

## **John Phillip Sousa**

Ask all the kids to stand up. Play music on CD 1. Now ask them what they feel like doing when they hear this music? Maybe marching? Do they feel happy or sad? Energetic or lazy? Bring up how music can influence how you feel and move.

This particular piece of music is probably the most famous march music in America. It was written by our composer of today – John Phillip Sousa. He is so famous for march music that he is known as the ‘March King’.

John Phillip Sousa was born in Washington, DC on Nov. 6, 1854. He was the 3rd of 10 children born to John Antonio Sousa and Maria Elisabeth Trinkhaus. John Philip's father, Antonio played the trombone in the U.S. Marine band. So Sousa heard a lot of military band music while growing up.

He began to study music when he was age six. He studied many instruments; violin, piano, flute, cornet, baritone, trombone and alto horn. In fact most of the instruments in a regular band. He showed great musical talent and when he was 11 he formed a dance orchestra with 7 adults. But he was also strong willed and at one point when he didn't like his teacher he decided to give up music and become a baker. But luckily for us his love of music withheld.

When he was 13 a circus came to town. Sousa was fascinated with the idea of joining the circus band and traveling with them. He knew his father would not agree to this notion so he decided to sneak off without telling his parents. His father found out and instead enlisted him in the Marines as an apprentice. He stayed with the Marines till 1875.

He started composing even while he was with the marines and published his first composition, "Moonlight on the Potomac Waltzes" in 1872. After he left the marines he began performing (on violin), touring and eventually conducting theater orchestras. He conducted Gilbert & Sullivan's *H.M.S. Pinafore* on Broadway.

At the age of twenty-five, in February of 1879 he met Jane van Middlesworth Bellis during *Pinafore* rehearsals. They were married December 30, 1879 and had three children together.

In 1880 he was invited to Washington to take on the leadership of the US Marine Band. Sousa was deeply patriotic and he was happy to serve his country again.

Established by an Act of Congress in 1798, the Marine Band is America's oldest professional musical organization. Its primary mission is unique: to provide music for the President of the United States and the Commandant of the Marine Corps. In 1801 the band performed for the inaugural of Thomas Jefferson and has performed for every Presidential inaugural since that time. In Jefferson, the band found its most visionary advocate and friend. An accomplished musician himself, Jefferson recognized the unique relationship between the band and the Chief Executive by giving the Marine Band the

title, "The President's Own." Whether performing for South Lawn arrival ceremonies, State Dinners, or receptions, Marine Band musicians appear at the White House more than 200 times each year. These performances range from a solo harpist or chamber orchestra to a dance band or full concert band, making versatility an important requirement for band members. Additionally, the band participates in more than 500 public and official performances annually, including concerts and ceremonies throughout the Washington, DC, metropolitan area. Each fall, the band travels through a region of the United States during its concert tour, a century-old tradition started by John Philip Sousa. He was the band's 17<sup>th</sup> director and served under five presidents; Hayes, Garfield, Cleveland, Arthur and Harrison. As Director from 1880-1892, Sousa brought "The President's Own" to unprecedented levels of excellence and shaped the band into a world-famous musical organization. During his tenure, the band was one of the first musical ensembles to make sound recordings. Look out for the Marine Band in the upcoming Presidential inaugural!

Play another piece of music that Sousa composed. CD 2, track 9.

After two successful but very limited tours with the Marine Band in 1891 and 1892, promoter David Blakely convinced Sousa to resign and organize a civilian concert band. The first Sousa Band concert was performed September 26 at Stillman Music Hall in Plainfield, New Jersey. The original name of the band was "Sousa's New Marine Band", but criticism from Washington forced the withdrawal of the name. He toured all over the world with his band and got great acclaim. In these years he also invented the 'Sousaphone'. It was invented to replace tubas in marching bands. The sousaphone is a valved brass instrument with the same tube length as a tuba, but shaped differently so that the bell is above the head, the valves are situated directly in front of the musician a few inches above the waist, and the majority of the weight rests on one shoulder. It can be carried far more easily than a traditional concert tuba, but sounds very similar.

You all remember the piece I played at the beginning. It was *The Stars and Stripes Forever*. Sousa received the inspiration for it on a trip back from Europe and it was his favorite piece of music. He always ended each concert with it.

In 1917 during World War I Sousa joined the US Naval Reserve at age 62. Even though he wasn't young he felt it his duty as a patriot to serve his country. He led the Navy band as part of his service.

After the war Sousa continued to tour with his band. He championed the cause of music education, received several honorary degrees and fought for composers' rights, testifying before Congress in 1927 and 1928.

He died at age 77 after conducting a rehearsal of the Ringgold Band in Reading, Pennsylvania.

The last piece he conducted was "The Stars and Stripes Forever".