



"The President's Own"
**UNITED STATES
 MARINE BAND**
 Colonel John R. Bourgeois, Director

NOTES

December 1989 - January 1990

Published Bi-Monthly for the Friends of the Marine Band

String Section Plays Vital Role in "The President's Own"



Marine Band string players are joined here by two world-class concert artists in an impromptu session. Pictured from left to right: Itzhak Perlman, violinist; former Marine Band member James McLeland, violinist; Yo-Yo Ma, cellist; Gunnery Sergeant Susan Franke, violist. (Official White House photograph)

Many people are surprised to learn that the Marine Band roster includes string musicians, yet the tradition of Marine Band string players reaches back to the organization's earliest days.

In researching her book, *Music at the White House*, Dr. Elise K. Kirk found much information about Marine Band string players. As far back as the 1820's, The White House requested Marine Band strings, and strings were also used during the Lincoln administration. The Marine Orchestra also played a significant role in presenting premier performances of major musical works in America.

While Sousa was director, a musician named William H. Santelmann joined the band after auditioning on clarinet, baritone and violin. When Santelmann eventually

became director in 1898, a position he held until 1927, he expanded the musical scope of the Marine Band by developing an orchestra for performing at The White House. He made it a requirement that every Marine Band member play *both* a string and a wind instrument. As a result, Marine Band members performed regularly as "The Marine Symphony Orchestra." Additionally, the first radio broadcast by the Marine Band in 1922 was of the orchestra. The two instrument requirement for Marine Band musicians was eliminated in 1955 when Col. Albert Schoepper became director of the band. He believed that it would improve the quality of both the band and orchestra if Marine Band musicians were allowed to specialize in one instrument.

Several directors of the Marine Band

have been string musicians. "The March King" himself, John Philip Sousa, was a violinist. This trend continued with Taylor Branson, Concertmaster under William H. Santelmann and then director, 1927-1940; William F. Santelmann, son of William H. Santelmann and director, 1940-1955; and Albert F. Schoepper, director, 1955-1972, were all violinists.

Today the 18 members of the Marine Band's string section perform throughout the year for both private and public audiences. These musicians perform most frequently at The White House. At the Presidential mansion, Marine string players regularly perform music for a variety of occasions, from large congressional and diplomatic receptions to intimate staff and family gatherings. The most common are state dinners, state and diplomatic receptions and Presidential "working luncheons."

As the guests arrive at all White House state dinners, the Marine Chamber Orchestra plays popular American music to create a relaxed atmosphere. "Basically we provide background music except for instances when the music serves a ceremonial purpose such as 'Hail to the Chief,'" explains cellist Marcio Botelho. "It's surprising," he added, "because even though we are performing background music, people often make it a point to compliment us. In fact, at all of the state dinners the President and Mrs. Bush have greeted us and thanked us at the end." Botelho recalls his first White House performance: "It really was exciting. In fact, sometimes it was difficult to keep playing when someone famous walked by because I found myself so distracted."

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Marine Band's Season Schedule Update

REMINDER - Don't forget our annual "Carols at Wolf Trap", to be held at the Fine Center at Wolf Trap, Sunday, December 3rd starting at 4 p.m. This outdoor concert features both candlelight and cold weather. Bring the whole family to this holiday event; it's free and no tickets are required.

COMING UP - The Chamber Music Series, usually held in January and February, will be incorporated into the Showcase Series this season. This series will take place in March, April and May in the Sousa Band Hall. Information about programming will be available in future editions of NOTES.

ADVANCE NOTICE - The Marine Band is planning its 1990 annual concerts for April 9th at Joseph Meyerhoff Symphony Hall in Baltimore, MD; and April 11th at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington, D.C. More information will be available regarding tickets, etc., as the concert dates approach.

Band Member News

NEWMEMBERS - Clarinetist Christine A. MacDonnell of Westwood, NJ,



graduated from Westwood High School in 1980. She earned a bachelor's degree in music from Loyola University in New Orleans, LA, and a master's de-

gree from The Juilliard School in New York.

