



## **The American March**

**CLINICIAN:**

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# **“The American March”**

**For the**

## **Texas Bandmasters Association**

**By**

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# The American March

## THE OBVIOUS

1. Sir Donald Tovey identifies two basic types of rhythms – Speech and Body. I refer to these as music for the Brain and music for the Feet.
2. Marches are functional, physical and artistic.
3. Melody and articulation reign supreme in marches.
4. Basic Types of Marches – Concert, Funeral or Dirge, Street (Military and Regimental), Quick Step and Circus (Screamers).

## PERFORMANCE ISSUES FOR ALL ENSEMBLES

### *INTONATION*

1. Tuners are good for one note only. Use your ears!
2. Intonation – tune unisons first, then octaves, then fifths. For the perception of good intonation, the bottom octave is perceived as correct as it is heard as the fundamental. Thirds will take care of themselves.
3. Ensembles play or sing in Pythagorean/Just tuning, not equal temperament.
4. Tuning Pitch (clarinet especially) – CO<sub>2</sub> (Carbon Dioxide) content is greater when air flow begins making the pitch sharp for a moment until the air mixture stabilizes.

### *PERFORMANCE PRACTICE*

1. Articulate with more strength in quieter passages, not more legato or softer.
2. Attacks – Chewing the note, typically the first note of the piece.
3. Play full value – of course, if under a crescendo or diminuendo this does not apply.
4. Play rhythms as slowly as possible within the tempo to avoid compression.
5. Release on the tied note or dot.
6. Compound meters rush, see above.

### *DYNAMICS AND BALANCE*

1. Apparent levels – what is heard when?
2. Notes lower in the register must be played louder to be heard.
3. Shorter valued notes must be played louder to be heard.
4. Equate dynamics to some reference – I use numbers.
5. Reverse dynamics for ascending scale passages.
6. What is active and passive silence?
7. All notes are not created equally.

### *STYLE*

1. Unmarked notes, learn the style.
2. Train the ensemble to be played (not conducted) – avoid delayed beats and associated performance issues.

## RESEARCHING THE NATURE OF PERFORMANCE PRACTICE

*Four areas are essential:*

1. Original manuscripts and published first editions.
2. Performance parts with the markings of the musicians who played them.
3. Information from former members and other sources of the time.
4. Any extant recordings of the ensembles.

## METHODS FOR INFORMED PERFORMANCE PRACTICE

1. Discrepancies in written pitch and note value should be clarified via the manuscript score if available.
2. Harmonic lines which are rhythmically identical should be articulated alike.
3. Dynamics should be identical throughout the band unless altered to achieve a performance effect.
4. Dynamic changes should occur simultaneously.
5. Any and all inconsistencies should be resolved to conform with the majority of the other voices in the score or like parts.

## OVERALL MARCH PERFORMANCE PRACTICE – The misunderstood

1. Marches are functional, physical and artistic.
2. Melody and articulation reigns supreme in marches.
3. Basic Types of Marches – Concert, Funeral or Dirge, Street (Military and Regimental), Quick Step and Circus.
4. Understand the function and you understand the style and tempi.
5. Style of march used for specific functions.
6. Compound time marches (6/8) are more often used for “review” type activities.
7. Simple time marches used more often for movement of people.
8. When marching a street parade, place all trumpets on first part – it is all about melody.
9. Percussion parts are more of “guides” than absolutes.
10. Play cymbal crash or bass drum hits in the “holes,” do not leave them empty.
11. Basic performance requirements: bass drum heard, after – beats sharp, stingers short.
12. The dots on dotted rhythms become rests.
13. Articulated quarter notes in duple compound marches are played half the value of the written note.
14. The tied note becomes a rest.
15. Emphasize the short note.
16. Stingers are short!

## PERFORMANCE TRAPS

1. Not providing the primary and secondary beats – going into large pulse as one beat per bar when NOT a circus march. I am not refereeing to melded gestures.
2. Playing values “too” long. Dots to the right of the note (when articulated) become rests!!!
3. Unmarked articulated notes are spaced with good front to the note.

