored Swearingen with their Distinguished Alumnus Award. In the fall of 2021, The Vandalia Butler High School Alumni Association honored him, along with three others, as inductees in the newly formed Hall of Achievement. And on January 1, 2022, Swearingen was designated as one of five distinguished teachers to represent music instructors throughout the United States in the widely viewed Tournament of Roses Parade. Most recently, on April 6, 2024 he received recognition from Bowling Green State University College of Musical Arts for a lifetime of dedicated service to music education. It should be noted that he is also a member of numerous professional and honorary organizations including the National Association for Music Education (NAfME), ASBDA, Phi Beta Mu, and Pi Kappa Lambda.

Many of Swearingen's most popular band compositions have been recorded by the prestigious Washington Winds and are available on Walking Frog Records compact discs: his recordings include *In All Its Glory*, *Exaltation*, *Celebration for Winds and Percussion*, *The Light of Dawn*, and the most recent release, *Flight of Valor*.

Adventures in Wonderland (2025)

ERIKA SVANOE (B. 1976)

First published in 1865, Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* occupies a singular place in literary history. Written by Oxford mathematician Charles Lutwidge Dodgson under the pen name Lewis Carroll, the book grew out of a story first told to entertain children during a summer outing and quickly evolved into a work whose imagination, wordplay, and dreamlike logic appealed equally to adults. Its cast of eccentric characters, playful manipulation of time and identity, and episodic structure have inspired generations of artists across music, theater, and the visual arts.

Erika Svanoë's *Adventures in Wonderland* translates selected episodes from Carroll's story into a large-scale work for wind band. Commissioned by the American Bandmasters Association, the piece follows Alice's journey through Wonderland in a sequence of four movements, each reflecting a distinct scene and atmosphere from the original narrative. Rather than offering a literal retelling, Svanoë captures the spirit of Carroll's world through contrasts of color, texture, and character, allowing the music to mirror the story's unpredictability and whimsy. In *The Garden & the Cheshire Cat*, Alice finally enters the beautiful garden and meets the mysterious Cheshire Cat. In *A Mad Tea Party*, she is baffled by the Mad Hatter's musings, including a recitation of "Twinkle twinkle little bat."

Svanoë is a conductor and composer for wind band known for her lyrical melodies, nods to classical literature, and musical deconstruction, humor, and pastiche. Her works have been performed internationally by school, university, community, and professional bands. Her music has been featured on Wisconsin Public Radio, in *Bandworld Magazine's* Top 100, and the Teaching Music Through Performance in Band series. She has been recognized with the NBA/Alfred Music Young Band Composition Award, and as a finalist for the ABA Sousa-Ostwald Award.

As a conductor, Svanoë has been a guest faculty artist at the Manhattan School of Music, interim conductor of the St. Olaf Band, and featured civilian guest conductor of the United States Air Force Heritage of America Band. She has held collegiate appointments at Augsburg University, Bemidji State University, and the University of New Hampshire, and remains active as a guest conductor and clinician, appearing with high school, university, and All-State and festival ensembles across the United States. She earned a doctor of musical arts in conducting from Ohio State University, a master's of music in wind conducting from Oklahoma State University, and a bachelor of music education from the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire.



DR. RUSSEL C. MIKKELSON

DIRECTOR OF BANDS, THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY

Dr. Russel C. Mikkelson serves as the sixth director of university bands at The Ohio State University (OSU), a position he has held since 1998, where he is professor of music in conducting, former area head of conducting and ensembles, conducts the Wind Symphony, and oversees all aspects of the university's band program. Under his direction, the OSU Wind Symphony has performed at the Japan Band Clinic, CBNDA Convention, CBDNA North Central Conference, Ohio Music Educators Association Convention, and has recorded six CDs. In a review of the *Southern Harmony* recording, *Fanfare* magazine proclaims "The Ohio State musicians play their collective hearts out and conductor Mikkelson shapes the music with a loving hand, wringing every last drop of emotion out of the music. If this does not give you goose-bumps, nothing will."

