



**Texas Bandmasters Association
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**The Modern Musical Mystery: How
Do I Style a March?**

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Sponsor: NAMMB

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The Modern Musical Mystery- How Do You Style a March?

I believe marches have been very much neglected in recent years in American concert band literature. There are many reasons for this, one being how poorly the marches are played or interpreted. We forget as conductors that the simple march is one of our earliest forms of band literature and important to teaching style, phrasing, technique and so on. I hope that today I can demonstrate to you the nuts and bolts of playing a march where you will not think they all “sound the same” or “are not exciting to play”. This is only true if you play them incorrectly. Ask any student or audience member after a great rendition of a march is played if they enjoyed it. I think you will be surprised by the answer.

Where did the March form come from?

Our modern March sometimes referred to as “The Music of War “can be traced back to the Ottoman Empire (Turkish tribes in Asia Minor). The march’s basic purpose was to regulate the functioning of the armies in the field by communicating orders and keeping time during marching & maneuvers. The extensive use of percussion (especially cymbals) was used for psychological effect on the enemy, especially in Western Europe, where these sounds were at the time unknown. These sounds had the capacity to frighten the opponent. The use of percussion (especially cymbals) was a direct importation from the Ottomans.

March Style Nuts & Bolts

Steady, driving tempo- During the 18th century two different march tempos came into vogue. The first was the slow (common) march, which the British reportedly used tempos between 60 and 80 BPM.

The quick march was used for parades, maneuvers & reviews and used tempos between 100-140 BPM.

Most of us today use approximately ♩=120 BPM for our standard American quick step march. Many use much faster tempos for circus marches and still even different tempos for European marches. (See the addendum attached for tempo suggestions).

Big and little notes

I categorize notes in a march in two types- "Big" and "Little" notes. Many young bands play all the notes with the same weight which makes for a dull, monotonous march performance.

Big notes (in ♩, ♪ or longer) get weight and slight space at the end of the note.

Small notes (in ♩, ♪ are deemphasized and are played extremely short and light.

Sixteenths or faster are played legato if they are not written slurred. This may sound counterintuitive, but the speed of a quick step march will take care of the note length and the run will sound more effortless. In a much slower march you would have to make some adjustment to make sixteenth notes slightly shorter in length.

6/8 time uses a slightly different approach. Big notes still get weight and slight space (♪ or longer) but the ♪'s are extremely short. I suggest you start teaching the 6/8 style with the pattern ♩ ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪ to begin with to give the overall lilting effect of the 6/8 time signature.

Rhythmic Integrity

A march without rhythmic exactness will not create the effect you want. The subdivision must be exact (down up, down up, or 1 La Le, 2 La le if in 6/8).

Remember the origins of the march. The army cannot put their foot down in an organized and exacting manner if the march is not in perfect pulse. The frame of a march is the percussion, bass line (tuba etc.) and french horns. The frame must be exact just like building a house. If you get the pulse and subdivision correct with the rhythm section you are on the right path. The melody and countermelody are much easier to “line up” if the frame of the march is correct. You still must work for accurate rhythmic playing with the melody and countermelody line, but always start from the frame up.

Phrasing

First look at the time signature and determine if the phrase is in four or eight measures. Most 2/4 marches are in eight measure phrases at an up tempo. Too large a space between the “big” notes causes the march to sound gapped and unphrased.

Pay special attention to the phrase endings. Poor phrasing shows up when the long note at the end of a phrase is not held out across the bar line and the last moving note is exposed. I refer to this note as the “naked note”. The moving line is generally written in the lower voice but sometimes this is reversed with runs written in the upper voice leaving an upper voice note exposed (a chirp).

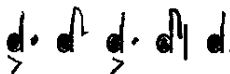
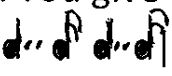
Note the example below:



This creates an abrupt choppy sound at the end of each phrase when done improperly. This is an exception to my “big” note rule. The last phrase note is weighted but it is not spaced or cut off early. You must teach the students to hold the long note across the bar line to the tied note and release it **at the same time** the low voice finishes the last note for the march to have a smooth phrase ending. I use the technique of having one player on a part (just the long note and the moving line) to demonstrate the phrase ending. My trick is to purposely have the student playing the long note play it too short, which shows the entire band a chopped phrase (leaves the moving note exposed). Then I ask the player on the long note to hold it out for its full value (tie across the bar line), and it makes it very clear which way sounds the best (for students and teacher). This is the most difficult issue to correct when playing a march and seems to be something most directors overlook until someone brings it to their attention at the last minute before a performance. You must continually remind students (and yourself) to listen for this common flaw.