Clarinetist Janice M. Snedecor of Chicago, IL, graduated from Hampton High School in Allison Park, PA, in 1979. She attended Northwestern University in Evanston, IL, and the University of Southern California in Los Angeles, where she earned a bachelor's degree in music. She also attended DePaul University in Chicago, where she earned a master's degree in music.



Cornetist John R. Hagstrom of



Elmhurst, IL, graduated from York Community High School in Elmhurst in 1983. He earned a bachelor's degree in music from Eastman School of

Music, and a master's degree in music from Wichita State University in Kansas.

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Performing at The White House is nothing new for string bass player MGSgt. Dave Wundrow who has been with the Marine Band longer than any other member. When Wundrow joined the band in 1956, President Eisenhower was in his second term. "I remember Mamie literally giving the furniture the white glove test before state dinners," says Wundrow. Although he has performed for eight presidents, Wundrow insists that the excitement has not diminished.

Over the years, a number of White House performances have proven to be particularly outstanding in the history of the Marine Band's string section. For instance, at a state dinner in his honor in July of 1977, West German Chancellor, Helmut Schmidt, surprised everyone when he took the baton from LTCOL Jack Kline and led the orchestra in the final measures of the *Ode to Joy* from Beethoven's *Ninth Symphony*.

At a 1979 State Dinner for Prime Minister Jack Lynch of the Irish Republic, the Marine Orchestra had another surprise conductor. Among the dinner guests was composer/conductor Leonard Bernstein who, as *The Washington Post* reported, "provided the lightest note in an otherwise somber day" when he sauntered across the foyer and to the delight of the musicians, stepped up to the podium to conduct the orchestra in the ballet music from Verdi's *Aida*. When he was done Bernstein rated the musicians, "A-1!"

In addition to being conducted by foreign dignitaries and famous composers during performances at The White House, Marine string players have also been joined by famous orchestral musicians. In October 1986, cellist Yo-Yo Ma and violinist Itzhak Perlman were among the guests at a White House reception for which a Marine String Quartet was performing. Violist Susan Franke recalls the event: "Suddenly, Yo-Yo Ma and Itzhak Perlman came over to the quartet and asked to borrow instruments so they could sit down and play with us. I really didn't have time to be excited or nervous because it happened so quickly. They are both such warm and friendly people that we were put at ease."

During a White House state dinner in 1985, violinist Isaac Stern was scheduled to perform. "He shocked us all when, in order to warm up for his performance, he took out his fiddle and sat down at the back of the second violin section to play along," recalls violinist Bruce Myers, Concertmaster since 1988. He adds jokingly, "In comparing notes later, the orchestra decided that he had played *pretty well!*"

Marine string players also have had memorable experiences performing for State Dinners being hosted by the President in foreign countries. On October 1, 1970 President Richard M. Nixon became the first President of the United States to visit Yugoslavia. For this occasion he brought along a 13-piece orchestra from the Marine Band to provide music during a dinner and reception he gave for Yugoslavian Premier Josip Broz Tito at his palace in Belgrade. This marked the first time that members of the Marine Band played outside the United States for a state function. After the reception, Nixon shook hands with each of the musicians and thanked them for their performance on this historic occasion.



Staff Sergeant Donna Willingham demonstrates violin technique to a young student during "Music in the Schools." (Photo by Master Sergeant Andrew R. Linden)

Many Marine Band string musicians treasure memories of special performances. For harpist Phyllis Mauney, the return of the American hostages from Iran in 1981 provided one of these memories: "While we were performing for a reception in their honor at The White House, one of the former hostages came over to me and said, 'It's been so long since we've heard music. This is so beautiful.'"

When Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev was at The White House to sign the Intermediate Nuclear Forces Treaty in December of 1987, violinist Celeste Blase became an active witness to the day's events. As Gorbachev and President Reagan emerged from the East Room following the treaty signing, the Marine Orchestra played a lively march in the foyer. Blase describes what happened next: "As they passed, some of us looked over and smiled. Then Gorbachev walked over to me. He extended his hand to me and for a split second I was stunned. Then I stopped playing and shook his hand." She quickly adds, "It was so exciting! That is definitely one of the top moments in my career with the Marine Band."