A staunch advocate for the creation of new works, Mikkelson is past chair of the Big Ten Conference Commissioning Project, has served on the ABA Commissioning Committee, the New Works Committee for CBDNA, and instituted a program of regular commissioning projects for the Ohio State Bands. He has received praise from composers Leslie Bassett, Krzysztof Penderecki, John Corigliano, Michael Colgrass, Joseph Schwantner, Aaron Jay Kernis, Jennifer Higdon, Gunther Schuller, Julia Wolfe, and Augusta Read Thomas, among many others, for his musical realization of their compositions. Corigliano wrote, "Russel Mikkelson is a conductor who really understands my music, and that's rare."

Dr. Mikkelson is past president of the North Central Division of CBDNA, past president of the Big Ten Band Directors Association, a member of NAfME, Phi Mu Alpha Sinfonia, Phi Beta Mu, and a duly elected member of ABA. An enthusiastic advocate of public school music education, Dr. Mikkelson has conducted all-state

bands, festivals, and honor bands across the United States and internationally. Additionally, Mikkelson serves as music director and conductor of the professional Newark-Granville Symphony Orchestra and the Heisey Wind Ensemble, a highly skilled community band.

He is recipient of The Ohio State University School of Music Distinguished Teaching Award and the Distinguished Scholar Award, in addition to serving on the editorial board of the *Journal of Band Research*. In 2022, Mikkelson was recognized by the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire with the President's Award, given in recognition of his professional and personal achievements as a graduate of that institution. He has published articles in *The Instrumentalist* and *The Journal of the Conductor's Guild*, and as a composer/arranger, is published through C. Alan and Daehn Publications. Previous posts include SUNY Fredonia, Stevens Point Area Senior High School in Wisconsin, and Kickapoo High School in Wisconsin.

Dear Arturo

ARRANGED BY GYSGT SCOTT NINMER*

Dear Arturo is a tribute to the artistry, influence, and enduring legacy of Arturo Sandoval, one of the most important trumpet voices of the past half-century. Conceived as a medley of works either composed by or closely associated with Sandoval, the arrangement honors both his virtuosity as a performer and his central role in shaping the modern language of Latin jazz. Prepared by United States Marine Band staff arranger Gunnery Sgt. Scott Ninmer, the work was written specifically for Marine Band trumpeter Gunnery Sgt. Tyler Lindsay and reflects the ensemble's long-standing engagement with leading figures in American jazz.

Born in 1949 in Artemisa, Cuba, Arturo Sandoval received his earliest musical training within the Cuban classical system, studying trumpet and piano before discovering jazz as a teenager. His artistic trajectory was profoundly shaped by Dizzy Gillespie, whose fusion of Afro-Cuban rhythms with bebop harmony opened new expressive pathways in jazz and whose personal mentorship would later prove transformative in Sandoval's life. Sandoval emerged in the 1970s as a founding member of the pioneering Cuban ensemble Irakere, a group that redefined Latin jazz through its synthesis of Afro-Cuban traditions, jazz improvisation, and contemporary classical techniques.

Following his defection from Cuba in 1990, Sandoval established an international career distinguished by remarkable stylistic breadth. Equally fluent in jazz, classical, and popular idioms, he has performed as a soloist with major symphony orchestras, written concert works for trumpet and orchestra and built a prolific career as a composer for film and television. His artistry has been recognized with numerous honors, including multiple GRAMMY Awards and an Emmy Award for his score to the HBO film *For Love or Country: The Arturo Sandoval Story*, which dramatized his own life and artistic journey. Throughout his career, Sandoval has also remained deeply committed to education, mentoring young musicians through masterclasses and institutional residencies.

The musical selections in *Dear Arturo* reflect key facets of Sandoval's artistic world. "Funky Cha Cha," composed by Sandoval himself, captures the rhythmic vitality and exuberant spirit that define much of his writing, blending Latin dance rhythms with jazz harmony and virtuosic trumpet writing. "I Can't Get Started," by Vernon Duke with lyrics by Ira Gershwin, represents a cornerstone of the American songbook and a vehicle long embraced by jazz trumpeters for its lyrical expressiveness and emotional range. Dizzy Gillespie's "A Night in Tunisia," one of the most influential works in the jazz repertoire, stands as a landmark in the fusion of Afro-Cuban rhythm and bebop language, and serves as a direct musical lineage connecting Gillespie's innovations to Sandoval's own artistic voice.