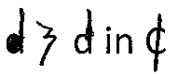
Dotted Rhythms

Correctly played dotted rhythms in a march give the march a smart, jaunty feel. These rhythms should be exaggerated and not played exactly in a subdivided rhythm.

In $\frac{4}{4}$ time start by teaching your band the . You give weight and space to the dotted quarters and play them as if they were a . The sixteenth will be played as a grace note into the next dotted quarter. Be sure the students do not slur the sixteenth into the dotted quarter. I use the spoken phrase “day today” to demonstrate the dotted quarter/eighth note pattern. I routinely hear dotted quarter notes played in two incorrect styles, much too long and much too short. If I had to pick between the two I would err on the long side. The sixteenth

note after the dotted quarter must have a “flipped” feel, very much like a grace note. A march played without the correct dotted rhythm will have an elongated, lazy sound.

Notes Preceding a Rest

The pattern most commonly written as  is one that students “tutt” the first quarter note by breaking the “little” note rule and accenting the quarter more than the half note that follows. Deemphasize the quarter note and weight the next “big” note and all will be well in the march world.

Articulation

The clarity of a march or any music for that matter has very much to do with articulation. When you tongue and when you slur is very important as is the syllable you tongue with. Many bands play with many different articulations including some of the band slurring the pattern when it should be tongued. You won’t notice this misarticulation until you hear the student playing by himself. The mixed articulation gives the march an unclear, muddy sound.

The articulation you use to start a note is also extremely important. I prefer a “Du” or “Tu” articulation to start the “big” notes, a “Tee” articulation for the “little” notes, and a legato “Du” articulation for sixteenth or thirty-second note runs.

Most bands over articulate the entire march including the little notes when they attempt to play marcato style. Use more air for the weighted notes and less tongue to avoid the sledge hammer approach to articulation and use a very light tongue (Tee) on the quarter notes in C time.

A clean articulated march reminds me a of a snappy, distinct military dress uniform after inspection.

Dynamic Contrast

A march played mezzo forte throughout is pretty uninspiring. Play the dynamics that are written and then add some when it makes musical sense. I like to add a mezzo piano phrase in the middle of the second strain when appropriate. The typical march starts forte then goes to mezzo forte in the first strain followed by fortissimo in the second strain. The break strain or dog fight is technical in nature and played forte, followed by the softest section of the march in the trio and often time played in a legato style. The out strain (repeated trio) is very full.

The three loudest sections of a march are generally the Introduction, second strain and the out strain of the trio. Be sure the band plays full with a quality sound. The old rule still applies that your group should never play louder or softer than its best sound.

Stinger Notes

The stinger note is often left unrehearsed and played in a loud, harsh manner or many students just leave it out. The stinger note should be full and emphatic like the out strain it follows, but not overblown and most importantly played with a quality ensemble sound. The stinger should be short but not too short and have weight (another exception to the “little “note rule). I like the students to use a “Tu” syllable on the last note, and we stop many times to sustain the chord and balance to the bottom of the band so the march does not end with a percussive,

harsh, unbalanced stinger. I like to stay it is the exclamation mark at the end of the march.

Ensemble Sound

I consider ensemble sound the most important aspect of the march or any music for that matter. A band cannot have a quality ensemble sound without three things:

1. Characteristic individual sounds
2. Good balance between sections and
3. Accurate intonation.

I believe the march has a masculine sound overall because of its heritage from the military. The countermelodies have such an important role in the music and should play equal volume to the melody or in some instances louder than the melody. The ensemble sound should have a darker quality than most other genre of music, especially when in a minor key. Don't let your upper voice be the forte of your band. Clarinet tends to be written in the extreme upper register and can really dominate the ensemble sound if you do not manage them or rescore them.

I hope our discussion today has helped you to value and appreciate the march. We need to place this simple and early form of original band literature back into our regular band repertoire. Your students and audience will thank you.