In addition to providing background music at White House state dinners, occasionally the Marine Orchestra accompanies famous performers who are invited to present the after-dinner entertainment in the East Room. These celebrities have included Sammy Davis Jr., Mary Martin, Robert Goulet, and Frank Sinatra.

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Surprise Serenade

When is a surprise not a surprise? When an annual event.

Although this might be true, you can't convince the Marine Band. Traditionally, the Marine Band performs a "Surprise Serenade" for the Commandant of the Marine Corps and his lady on New Year's Day.

It isn't surprising that an organization rich in traditions would establish such a noble one. But what is surprising is its origin. Although the first serenade probably dates back to the first years of the Commandant's House, there is no documentation to support this. There is evidence, however, that dates the serenades back to the Civil War.

Under the leadership of Francis Scala, the fourteenth director, the musicians donned their bright red coats and assembled outside the garden of the house on Eighth and "G" Streets in southeast Washington, DC. The fifth commandant, Colonel Commandant Archibald Henderson and his wife,

Anna Maria watched from the steps of their garden as "The President's Own" serenaded them with musical selections appropriate for the occasion. The tradition continued with the Commandant inviting the band in to "splice the main brace," an old naval expression meaning to come in for some hot grog, a traditional rum punch mixture.

Although traditions are not to be tampered with, there have been a few modifications made to this one. For most of its history, the serenade had taken place outdoors, but in 1964, General and Mrs. Wallace M. Greene moved the serenade indoors, due to freezing rain and snow. In the years to come, the location of the serenade was dictated by the weather.

Whether the serenade is performed unexpectedly or not, it is a tradition. In keeping with this, the Commandant and his guests never fail to be "traditionally" surprised.



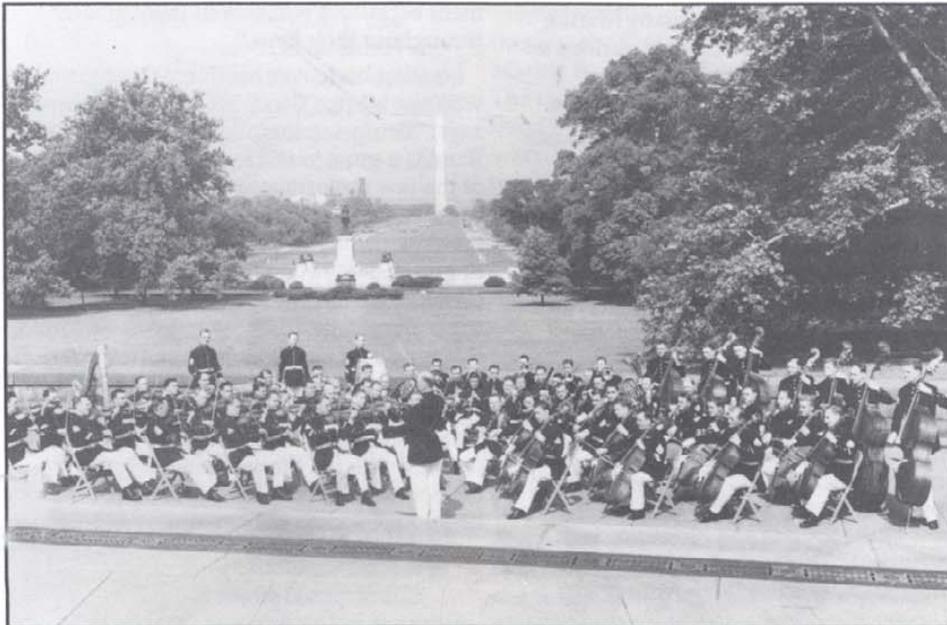
General John A. Lejeune poses with Marine Band leader Capt. William H. Santelmann on January 1, 1927 at the Commandant's home at 8th and G Sts., SE, Washington D.C. This home has traditionally been the site of the New Year's Serenade since the Civil War era. (U.S. Marine Corps photo)

Marine Band Concert Information Line:

(202) 433-4011

From Our Archives . . .

