

## THE MARINE BAND AND THE PRESIDENTS

The Marine Band was established by an Act of Congress signed by President **John Adams** on July 11, 1798. At the invitation of President Adams, the Marine Band made its White House debut on New Year's Day 1801.

President **Thomas Jefferson**, an avid music lover and an accomplished musician, greatly admired the Marine Band and gave the band the title, "The President's Own."

President **John Quincy Adams** brought a new social custom to the White House when he initiated dancing at the Executive Mansion—to music by the Marine Band.

Formal outdoor concerts on the U.S. Capitol grounds were instituted in the 1840s, either by President **Martin Van Buren** or **John Tyler**, a tradition carried on today during the summer months.

"The President's Own" accompanied President **Abraham Lincoln** to Pennsylvania when he delivered his immortal Gettysburg Address.

Under the administration of President **Ulysses S. Grant**, the band played for all the galas, receptions, banquets, and serenades, as well as the wedding of the Grants' 18-year-old daughter, Nellie. During this time, the Marine Band also performed for the first official visit of a Head of State to our nation with the visit of King Kalakaua of Hawaii on December 12, 1874.

Under the leadership of the Marine Band's legendary Director, John Philip Sousa, "The President's Own" performed at the wedding of **Grover Cleveland** to Frances Folsom on June 2, 1886. Cleveland was the only President to be married in the White House.

President **Theodore Roosevelt**'s daughter Alice requested that the band perform Scott Joplin's new "Maple Leaf Rag." This youthful request for "jazz music" seemed controversial in its day, but the members of the Marine Band gladly complied.

President **Warren G. Harding** brought to the White House a lifelong love of band music, having played in bands all his life. Harding told friends that he had, at one time or another, played every instrument in the band except the trombone and the E-flat cornet. Harding's biographer, Willis F. Johnson, wrote that Harding was known to occasionally join the Marine Band during its rehearsals at the White House.

When President **Calvin Coolidge** was unable to attend a special Marine Band concert, the President sent flowers and a personal note that read in part, "The Marine Band has earned for itself a unique place in the affections of the American people..."

The Marine Band performed a special wartime concert on the White House South Lawn for President **Franklin D. Roosevelt** and Winston Churchill. Despite a steady rain, Roosevelt and Churchill stayed throughout, singing "The Battle Hymn of the Republic" with the band at the concert's conclusion.

Under President **Lyndon Johnson**, the Marine Band often provided the accompaniment for White House shows and famous entertainers. Reflecting on her years in the White House, the former First Lady wrote, “Lyndon and I were deeply proud to present the Marine Band as a national showcase to visitors from home and abroad.”

President **Richard Nixon** often featured the Marine Band at White House events and brought Marine Band musicians with him for two important visits abroad: In 1970, President Nixon took the Marine Chamber Orchestra to Yugoslavia to provide music during a dinner and reception for Yugoslavian President Tito. And in 1974, a string ensemble from the Marine Band accompanied President Nixon to the Soviet Union to provide music for a dinner hosted by the President.

During the **Gerald Ford** administration, the Marine Band performed for many White House events, including the visit of Queen Elizabeth II of England during the nation’s bicentennial celebration in 1976. President Ford recalled memories of the Marine Band during his 28 years of public service in Washington writing, “The excellence of their performance makes them a welcome and important part of State functions. The Marine Band deserves every recognition and accolade they receive.”

President **Jimmy Carter** had an avid interest in music and often took time from his busy schedule to listen to “The President’s Own.” Marine Band musicians performed for a variety of events, ranging from an outdoor performance of Rodgers & Hammerstein’s *Carousel* to a South Lawn performance by composer Marvin Hamlisch. Following this performance, President Carter told the audience, “The only problem is that Mr. Hamlisch wants to take my Marine Band back with him. He can’t have them!”

President and Mrs. **Ronald Reagan** expressed great interest in the band and were guests of honor at the Marine Band’s 185th birthday concert at the Concert Hall of the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts. President Reagan said, “For 185 years the White House has been filled with our most American of sounds, the music of the United States Marine Band. Congratulations to you. I am proud to call you “The President’s Own.”

During the **George Bush** administration, the Marine Band led returning Marine Corps veterans of Operation Desert Storm as they passed in review for President Bush during the National Victory Parade in Washington. The Marine Band also joined President Bush at the groundbreaking ceremony for the Korean War Memorial. The President later wrote, “Your music inspired me and often made me shed a tear of gratitude for those who serve our nation in uniform.”

President **Bill Clinton**’s association with the Marine Band began while he was governor of Arkansas. An avid saxophonist, he sat in for several numbers with Marine Band musicians at the 1991 Governor’s Dinner at the White House. For the band’s 200<sup>th</sup> birthday on July 11, 1998, the President and First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton hosted a command performance and reception at the White House and were guests of honor with daughter Chelsea at the band’s gala bicentennial concert at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts.

As President **George W. Bush** took the oath of office on January 20, 2001, the Marine Band made its 51<sup>st</sup> consecutive inaugural appearance, proudly continuing its mission of providing music for the President of the United States.