



MARINE BAND ★ MARINE CHAMBER ORCHESTRA ★ MARINE CHAMBER ENSEMBLES

A SUMMARY OF THE MARINE BAND'S HISTORY

For more than two centuries, the United States Marine Band has been part of the events that have shaped our nation. As “The President’s Own,” its omnipresent role has made it an important thread in the fabric of American life.

Established by an Act of Congress in 1798, the Marine Band is America’s oldest continuously active 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.

President John Adams invited the Marine Band to make its White House debut on New Year’s Day, 1801, in the then-unfinished Executive Mansion. It is believed in March of that year, 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 and is credited with 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, D.C., metropolitan area. Each fall, the band travels through a region of the United States during its concert tour, a century-old tradition initiated by John Philip Sousa, the band’s legendary 17th Director.

As Director from 1880-92, 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. Sousa also began to write the marches that earned him the title, “The March King.”

“The President’s Own” continues to maintain Sousa’s standard of excellence. Musicians are selected at auditions much like those of major symphony orchestras, and they enlist in the U.S. Marine Corps for duty with the Marine Band only. Most of today’s members are graduates of the nation’s finest music schools, and nearly 60 percent hold advanced degrees in music.

On July 11, 1998, the Marine Band celebrated its 200th anniversary with a command performance at the White House and gala concert at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington attended by President and Mrs. Clinton. Also during 1998, the Marine Band became the only organization to be inducted into the inaugural class of the American Classical Music Hall of Fame in Cincinnati.

-over-

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

In July 2001, “The President’s Own” performed in Switzerland in conjunction with the 10th International Conference of the World Association for Symphonic Bands and Ensembles. The performance schedule included a gala concert at the Luzern Culture and Convention Center, which featured the international première of David Rakowski’s *Ten of a Kind*. *Ten of a Kind* was later named a finalist for the 2002 Pulitzer Prize in Music.

On July 12, 2003, the Marine Band returned to the Kennedy Center to celebrate its 205th anniversary in a concert featuring guest conductor John Williams, renowned composer of American film and concert works and laureate conductor of the Boston Pops Orchestra. Williams returned to the podium on July 20, 2008 to celebrate the Marine band’s 210th anniversary in a gala concert of his works.

Also in 2008 Director Colonel Michael J. Colburn and several musicians performed as guests in the Singapore Armed Forces Central Band’s 50th anniversary concert, making the Marine Band’s first sojourn to Asia.

In its third century, the Marine Band continues a tradition of excellence that earned it the title, “The President’s Own.” Whether in White House performances, public concerts, or national tours, the music of the Marine Band is the music of America.

-USMB-

Contact: Marine Band Public Affairs Office (202) 433-5809

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