Together, these works form a concise portrait of Arturo Sandoval as virtuoso, composer, collaborator, and cultural bridge. *Dear Arturo* celebrates not only an individual artist, but a living tradition shaped by cross-cultural exchange, technical mastery, and expressive freedom.



THOMAS LESLIE

DIRECTOR OF THE DIVISION OF WIND BAND STUDIES AND PROFESSOR OF CONDUCTING
UNIVERSITY OF NEVADA, LAS VEGAS

As Director of the Division of Wind Band Studies and Professor of Conducting, Thomas Leslie has earned recognition for high quality performances of the University of Nevada, Las Vegas (UNLV) Bands. During his tenure at UNLV, his bands have received critical acclaim from members of the international music world. Such notables include composers Malcolm Arnold, Bruce Broughton, Eric Whitacre, and Frank Ticheli; United States Marine Band Conductor Emeritus Colonel John Bourgeois, (Ret.); Colonel Lowell Graham, Conductor United States Air Force Band, (Ret.); United States Navy Band Conductor Commander John Pastin (Ret.); Dr. Harry Begian, Director Emeritus, University of Illinois; GRAMMY Award winning recording artists Eric Marienthal, Jimmy Haslip, Will Kennedy, Bernie Dresel, Mitchel Forman, and Russell Ferrante.

Recognized for a fresh, interpretative style among collegiate wind orchestras, Leslie and the UNLV Wind Orchestra continue to excel in their commitment to commission new works by the next generation of the world's finest young composers. This ensemble, under Leslie's baton, has premiered numerous pieces commissioned by UNLV, Leslie and the Wind Orchestra. Leslie has conducted and recorded twenty-one compact disc recordings with the UNLV Wind Orchestra. They are: 1994 – The UNLV Wind Symphony; Ghost Train; Gaud\$illa Eats Las Vegas; It Takes a Village; Monkey; No Mo' Chalumeau; Chunk (all title tracks commissioned by Leslie); BCM... Saves the World; Bandanna, the complete Daron Hagen opera; 3 Steps Forward, the premiere disc in the new UNLV Wind Orchestra Series for Klavier Recordings; Spiritual Planet; 4 Flew Over the Hornet's Nest; The Quest; Vegas Maximus; Concerto for Marienthal; Marquee Mojo; Lost Vegas; Ventanas; The Return; and 24K Gould, and Quaternity, the newest release in this collection. All of these recordings have received noteworthy acclaim in professional review journals in addition to high praise from colleagues throughout the world. Several of the UNLV Wind Orchestra Series recordings have received nominations for GRAMMY AWARD consideration in the "best classical performance" category.

As a high school band director, Leslie won numerous state and national championships while teaching in Iowa, Indiana and Arizona. While teaching at UNLV starting in 1985, Leslie has been featured as an adjudicator and conductor throughout the United States, additionally Leslie has been invited to conduct performances and clinics internationally in Australia, Austria, Hungary, Ireland, Japan, England, Scotland, France, Switzerland, Germany, and Canada. Under his direction, the UNLV Wind Orchestra has appeared as an invited performing group at the College Band Directors National Association Conference in March 1994, the Music Educators National Conference Biennial Convention in April 1998, the American Bandmasters Association National Convention in March 2001, and numerous state music educator conferences. The UNLV Wind Orchestra performed as the featured ensemble at the Hokkaido Band Association Clinic in Sapporo, Japan, in May 2002, and was featured in a multiple performance tour at the La Croix Valmer International Music Festival in St. Tropez, France in June 2005 and June 2016. The UNLV College of Fine Arts awarded Leslie the College of Fine Arts Teacher of the Year Award in 2006. Most recently, Leslie and the internationally acclaimed UNLV Wind Orchestra were awarded the American Prize for Best American Collegiate Wind Ensemble for the year 2020.

Leslie received degrees in Music Education from The University of Iowa and Indiana State University. Elected in March of 2012, Leslie served office as the 75th President of the prestigious American Bandmasters Association and currently serves as a member of the ABA Nominating Committee, the ABA Membership Committee, and the ABA Past President's Ad Hoc Committee. He was originally inducted to membership in 1997 and he hosted the National Convention of this very distinguished group in Las Vegas in March 2001. He continues to be a long-standing member of the College Band Directors National Association and has served as Western Division Chair for the National Band Association. Leslie currently serves on the Board of Directors for the John Philip Sousa Foundation.



