



Marine Band | Marine Chamber Orchestra | Marine Chamber Ensembles

NATIONAL CONCERT TOUR

Each fall, “The President’s Own” United States Marine Band performs for nearly 100,000 people in communities across America on its annual concert tour. The tour is a tradition initiated by 17th Director John Philip Sousa more than a century ago.

The modern concert tour

Today’s Marine Band tours in the fall, and rarely leaves the Washington, DC, area at other times because of a heavy schedule of White House and ceremonial commitments.

The Department of Defense has divided the country into five regions for tours by the premier bands of the Armed Forces. This allows each band to visit as many states as possible during a normal rotation without competing for the same sponsors and concert sites.

Marine Band tours begin in early October and last about 30 days. During this time, the band presents approximately 28 concerts, each in a different town.

The band typically performs 3-4 different programs during a concert tour, rotating the programs to best suit the concert venues. Marine Band tour performances offer a unique blend of traditional concert band and contemporary wind ensemble music.

The Marine Band tours at government expense. Transportation, meals, and lodging are the responsibility of the Marine Corps. A sponsor in each community presents the concert as a public service on an admission-free basis.

If you are interested in sponsoring a Marine Band tour concert in your area, please contact the National Tour Director at (703) 614-1405, e-mail marineband.publicaffairs@usmc.mil, or write to: National Tour Director, Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps, 2 Navy Annex, Washington, DC 20380-1775.

History and origins of the concert tour

The Marine Band did not always tour. For almost 100 years, the band could be away from Washington, DC, for only 24 hours at a time. In 1891, the Secretary of the Navy approved Sousa’s request to tour, and told him to seek final approval from President Benjamin Harrison, which was granted.

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PLAYING AMERICA’S MUSIC SINCE 1798

Marine Barracks, 8th and I Streets, SE, Washington, DC 20390-5000

Telephone: 202/ 433-5809 • Fax: 202/ 433-4752

Concert Information: 202/ 433-4011 • Internet: www.marineband.usmc.mil

The first Marine Band concert tour was to 32 cities and towns in New England and the Midwest. The band performed two different programs, one for matinees and another for evening concerts. Each included Sousa's unique blend of popular music, orchestral transcriptions, and his own compositions. Although the audiences clamored for Sousa's marches, he included them only as encores, offering his audiences what he called the "solid fare" of Richard Wagner, Giuseppe Verdi, Hector Berlioz, and others.

The band's second concert tour, in 1892, was through 37 cities to the Pacific Coast and back. After Sousa's departure in 1892, "The President's Own" made four tours—1901, 1907, 1911, and 1912—before beginning annual tours in 1920. The band suspended its tours during the Depression years of 1932-34, started again in 1935 and continued until 1942. The Marine Band's national concert tours resumed in 1946, after World War II, and have continued every year since.

An enduring philosophy

Over the past century, the philosophy supporting the Marine Band's national concert tour has remained virtually unchanged. Publicity materials for the first tour in 1891 reflect current thought: "The President and the Secretary of the Navy have consented to give a leave of absence to the band for a brief tour, in response to many pressing requests, and because they recognize the fact that the people throughout the country should have an opportunity to listen to the band which is maintained by their pleasure and at their expense."

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