The March – A Quick Reference Guide

An Overview of Interpretation, Performance Guide and Historical Practices

The Fillmore Wind Band, Cincinnati, Ohio
Jim Daughters, Conductor, Fillmore Wind Band
Stephen Lytle, Associate Director of Bands, Miami University
Cody Birdwell, Director of Bands, University of Kentucky

TYPES OF MILITARY MARCHING

- Funeral March J = 72
- Slow/Ordinary March J = 60-80
- Quick March J = 116-120
- Double Quick March

MARCH MUSIC TYPES

- Military Marches J = 112-144
- Circus Marches J = 140-170
- Gallops can reach J = 240
- Funeral Marches J = 60-72
- Patrols (*simulate the sound of a band marching past a listener, coming and going*)

EUROPEAN MARCHES

- British J = 108
- German J = 104-112
- Spanish *paso doble* J = 108
- Italian J = 116
- French J = 126

ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS OF A MARCH

- Tone Quality
- Technical Accuracy
- Tempo
- Interpretation

MARCH STYLE (*with much credit to John Whitwell*)

- Heart of the March – bass line, tuba, bass drum, horns, percussion
- “Lilt” – 1₂1₂ (this alone will transform the style and feel of your march)
- Tempo – choose a tempo appropriate for the style of march you are performing
- Rhythm – master common rhythm figures and sustain notes for their duration
- Accentuation – accentuation can improve the interpretation and effectiveness of a march
- Dynamics – not too loud in the percussion section
- Musicality – shape and balance the heart, melody, counter melody, and obbligato

MARCH EDITIONS

Many editions of marches were published in street or flip folder (music lyre) size. These are generally printed in tutti with all members are playing at all times. This was done to conserve printing space and so any sized group, from small circus bands, military parade bands, or large symphonic bands, might use them. Many concert marches, particularly those in large-page editions, are scored in a way to give adequate expression and tonal color when played strictly how they are printed. Current editions of the earlier street size marches may or may not include tonal variety and revoicing. Other edits in these editions can include the editors’ interpretation of accents, dynamics, phrasing, etc. Many original publications are listed under “marching band” in music catalogues.

WHAT YOU CAN CHANGE IN A MARCH

Change dynamics in entire strains or parts of strains in addition to octave registration. Add accents to agree with your own aural perception of how you want to hear it played. Sing through the march then mark it for style, accentuation, and phrasing. Alter percussion parts if necessary, keeping in mind that most march composers were not percussionists. Flutes, for example, can transition to piccolo in different parts of a strain or bells could be added to a melody. Add or delete voices to change colors and to bring out unique textures. Brass players can and should rest more often. Include a separate pair of cymbals to accentuate special accents in the music. Have students memorize parts of a strain and stand up, e.g. the final strain of the march. Try using a field drum rather than a snare for a more historically accurate performance.

WHAT YOU CANNOT CHANGE IN A MARCH

While having a unique interpretation is recommended, a detached style is necessary. Legato playing, if opportunistic, can be used in the trio section. Do not play the entire march in a legato or tenuto style; always detached. Maintain a steady tempo throughout and remain true to the melodic, harmonic and rhythmic aspects of the march.

INTERPRETATION

March manuscripts rarely contain the interpretations of the composer and composers often assumed bandmasters knew *march style* and did not bother with stylistic markings, dynamics, revoicings or registral alterations. Additionally, many composers rehearsed and performed their own music and as Henry Fillmore stated, "I didn't know how I wanted it to sound until I got in front of the band." There is no one way to play any march and you should arrive at a convincing interpretation on your own. Dr. Harry Begian perhaps summed it up best in a presentation at the Midwest Clinic in 1999,

We should not think of marches as musical items that are sacrosanct and that there is only one 'true' style or interpretation of any march! If symphony orchestra conductors don't all COPY one another and perform the great symphonic literature with a prescribed style, tempo and nuances then why should band conductors not figure things out for themselves and come up with their own musical convictions as to how they want to play a march! I can truthfully say that those band-conductor colleagues whom I consider great march-stylists reflect their personal musical tastes to any march they perform and never copy someone else's interpretation. I think it truly unfortunate that there are too many band conductors who either don't arrive at musical convictions regarding style, tempo or nuances or must always rely on some else's way of playing a piece of music. One of the greatest challenges to conductors is to be able to study a score diligently and to come up with an interpretation of that score that is convincing, not only to him, but to his players and audiences as well. I think that is the true test of the quality of a conductor, certainly NOT how well he can copy another conductor's interpretation!

GENERAL DYNAMIC CHARACTERISTICS OF EACH STRAIN

Avoid dull performances by changing dynamics on repeated strains, particularly in second and break strains.

