



Quick Reference Performance Guide for Marches

BY JIM DAUGHTERS

I would like to thank my colleagues for their assistance in preparing this quick reference performance guide for the *march*. In our conversations about marches and march interpretation, my questions were very straightforward, such as, “what is it about marches that keeps you from performing them more often,” and, “what do you want to know that would help with interpretation?” Answers ranged from “what is march style, what types of marches are there,” and as I had thought for a long time, “what am I supposed to DO to a march?” Through the notes and interviews of Harry Began, William Revelli, John Whitwell, Harold Bachman, John Philip Sousa, and Henry Fillmore, and with the help of famed march researcher Paul Bierley, it is my hope to provide you with a quick reference guide to the march that will help to answer some of those questions.

TYPES OF MILITARY MARCHING

- *Funeral March* – used to accompany the deceased to a cemetery or provide appropriate music at funerals and memorial services. They are typically at a tempo of $q=72$.
- *Slow March* or *Ordinary March* – the standard by which the tempos of other marches are measured. This was used for exercises, reviews and parade, with a metronome marking of $q=60-80$.
- *Quick March* – twice as fast as a slow march, $q=100-140$, with $q=116-120$ being the norm. This type of march is also used for maneuvering.
- *Double Quick March* – an attack march, still more rapid in tempo than the quick march.¹

MARCH MUSIC TYPES

- *Military Marches* are precise in rhythm and articulation. They can range from $q=112-144$.
- *Circus Marches* reflect the pageantry of the circus. Rhythmic drive is given to percussion parts and precision is essential. Circus marches are often punctuated by unwritten accents and range in tempo depending on the nature of the activity for circus performers, $q=140-170$.
- *Gallops* are simply marches played fast. There are two types: the *dance gallop* which is moderate in tempo and slightly faster than a military march (marches of Offenbach and Suppe), and the *circus*

galop, which can reach tempos of $q=240$.

- *Funeral Marches*, or dirges, are deliberate and slow, $q=60-72$.
- *Patrols* are intended to simulate the sound of a band marching past a listener. The audience hears the band approaching, passing by, then marching off in the distance. The music includes a gradual crescendo then steady decrescendo, all at a steady tempo.²

EUROPEAN MARCHES

- *British* marches are generally slower than American marches, $q=108$. American marches are similar to the British in sound, style and tempo because early American march composers were influenced by British composers. The British regimental marches most closely resemble American marches. Some key differences: British marches are usually of greater length, employ lyrical and lengthy countermelodies, a pompous-style second strain, and simple, song-like trio tunes. The marches are dignified and unhurried. Frederick J. Ricketts wrote under the pseudonym of Kenneth J. Alford and was the most popular British march composer.
- *German* marches generally performed at $q=104-112$. Characteristics include lyrical tunes juxtaposed by rhythmically precise and marcato playing that is contrasted by dynamic changes and accentuation. German marches can include heavy bass parts, soaring euphonium countermelodies, trumpet fanfares, and high woodwind obbligatos. Popular German march composers include Teike, Blankenburg, Fucik, and Strauss.
- *Spanish paso doble (two step)* is the most popular Spanish march, usually performed at $q=108$. Characteristics include subtle lyricism with contrasting lines including crescendos and diminuendos. Guitar-like accompaniments are composed alongside oolong, horizontal tunes. Spanish marches are some of the most lyrical that can be performed. *Amparito Roca* by Jamie Texidor has a tendency to be played too fast, which is wrong musically and stylistically.
- *Italian* marches are similar to Spanish marches in lyrical quality, however most Italian marches are a little faster. The Italians are known for their symphonic marches with sweeping melodies, development of thematic material and dramatic climaxes at $q=116$.