4. In duple compound time marches (6/8), unmarked quarter notes are half the value – a long half value. (quarter followed by an eighth note will be played as a long eighth note, eighth rest and eighth note)
5. Misperception -- “Bass Drum is to be felt, not heard.” What is function? How is a march used?
6. Do not use a 40 inch BD for marches – too much and not focused. Find a 32 or a 36 inch BD that is at least 18 inches across. Also, cymbal types, no 22 inch French Thins. Incorrect Cymbal for the medium.
7. The connection between BD and Tuba is critical. The BD puts the front on the tuba notes. The BD should be the same volume as the Tuba section.
8. Slowing before the last strain. Keep tempi steady.
9. Making Stingers long.

### **THOUGHTS FOR GOOD INTERPRETATION**

To quote Maestro Leinsdorf, “Nevertheless, however well a conductor observes a composer’s stated desires and the traditions of his time, there are still areas in which he must fall back upon his own judgement. For this reason, it is essential to understand where interpretation begins and where it ends.”

### **TYPICAL PERFORMANCE PRACTICE FOR SOUSA MARCHES**

**(Not others)**

**Note that Sousa wrote his music for performance, NOT publication**

1. The introductions and first strains were usually played as written.
2. The second strain was usually altered. The first time through, the dynamic level is adjusted to piano. The Cornets and Trombones usually did not play and upper clarinet parts were dropped an octave with both the piccolo and the E-Flat not playing. On the repeat, all instruments played as written playing fortissimo as printed.
3. In the trio, the same instruments listed above were tacit and the upper clarinets were lowered an octave. Snare drum, bass drum and cymbals “MAY” have been eliminated as well. Bells could double the melody at the trio. If the trio is repeated, the dynamic would be piano the first time and pianissimo the second time.
4. Break-up strains (dogfights) were usually played as written with all instruments at written pitch.
5. The last strain is usually played twice separated by the interlude or break-up strain. It was performed in the de-orchestrated manner the first time through with Piccolo and E-Flat Clarinet out, Cornets and Trombones out, upper Clarinets down and octave playing piano. On the repeat, all instruments were back at the break-up strain and playing fortissimo to the end.
6. Often climatic accents were used in the final repeat of the last strain with the addition of a “five stroke roll with flam attack.”

## FORM OF THE MILITARY MARCH

The military march can be greatly credited to John Philip Sousa. He standardized the military march form, and it is used in over half of his marches.

**Introduction** (Tonic) is either 4, 8, or 16 bars long and is usually the shortest part of the form. Most introductions utilize chromatic scales and contrary motion counterpoint. The introduction is commonly based on the Dominant chord naturally leads into the next section

**First Strain** is the first prominent melody of the march. The first strain is typically 16 bars long in four measure phrases and is typically repeated. Occasionally the first strain is played again once after the second strains have been played, Karl King and Henry Fillmore also did so with his trombone smears like *Lassus Trombone*.

**Second strain** is usually 16 bars long and is the next primary melody of the march. Often the first playing of the second strain quieter and the repeat louder as in *The Stars and Stripes Forever*, *His Honor*, *The Washington Post*, *Hands Across the Sea*, *On the Mall*. The second strain is usually repeated but some marches, like *Emblem of Freedom*, *Cyrus the Great*, *the Melody Shop*, and a few others, omit this repeat.

**Introduction to the trio.** This can be a repeat of the first introduction, a fanfare by the brasses, or a percussion soli (drum rolloff) as in *Semper Fidelis* by Sousa.

**Trio** (Sub-Dominant) is the third primary section in the march and is often the most prominent melodies of the march often played legato style in a softer dynamics and usually featuring low woodwinds as was common for Sousa. The trio is often repeated going to the next section.

**Breakstrain, breakup strain or dogfight** is the fourth main section to be heard. The break strain's purpose is simple, it creates a gap and offers contrast to the trio melodies and generates excitement for the listener. The length can vary but they are usually 16 measures in length typically creating tension through chromatic motifs. *Hands Across the Sea*, has a 16 bar breakstrain, but other Sousa marches like *The Washington Post* are eight. Other interesting variants are *On the Mall* and *The Purple Pageant* have a twelve bar breakstrain, with *The Thunderer* having a 15 bar breakstrain. Marches with 20 bar breakstrains include *Fairest of the Fair* and *Invincible Eagle* with *The Stars and Stripes Forever* having a twenty-four bar breakstrain.