GUNNERY SERGEANT TYLER LINDSAY

TRUMPET SOLOIST

Trumpet and Cornet Player Gunnery Sergeant Tyler Lindsay of Richmond, Virginia, joined “The President’s Own” United States Marine Band in May 2019. Gunnery Sgt. Lindsay began his musical instruction on trumpet at age three. After graduating high school in 2013 he earned bachelor’s degrees in Trumpet Performance and Composition at Loyola University in New Orleans.

He earned a master’s degree in music performance in 2019 from Temple University in Philadelphia. His notable teachers are Dr. Nick Volz and Vance Woolf from Loyola University and Anthony Prisk of Temple University. Prior to joining the Marine Band, Gunnery Sgt. Lindsay performed with the Disney All-American College Band and the Orchestre de la Francophonie in Montréal.

The Truest Course (2026)

VIET CUONG (B. 1990)

Described as “alluring” and “stirring” by *The New York Times*, the music of Vietnamese-American composer Viet Cuong has been performed on six continents by musicians and ensembles such as the New York Philharmonic, Los Angeles Philharmonic, Eighth Blackbird, Sandbox Percussion, Kronos Quartet, Orpheus Chamber Orchestra, Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra, and Dallas Winds, among many others. Cuong’s music has been heard at Carnegie Hall, the Kennedy Center, and Lincoln Center, as well as on NPR Music’s *Tiny Desk* and *PBS NewsHour*, and his works for wind ensemble have garnered over a thousand performances worldwide. In his music, Cuong also enjoys exploring the unexpected and whimsical, and he is often drawn to projects where he can make peculiar combinations and sounds feel enchanting or oddly satisfying. His works thus include concerti for tuba and dueling oboes, percussion quartets utilizing wine glasses and sandpaper, and pieces for double reed sextet, cello octet, and solo snare drum. This eclecticism extends to the variety of musical groups he writes for, and he has worked closely with ensembles ranging from middle school bands to GRAMMY-winning orchestras and chamber ensembles. He is currently the Pacific Symphony’s Composer-in-Residence and serves as assistant professor of music composition at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. Cuong holds degrees from Princeton University (MFA/PhD), the Curtis Institute of Music (AD), and Peabody Conservatory (BM/MM). Cuong writes the following:

The Truest Course was written for the United States Marine Band in celebration of the 250th anniversary of the United States. The work is conceived as a companion to my clarinet quintet *Compass*, which reflects on my family’s journey as Vietnamese boat people following the Fall of Saigon in 1975. My mother was among the more than 800,000 who fled Vietnam by sea, eventually resettling in the United States. In *Compass*, canons, echoes, and the image of the compass needle serve as metaphors for migration, memory, and hope.

While *Compass* focuses on one family’s story, *The Truest Course* widens that lens. Written in honor of America’s 250th anniversary, the piece reflects on the many migrations that have shaped the nation’s history and character. From those who crossed oceans seeking refuge or opportunity to those who journeyed across continents in search of belonging, the American story has long been one of movement — of departure and arrival, uncertainty and resolve.

The title draws from navigational language. A “course” is not a fixed destination but a sustained heading, maintained over time and through changing conditions. In this sense, the truest course is not defined by ease or certainty, but by resilience and shared purpose.

Musically, lines emerge tentatively and pass between sections in layered canons and overlapping echoes. Individual voices branch and diverge before gradually aligning into a shared momentum, suggesting the convergence of many paths into forward motion.

Written for a historic ensemble whose mission spans centuries, *The Truest Course* looks both backward and forward — honoring journeys that have shaped the country while imagining the paths still unfolding ahead. I am deeply grateful to Director LtCol Ryan Nowlin and the musicians of the United States Marine Band for bringing this work to life.