- *Introduction* – usually loud, forte or fortissimo.
- *First Strain* – less loud, mezzo forte, usually played as written.
- *Second Strain* – usually the loudest strain in a march. Vary dynamics in this strain, softer the first time and louder on the repeat. Try eliminating brass the first time.
- *Trio Strain* – softest strain of the march, piano to mezzo forte. Play legato if stylized that way.
- *Break Strain* – loud and technically involved, usually played as written.
- *Repeated Trio Strain* – loud and played out. Trio tune is played softly with emphasis and forte volume on the countermelody and/or obbligato.
- *Stinger* – in the style and volume of the last strain.

HENRY FILLMORE MARCHES AND SMEARS (*We are the Fillmore Wind Band after all...*)

Fillmore generally liked his marches performed much faster than a traditional military march. He stated, "my marches sit well at $J = 160$ and the smears at $J = 120$." He composed under several pseudonyms and each represents a difficulty level. Marches by *Harold Bennett* are non-progressive and great for middle school bands. If you can play one, you can play them all. *Al Hayes* and *Will Huff* marches are a little more difficult and same in difficulty level. *Henry Fillmore* marches can be the easiest or the most difficult. Fillmore typically wrote two percussion parts, one for concert settings and one for marching.

TYPICAL COMMENTS AT ASSESSMENTS REGARDING MARCHES

- The march selected has no special character.
- There is a lack of care in preparation. The march did not have the same meticulous attention to detail as other concert selections.
- Rhythms are not clearly defined.
- Eighth notes in triple time are played too close together with a space between each grouping of three notes – this causes a 'hopping' effect.
- Accompaniment figures in triple time sound like they are in duple time.
- Accompaniment figures in duple time sound like they are in triple time.
- Harmony parts are not confident and clear.
- Preserve the balance of the band at all dynamic levels.
- Keep the tone under control at all dynamic levels.
- Do not depend on upper clarinets for fortissimo effects.
- Paying more attention to accents can liven up the march.
- Make a musical sound on the stinger rather than a noise.
- **It is the space between notes, which makes a march lively and spirited rather than the rate of speed it is being performed.**
- You cannot attack one tone before releasing the one preceding it.
- There is little variation in the intensity of the beat from the bass drum to conform to the spirit of others in the band.
- Do not allow the band to rush away with the tempo.
- *Grandioso* means a change in style, not a change in tempo.

SELECTED MARCH LIST OF HARRY BEGIAN AND WILLIAM REVELLI

AMERICAN

Americans We H. Fillmore
 Barnum and Bailey's F. King
 Battle of Shiloh C. Barnhouse
 Battle of the Winds C. Doble
 Battle Royal F. Jewell
 Boys of the Old Brigade C. Smit
 Bravura C. Doble
 Brighton Beach March W. Latham
 The British Eighth Z. Elliot
 The Caravan Club K. King
 Chicago Tribune P. Chambers
 Chimes of Liberty E.F. Goldman
 The Circus Bee H. Fillmore
 The Circus King C. Doble
 Colossus of Columbia R. Alexander
 The Director General F. Jewell
 El Capitan J.P. Sousa
 Emblem of Freedom K. King
 E. Pluribus Unum F. Jewell
 The Free Lance J.P. Sousa
 From Topic to Topic R. Alexander
 Gentry's Triumphal F. Jewell
 Golden Friendships H. Fillmore
 Golden Jubilee J.P. Sousa
 The Goldman Band K. King
 Hands Across the Sea J.P. Sousa
 His Honor H. Fillmore
 Honey Boys on Parade E. Cupero
 Independentia R.B. Hall
 In Storm and Sunshine J.C. Heed
 Joyce's 71 N.Y. Regiment T. Boyer
 The Klaxon H. Fillmore
 Military Escort H. Bennett
 National Emblem E. Begley
 Olympia Hippodrome R. Alexander
 On the Mall E.F. Goldman
 The Outlook F. Jewell
 The Purple Carnival H. Alford
 Quality Plus F. Jewell
 Ringling Bros. Grand Entry A. Sweet
 Robinson Grand Entrée K. King
 Rolling Thunder H. Fillmore
 Revelation P. Chambers
 The Royal Decree W. English
 Sarasota K. King
 The Southerner R. Alexander
 Tenth Regiment R.B. Hall
 Washington Grays C.S. Grafulla