**Grandioso** is often (and should be) the most exciting section of the march by instilling the trio melody into the mind of the listener. The **grandioso** sometimes adds yet another counter-melody or obbligato, such as the one in *Stars and Stripes Forever*.

## FORM OF THE REGIMENTAL MARCH

The introduction, first strain, and second strain are all similar to the military march.

Often the regimental march will have a completely new strain in lieu of a breakstrain following the trio. This strain has similar characteristics of a second strain and is almost always repeated once.

Due to its lack of a third trio repeat and breakstrain, the regimental march is considerably shorter than a military march is often played in military parades. A great example would be *Men of Ohio* by Fillmore, *Bugles and Drums* by Goldman and *Robinson's Grand Entry* by Karl L. King.

Some marches have no breakstrain or last new strain. A great example of that is "*Our Director*" by F.E. Bigelow. Karl L. King, Karl King and Henry Fillmore often used this style in their marches but John Philip Sousa rarely used this style.

## MARCH DISCOGRAPHY

### On Dress Parade

The United States Air Force Band  
Colonel Lowell E. Graham, Commander/Conductor  
The Maryland Hall for the Creative Arts, Annapolis, MD

Olympia Hippodrome	Russell Alexander
Queen City	Walter Boorn
On Dress Parade	William Chambers
Bull Trombone	Henry Fillmore
On the Campus	Edwin Franko Goldman
Independientia	Robert Browne Hall
Black Jack	Fred Huffer
Basses on a Rampage	Getty Huffine
The Little Bugler	Arthur Hughes
Battle Royal	Fred Jewell
Tribute to the Trombones	Don Keller
Coat of Arms	George Kenny
Kiefer's Special	William Kiefer
Cyrus the Great	Karl King
National Defense	Jens Lampe
Slippery Streets	Keith Latey
The Fire Master	Harry Lincoln
Slippery Hank	Frank Losey
The Kilties	Samuel Morris
American Red Cross	Louis Panella
Salutations	Roland Seitz
Manhattan Beach	John Philip Sousa

### Front and Center

The United States Air Force Band  
Colonel Lowell E. Graham, Commander/Conductor  
George Mason University: Center for the Arts, Fairfax, VA

Colossus of Columbia	Russell Alexander
Front Section	Edwin Eugene Bagley
Sweeney's Cavalcade	William Paris Chambers
Trooper's Tribunal	Henry Fillmore
Bugles and Drums	Edwin Franko Goldman

Washington Grays	Claudio Grafulla
Veni, Vidi, Vici	Robert Browne Hall
Regimental Pride	John Clifford Heed
The Show Boy	Will Huff
Knights of the Road	Fred Huffer
Them Basses	Getty Herschel Huffine
Transcontinental	Harry Hughes
The Outlook	Fred Jewell
Smilin' Jack	Robert Keller
Invictus	Karl King
The Billboard	John Klohr
Gloria	Frank Losey
Lights Out	Earl McCoy
A Warrior Bold	Frank Panella
Shield of Liberty	Joseph John Richards
Brooke's Chicago Marine Band	Roland Seitz
The Gladiator	John Philip Sousa

### **Sousa**

The ACC Heritage of America Band  
 Colonel Lowell E. Graham, Commander/Conductor  
 Chrysler Hall, Norfolk, VA

Easter Monday on the White House Lawn  
 Tally-Ho Overture  
 Last Days of Pompeii  
 High School Cadets  
 Manhattan Beach  
 Solid Men to the Front  
 Jack Tar  
 Beau Ideal  
 Mother Hubbard  
 Wolverine  
 The Gallant Seventh  
 The Directorate  
 The Gladiator  
 Sabre and Spurs  
 Flags of Freedom  
 The Rifle Regiment  
 Hands Across the Sea  
 El Capitan Waltzes  
 La Reined de la Mer