LIEUTENANT COLONEL RYAN NOWLIN

DIRECTOR, U.S. MARINE BAND

LtCol Ryan Nowlin is the 29th Director of the United States Marine Band. He serves as the music advisor to the White House and has led the band at presidential inaugurations, state dinners, state funerals, and other events of national importance under four presidential administrations. Entrusted with command of one of the nation’s most visible and historically significant ensembles, LtCol Nowlin is proud to continue a tradition of musical excellence dating to the band’s founding by an Act of Congress in 1798.

Prior to being appointed to his current position in 2023, LtCol Nowlin was named Assistant Director in 2014 and Associate Director/Executive Officer in 2018. Since his commissioning, he has conducted the Marine Band and Chamber Orchestra in their dynamic schedule of public concerts on some of the nation’s most prominent stages as well as on international trips to Japan and Europe and on the band’s annual national concert tour—an initiative begun under their 17th Director, John Philip Sousa.

LtCol Nowlin first joined “The President’s Own” in 2010 as staff arranger. His arrangements, transcriptions, and compositions have been featured on numerous Marine Band recordings as well as at many White House events and other high-profile performances in collaboration with such artists as Beyoncé, Kelly Clarkson, and John Williams.

As a producer for over twenty Marine Band albums to include each annual release since 2014, LtCol Nowlin has contributed to such projects as the band’s definitive recordings of “The Complete Marches of John Philip Sousa” and the Emmy award-winning program “New England Triptych” in partnership with the All-Star Orchestra featuring the United States Marine Band conducted by Gerard Schwarz.

Hailing from Cleveland, Ohio, LtCol Nowlin earned his BM and MM degrees from Bowling Green State University (OH). Prior to joining the Marine Band, he spent ten years as a music educator, an experience that continues to inform his deep respect for and advocacy of music education and its role in our lives and culture. His ongoing commitment to young musicians is reflected in his work as a composer, arranger, and coauthor of notable educational materials, as well as in his frequent appearances as a guest conductor and clinician across the country and internationally. In recognition of his achievements, Bowling Green State University awarded him an honorary Doctor of Music Education degree in 2024.

Bringing the excellence and traditions of the United States Marine Band to students, teachers, veterans and audiences around the nation is among his most rewarding experiences.

March, “The Stars and Stripes Forever”

JOHN PHILIP SOUSA* (1854–1932)

edited by The United States Marine Band

John Philip Sousa actively composed over a span of nearly sixty years but it was during his time as leader of the United States Marine Band followed by the early years of his leadership of his civilian band that Sousa wrote some of his most famous marches, those that earned him the title “The March King.” His most famous composition was written during this time, conceived while he was abroad and homesick from his nearly constant travel.

Since its première in Philadelphia on May 14, 1897, “The Stars and Stripes Forever” has secured its place as the most popular and widely recognized march of all time. It has captured the spirit of American patriotism perhaps better than any other composition for more than a century. Former Sousa Band members testified that, during the height of the band’s popularity, “The Stars and Stripes Forever” was performed on every concert. Audiences expected, and sometimes even demanded to hear the march and eventually began to stand upon recognizing its opening bars as if it were the national anthem. In 1987, President Ronald Reagan signed an Act of Congress designating “The Stars and Stripes Forever” the national march of the United States.



DENNIS FISHER

EMERITUS PROFESSOR OF MUSIC, UNIVERSITY OF NORTH TEXAS
ABA PRESIDENT-ELECT

Dennis Fisher retired from the faculty at the University of North Texas (UNT) in 2019 after thirty-seven years. While at UNT he conducted the Symphonic Band and was associate director of winds and professor of music in conducting and ensembles. Upon retirement he was designated professor emeritus. He has conducted extensively and lectured in thirty-four states with international appearances in Singapore, Thailand, Japan, China, Great Britain, Europe, Scandinavia, Canada, Greece, Brazil, Cuba, and Russia.

Fisher has recorded extensively on the Mark, Klavier, G.I.A., and Eurosound labels with the University of North Texas Symphonic Band and Wind Symphony. He is co-author of *Teaching Music Through Performance in Beginning Band, Volume 2*. Fisher co-authored with composer David Gillingham *Beyond the Chorale*, as well as *A Guide to Student Teaching in Band*. He served as recording and editing producer of the *Teaching Music through Performance in Band* series compact disc recordings, and producer of Volumes 1, 2 and 3 of the *Master Conductor DVD* series.