This 1941 photo features the Marine Symphony Orchestra posed on the Capitol West Plaza. LT COL William F. Santelmann, director at that time, is pictured leading the orchestra. During this period of the band's history, musicians were required to "double," that is, play both a string and a wind instrument, to be considered for membership. (U.S. Marine Corps photo)



U.S. Marine Band Represented at Mid-West Clinic

From December 12th to the 16th, representatives of the Marine Band will be in attendance at the 43rd annual Mid-West International Band & Orchestra Clinic to be held at the Chicago Hilton and Towers.

This educational event will feature performances from ensembles around the country; including two Marine Band members, Staff Sergeant Michael Colburn and Master Gunnery Sergeant Eliot Evans who will be performing with the U.S. Armed Forces Tuba-Euphonium Ensemble on December 13th. There will also be clinics, daily conducting workshops, 350 exhibit booths, as well as various association meetings relating to the music industry.

If you are planning to attend, please visit our booths (nos. 200-202) in the exhibition hall to see our display and talk with our Public Affairs staff members.

Wundrow fondly recounts his most memorable experience accompanying a famous entertainer: "In September 1988, Peggy Lee was invited to perform for the Reagans in their private quarters. She brought her own pianist and guitarist, but I was called on to play string bass. It was the first time I ever performed at The White House wearing something other than my Marine Band uniform. I had to wear a tuxedo because they didn't want me to stand out. I was so surprised when after the performance, President Reagan offered to carry my briefcase because I had my string bass case in my other hand! Mrs. Reagan asked me how long I'd been with Peggy Lee and I said, 'About 4 hours; I'm your bass player Mrs. Reagan!' and she said to the President, 'I *thought* he looked familiar!'"

The Marine Orchestra also accompanies celebrities for the nationally televised concert series which originates from the East Room called "In Performance at the White House". These PBS programs feature distinguished American performers as well as brilliant young talent. Since former President and Mrs. Reagan began the series in 1981, the Marine Orchestra has performed

for such celebrities as Mel Torme, Johnny Mathis, Roberta Flack, Sarah Vaughn and Teresa Stratas.

In addition to official presidential and state performances, the Marine Orchestra performs for public audiences as well. During the Marine Band's Chamber Music Series in Sousa Band Hall, many Marine Band string players perform in various ensembles which are organized and conducted by the musicians themselves.

The Marine Chamber Orchestra also performs on the Marine Band's Showcase Series which is presented in Sousa Band Hall on Sunday afternoons in March, April and May. At least once during the Showcase Series the strings also perform without wind, brass, or percussion musicians as the Marine String Orchestra.

Finally, during September and October, string players participate in "Music in the Schools", a series of one-hour demonstration concerts in Washington-area elementary schools. During these programs, a string quartet introduces students to the sounds and history of each instrument. This is a role which comes quite naturally for several of the string

players who are former music educators. Cellist Denna Purdie, a former instructor for the D. C. Youth Orchestra says, "I've always enjoyed working with kids and making them realize that music, even classical music, can be fun. It's so important to me to encourage them to study an instrument because it will benefit them greatly throughout their lives."

Looking back over his thirty-three years with the Marine Band, MGySgt. Wundrow says, "Being a string player in the Marine Band is a great job." He explains, "It's one of the few performance positions in the country that has real stability and provides the opportunity to perform a wide variety of music; everything from pop to jazz to classical, so you never get bored. And to top it all off," he adds, "you get to perform this music for such a unique audience; an audience made up of people invited by the President and the First Lady of the United States." Looking back over his four months with the Marine Band, SSgt. Marcio Botelho agrees: "This job is one of the better kept secrets of the string world".