John Philip Sousa

DOB: November 6th, 1854 (Washington, DC)
DOD: March 6th, 1932 (Reading, PA)

John Philip Sousa wrote the most famous American military marches of all time, including "Stars and Stripes Forever," earning him the nickname "the March King"; he was also known as a great bandleader, and organized the famed concert and military group, Sousa's Band. Born in Washington, D.C., on November 6, 1854, Sousa followed in the footsteps of his father, a musician in the U.S. Marine Corps, and enlisted by the age of 14. Before this, Sousa had studied violin with John Esputa. While active in the Marines, he composed his first march, "Salutation."

Around the age of 16, Sousa began studying harmony with G.F. Benkert, then worked as a pit orchestra conductor at a local theater, followed by jobs as first chair violinist at the Ford Opera House, the Philadelphia Chestnut Street Theater, and later the U.S. Marine Corps Band (1880-1992). Although most famous for his marches, Sousa composed in other styles as well, including a waltz, "Moonlight on the Potomac"; a gallop, "The Cuckoo" (both in 1869); the oratorio "Messiah of the Nations" (1914); and scores for Broadway musicals The Smugglers (1879), Desiree (1884), The Glass Blowers (1893), El Capitan (1896; which was his first real scoring success), American Maid (1913), and more.

Sousa formed his sternly organized marching band in 1892, leading them through numerous U.S. and European tours, a world tour, and an appearance in the 1915 Broadway show Hip-Hip-Hooray. Sousa's Band also recorded many sides for the Victor label up through the early '30s. His most famous marches include "The Stars and Stripes Forever" (1897), "U.S. Field Artillery March," "Semper Fidelis" (written in 1888, it became the Marine Corps anthem), "Washington Post March" (1889), "King Cotton" (1895), "El Capitan" (1896), and many more. In addition to writing music, Sousa also wrote books, including the best-seller Fifth String and his autobiography, Marching Along. Actor Clifton Webb portrayed Sousa in the movie about his life entitled Stars and Stripes Forever. The instrument the sousaphone was named after this famous composer and bandleader. ~ Joslyn Layne, All Music Guide

Washington Post (march). During the 1880's, several Washington, DC, newspapers competed vigorously for public favor. One of those, the Washington Post, organized what was known as the Washington Post Amateur Authors' Association and sponsored an essay contest for school children. Frank Hatton and Beriah Wilkins, owners of the newspaper, asked Sousa, then leader of the Marine Band, to compose a march for the award ceremony.

The ceremony was held on the Smithsonian grounds on June 15, 1889. President Harrison and other dignitaries were among the huge crowd. When the new march was played by Sousa and the Marine Band, it was enthusiastically received, and within days it became exceptionally popular in Washington.

The march happened to be admirably suited to the two-step dance, which was just being introduced. A dancemaster's organization adopted it at their yearly convention, and soon the march was vaulted into international fame. The two-step gradually replaced the waltz as a popular dance, and variations of the basic two-step insured the march's popularity all through the 1890s, and into the 20th century. Sousa's march became identified with the two-step, and it was as famous abroad as it was in The United States. In some European countries, all two-steps were called "Washington posts." Pirated editions of the music appeared in many foreign countries. In Britain, for example, it was known by such names as "No Surrender" and "Washington Grays."
Next to “The Stars and Stripes Forever,” “The Washington Post” has been Sousa’s most widely known march. He delighted in telling how he had heard it in so many different countries, played in so many different ways -- and often accredited to native composers. It was a standard at Sousa Band performances and was often openly demanded when not scheduled for a program. It was painful for Sousa to relate that, like “Semper Fidelis” and other marches of that period, he received only $35 for it, while the publisher made a fortune. Of that sum, $25 was for a piano arrangement, $5 for a band arrangement, and $5 for an orchestra arrangement.

Today, at a community room in Washington, a spotlight illuminates a life-size color portrait of the black-bearded Sousa, resplendent in his scarlet Marine Band uniform. This is the John Philip Sousa Community Room in the Washington Post Building. It is the newspaper’s tribute to the man who first gave it worldwide fame.¹

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Program note researched by Marcus L. Neiman
Medina, Ohio

Additional information on either the composer or composition would be welcomed. Please send information to marcusneiman@zoominternet.net

Washington Post March

1st FLUTE and C PICCOLO

J. P. SOUSA

15545 - 10 3/4

Carl Fischer, New York.
Washington Post March

3rd B♭ CLARINET

Q 1848

15545-10 3/4

Carl Fischer, New York
Washington Post March

ALTO CLARINET

J. P. SOUSA

15548-10 3/4

Carl Fischer, New York.
Washington Post March

1st Eb ALTO SAXOPHONE

J. P. SOUSA

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\text{Music notation here}
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TENOR
SAXOPHONE.

Washington Post March.

J.P. SOUSA.

1848

Washington Post

155 45 -10 3/4

Carl Fischer, New York
WASHINGTON POST MARCH

BASS SAXOPHONE

J. P. SOUSA

18846 - 10 3/4

Carl Fischer, New York.
1st Bb CORNET  Washington Post March.

J. P. SOUSA.

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3rd B♭ CORNET

Washington Post March.

J. P. SOUSA.

1848

Carl Fischer, New York
Washington Post March

1st HORN in F

J. P. SOUSA

18645 - 10 3/4

Carl Fischer, New York
Washington Post March

4th HORN in F

J. P. SOUSA

Carl Fischer, New York
Washington Post March.

1st & 2nd TROMBONES

J. P. SOUSA.

1848

Carl Fischer, New York
BARITONE.9:

Washington Post March.

1848

Carl Fischer, New York
BASSES.

Washington Post March.  

J. P. Sousa.

1848

ff

Washington Post

Carl Fischer, New York