His involvement in recordings for band includes producing and editing more than 200 compact disc recordings for college, university, military and professional bands across the United States.

Fisher holds professional memberships in the Texas Music Educators Association, Texas Bandmasters Association, and Phi Mu Alpha Sinfonia, with invited membership in Phi Beta Mu National Band Fraternity. He is Past-President of the Southwest Division of CBDNA.

He has been honored by being elected to membership in the prestigious ABA. He has served as a member of the board of directors and as co-chair of the Sousa/Ostwald Composition Committee of ABA. He is currently president-elect of ABA and will assume the presidency for 2026 to 2027.

In 2008, Fisher was awarded the Gagarin Medal of Honor from the Society of Cosmonauts of the Russian Federal Space Agency. In December 2017, he received the Outstanding International Contributor Award from Phi Beta Mu International Band Fraternity at the Midwest Convention in Chicago. He has also been honored by being awarded the Meritorious Achievement Award from the Texas Bandmasters Association. In 2018, he was honored to be inducted into the Frank A. Beach Hall of Distinction at his alma mater, Emporia State University. In February 2020, he received the high honor of being elected to the Texas Bandmasters Hall of Fame.

A Salute to the Armed Forces of the United States of America

ARRANGED BY THOMAS KNOX* (1937–2004)

Thomas Knox served for nearly a quarter century as one of the principal musical voices of the United States Marine Band. Born in Danville, Illinois, Knox studied trumpet at the University of Illinois and later with Adolph “Bud” Herseth of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra. He joined “The President’s Own” in 1961 as a trumpet player and moved to the arranging staff five years later. Appointed chief arranger in 1969, Knox produced a large body of works that balanced craftsmanship, clarity, and a deep understanding of the ceremonial and concert traditions of the Marine Band. His arrangements remain staples of the ensemble’s repertoire, valued for their durability and institutional voice.

Knox’s Salute to the Armed Forces of the United States of America occupies a distinctive place within that tradition. Designed as a continuous salute honoring the service branches of the United States Armed Forces, the medley brings together official service songs in a compact, cohesive concert arrangement. The version heard today reflects a recent update to include the official song of the United States Space Force, acknowledging the newest branch of the Armed Forces while preserving the spirit and structure of Knox’s original conception.

The medley opens with “The Army Goes Rolling Along,” whose origins date to 1908, when Army officer Edmund L. Gruber composed a march titled “The Caissons Go Rolling Along.” Later adapted with revised lyrics, it became the official song of the United States Army and has since served as a symbol of the service’s history and traditions.

Next is “Anchors Aweigh,” the official song of the United States Navy. Composed in 1906 by Navy musician Charles A. Zimmermann, then bandmaster of the United States Naval Academy, with lyrics by Midshipman

Alfred H. Miles, the song was first performed publicly at the Army–Navy football game that same year. Its brisk tempo and confident character have made it one of the most recognizable service songs in the American repertoire.

“Semper Paratus,” meaning “Always Ready,” follows as the official song of the United States Coast Guard. Written in 1927 by Captain Francis Saltus Van Boskerck, a Coast Guard officer, the song reflects the service’s dual military and humanitarian mission.

The United States Air Force is represented by “The U.S. Air Force,” nicknamed “Wild Blue Yonder,” from its opening line “Off we go into the wild blue yonder...” Composed in 1939 by Robert MacArthur Crawford, the song became the official song of the Air Force following the service’s establishment as a separate branch in 1947, capturing the optimism and forward-looking identity of American military aviation.

The most recent addition to the medley is “Semper Supra,” the official song of the United States Space Force. Adopted in 2022, the song was composed by Jamie Teachenor, a former member of the United States Air Force Academy Band, and Chief Musician Sean Nelson, staff arranger with the United States Coast Guard Band and reflects the mission and identity of the nation’s newest service branch.

The medley concludes with The Marines’ Hymn, one of the oldest official service songs in continuous use. Drawing its melody from an opera by Jacques Offenbach and paired with lyrics that trace the global history of the Marine Corps, the hymn has long served as a musical emblem of the Corps’ heritage and esprit de corps.



★ ★ ★ **CONCERT PERSONNEL** ★ ★ ★

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