SPANISH

Corazon Gitano M. Domingo
 El Abanico A. Javaloyes
 El Relicario J. Padilla
 Espana Cani P. Marquina
 Flores de Espana P. Chovi
 Gallito S. Lope
 Gerona S. Lope
 The Golden Ear M. San Miguel
 La Calesera F. Alonso
 La Sorella C. Borel-Clerc
 Lola Flores T. Tucci
 Pepita Greus P. Chovi
 Sol y Sombra G. Gates

ENGLISH

Army and Marine W. Zehle
 Army of the Nile K. Alford
 B.B. and C.F. J. Ord Hume
 The Contemptible L. Stanley
 Dunedin K. Alford
 The Elephant J. Ord Hume
 The Middy K. Alford
 Pentland Hills J. Howe
 Punctinello W. Rimmer
 Sons of the Brave T. Bidgood
 Trafalgar W. Zehle
 The Vanished Army K. Alford

GERMAN AND AUSTRIAN

Action Front H. Blankenburg
 Alte Kameraden C. Teike
 The Conqueror C. Teike
 Duetschmeister D. Ertl
 Entry of the Gladiators J. Fucik
 Florentiner J. Fucik
 In Treue Fest C. Teike
 Nibelungen G. Sonntag
 Radetzky J. Strauss
 Die Regimentskinder J. Fucik
 Thrill of Victory F. Fuhrer
 Under the Double Eagle J. Wagner
 Wien Bleibt Wien J. Schrammel

OTHER NON-AMERICAN MARCHES

Athletic Festival S. Prokofiev
 March of the Belgian Paratr. P. Leemans
 Corrida D. Savino
 March Electric G. Creatore
 Inglesina D. DellaCese
 Le Regiment de Sambre et Meuse R. Planquette
 Laurentian L. Ganne
 Le Grognard G. Pares
 March Lorraine L. Ganne
 Pere de la Victoire L. Ganne
 Sambre et Meuse R. Planquette
 Symphonic March E. Rivela
 Symphonic March G. Bonelli
 Valdres J. Hanseen

CONCERT MARCHES

Crusade for Freedom J. Richards
 The Dam Busters E. Coates
 The Golden Bear J. Richards
 Hail Miami J. Richards
 Hail to the Fleet R. Maltby
 Marche Hongroise H. Berlioz
 Montmartre H. Wood
 The Sinfonians C. Williams
 Stars and Bars R. Jager
 March Symphonic
 Metamorphosis P. Hindemith
 Vilabella M. Williams
 World is Waiting
 for the Sunrise H. Alford
 American Salute M. Gould
 Children's March P. Grainger
 Golden Cockerel N. R-Korsakov

STREET MARCHES

The Billboard J. Klohr
 Black Jack F. Huffer
 Dallas R.B. Hall
 Kiefer's Special W. Kiefer
 Men of Ohio H. Fillmore
 Officer of the Day R.B. Hall
 On the Square L. Panella
 Punjaub C. Payne
 Show-boy W. Huff
 Salutation R. Seitz
 St. Julien A.W. Hughes
 Them Basses G. Huffine
 The Trombone King K. King
 United Services J. Ord-Hume

RECOMMEND RECORDINGS

William Revelli with the University of Michigan Symphony Band
H. Robert Reynolds with the University of Michigan Symphonic Band
Harry Begian with the University of Illinois Symphonic Band
Military Bands

PUBLISHED RESOURCES

Bachman, Harold. "Henry Fillmore: A Tribute to a Bandman."
Begian, Harry. "Behold the Lowly March."
Bierley, Paul E. *Hallelujah Trombone!*
Bierley, Paul E. *The Incredible Band of John Philip Sousa.*
Chevallard, Philip C. *Teaching Music through Performing Marches.* Edited by Richard B. Miles.
Goldman, Edwin Franko. *Band Betterment; Suggestions and Advice to Bands, Bandmasters, and Band-players.*
Hansen, Richard K. *The American Wind Band: A Cultural History.*
Pryor, Arthur. "How To Play A March."
Ryder, Donald Dean. "The March Compositions of the Goldman Library." DMA Diss.
Smith, Norman. *March Music Melodies.*
Smith, Norman. *March Music Notes.*
Smith, Norman. *Program Notes for Band.*
Sousa, John Philip. *Marching Along.*

ONLINE RESOURCES

"The Complete Marches of John Philip Sousa." "The President's Own" Marine Band.
www.marineband.marines.mil
Brion, Keith. "Sousa's Marches, As He Conducted Them."
www.newsousaband.com
Daughters, Jim. "Quick Reference Guide to Marches."
www.fillmorewindband.org