### **Riders for the Flag**

The ACC Heritage of America Band  
 Colonel Lowell E. Graham, Commander/Conductor  
 Ogden Hall, Hampton University, Hampton, VA



The Air Force Song	Robert Crawford/David Bennett
Riders for the Flag	John Philip Sousa
His Honor	Henry Fillmore
Gloria	Frank Losey
The Screamer	Frederick Jewell
Bullets and Bayonets	John Philip Sousa
King Karl King	Henry Fillmore
The Big Cage	Karl King
Circus Echoes	Arthur Hughes
El Capitan	John Philip Sousa
Voice of America	King King
Black Jack	Fred Huffer
Nobles of the Mystic Shrine	John Philip Sousa
Sarasota	Karl King
The New York Hippodrome	John Philip Sousa/William Teague
Gardes Du Corps	Robert Browne Hall
Smilin' Jack	Robert Keller
Royal Scotch Highlanders	Karl King
The Black Horse Troop	John Philip Sousa
Bugles and Drums	Edwin Franko Goldman
New Frontiers	Karl King
The Magnet	Frank Losey
The Bride-Elect	John Philip Sousa
Brooke's Triumphal	Roland Seitz
The Stars and Stripes Forever	John Philip Sousa

#### **SOME AMERICAN MARCH COMPOSERS OF WORTH OTHER THAN SOUSA**

Russell Alexander, Edwin Eugene Bagley, Walter Boorn, William Chambers, Henry Fillmore, Edwin Franko Goldman, Claudio Grafulla, Robert Browne Hall, John Clifford Heed, Will Huff, Fred Huffer, Getty Herschel Huffine, Arthur Hughes, Harry Hughes, Fred Jewell, Don Keller, Robert Keller, George Kenny, William Kiefer, Karl King, John Klohr, Jens Lampe, Keith Latey, Harry Lincoln, Frank Losey, Earl McCoy, Samuel Morris, Frank Panella, Louis Panella, Joseph John Richards and Roland Seitz

## FUN THOUGHTS

**The 15 Fillmore Trombone Family (Smears/Rags)** ; Miss Trombone (A Slippery Rag)" (1908); "Teddy Trombone (A Brother to Miss Trombone)" (1911); "Lassus Trombone (The Cullud Valet to Miss Trombone)" (1915); "Pahson Trombone (Lassus Trombone's 'Ole Man'" (1916); "Sally Trombone (Pahson Trombone's Eldest Gal Some Crow)" (1917); "Slim Trombone (Sally Trombone's Cousin- the Jazzin' One Step Kid)" (1918); "Mose Trombone (He's Slim Trombone's Buddy)" (1919); "Shoutin' Liza Trombone (Mose Trombone's Ah-finity)" (1920) (Also known as "Hallelujah Trombone" for the quote from Handel's "Messiah"); "Hot Trombone (He's Jes a Fren' ob Shoutin' Liza Trombone)" (1921); "Bones Trombone (He's Jes as Warm as Hot Trombone)" (1922); "Dusty Trombone" (1923); "Bull Trombone (A Cullud Toreador)" (1924); "Lucky Trombone" (1926); "Boss Trombone" (1929); "Ham Trombone" (1929)

**The "On The" Series by Edwin Franco Goldman.** *"On the Mall", "On the Green", "On the Hudson", "On the Pier", "On the Go", "On the Campus", "On the Farm", "On the Hunt", "On the Air."*

**Newspaper Marches (a short list);** Sousa, *"Washington Post"*; Innes, *"Telegraph March"*; Pryor, *"Post-Dispatch"*; Burton, *"Baltimore American March"*; Seltzer, *"Hartford Post"*; Innes, *"Atlanta Constitution March"*; Liberati, *"Kansas City Star"*; Chambers, *"Detroit Free Press"*; Seitz, *"New York Journal"*; Weldon, *"Chicago Daily News"*; Fulton, *"Waterbury American"*; Klohr, *"Cincinnati Post"*; Jewell, *"Denver Post"*; Verweire, *"News-Sentinel March"*; Goldman, *"Toledo Blade"*; Griffith, *"Courier-Journal"*; Smith, *"Advocate Messenger"*.