- *French* marches usually sound their best at $q=126$. Fanfare openings and fanfare break strains are common in French marches and trio sections tend to be simple and singable, often accompanied by a repetitive ostinato rhythm in the snare drum.³

ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS OF A MARCH

William Revelli noted four essential elements for an effective rendition of the march: (1) Tone Quality – intonation and control, (2) Technical Accuracy – articulation and unity, (3) Tempo – precision, togetherness, and rhythm, and (4) Interpretation – accents, style, phrasing, dynamics, balance, nuance and expression.⁴

STYLE

The basic elements of a march are melody, harmony and rhythm. The *heart* of the march consists of the tuba, double bass, bass drum, horns and percussion. Bases and horns account for two-thirds of the basic march elements and must be a priority! Balance the *heart* with melody, countermelody and obbligato. Highlight the countermelodies, obbligatos and variations so they match the melody in volume. Allow the march show off the virtuosity of the group and players. Pay great attention to detail and perform with elegance.⁵

Perform marches with an appropriate *marcato*, detached style and pay close attention to accents and dynamics. Separate the notes and release each note before articulating the next – do not allow them to touch. To avoid “tutting” the notes, release the tone with breath and not the tongue. Attacks should be firm and solid, precise and articulate.

The second beat of the bass line in a 2/4 march should be softer. This is called *lilting*. Beat one is stronger than beat two, and beat two being the rebound beat, requires the lilt.⁶ This in turn supports the march in having a dance feel. Sousa's *Washington Post*, for example, was a two-step, which was one of the most popular dances in the world in the late 19th and early 20th-century. A fox trot could even be considered a march.

TEMPO

Choose a tempo that is appropriate for the style of march being performed. When determining a suitable tempo, do not play a march any faster than performers can play technical passages cleanly – slow practice precedes rapid practice. Rhythmic inaccuracy can cause rushing and percussion and bass lines will tend to rush or drag. Rushing generally occurs in ascending melodic lines, shortened long notes, cadence points of strains, technically difficult passages, and the apex of phrases (percussion particularly). Bands tend to rush marches in 6/8 and do not play with a rhythmic ‘swing.’ Maintain a steady tempo through crescendo and decrescendo passages and do not slow the tempo in *Grandioso* (in a

grand manner) sections. This is only a style change and not a tempo change. William Revelli stated, “through rhythm the march achieves life, vitality, motion and character. It keeps the march alive and it is here that many bands fail in performances.”⁷

RHYTHM

The key to playing marches with proper style is to master common rhythmic figures and to sustain notes for their correct duration. Notes of one beat or more should be played at full value – avoid curtail long notes. Maintain precise rhythms to avoid rushing. Rushing is usually fixed by playing notes for full value and having percussion (and winds) subdivide beats in their head.

ACCENTUATION

Many marches have accents in obvious places and the best march interpreters tend to add accents and dynamic changes of their own. Judicious accentuation can dramatically improve the interpretation and effectiveness of a march. There are three ways to accent a note or chord: (1) giving the note full length, (2) playing the note louder, and (3) attacking the note strongly. Accents are not always fortissimo accents.⁸

DYNAMICS

Many bands are at their worst when they play a march; overly-loud cymbals, overly-loud bass drum, and the entire band is blaring. Provide as much dynamic contrast as possible, especially in legato passages. Inner voices must be balanced and the lead trumpet should never be louder than the rest band, even though their part usually says solo trumpet or solo cornet. All percussion parts should relate to the band in dynamics and accentuation. Cymbals should emphasize accents and provide support at climactic points. Do not use cymbals and bass drum at fortissimo levels except in truly loud passages. The cymbal player should match the bass drum in volume. Do not overlay loud volumes and give dynamic accentuation to long notes—they are louder.⁹

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.

COUNTERMELODY AND OBBLIGATO

Countermelody is a melodic line, which is subordinate to, and combines contrapuntally with a principal line. *Obbligato* is defined as an indispensable instrumental line, where the instrumental part is obligatory and special or unusual in effect.¹⁰

HENRY FILLMORE SPECIFIC

Fillmore generally liked his marches performed much faster than a traditional military march. He stated, “my marches sit well at $q=160$ and the smears at $q=120$.” 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.¹¹

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.”¹² There is no one way to play any march, and you should arrive at a convincing interpretation on your own. Dr. Harry Began 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

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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!¹³

IN SHORT, 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.

TYPICAL MARCH COMMENTS AT ASSESSMENTS

- 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.¹⁴

MARCH EDITIONS

Many editions of marches were published in street or flip folder (music lyre) size. These are generally printed in tutti, 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, e.g., the Foster or Fennell editions of Fillmore's *Americans We*, may or may not include tonal variety and revoicing. Other edits in these editions can include the editors' interpretation of accents, dynamics, phrasing, etc.¹⁵

MARCHES SELECTED BY HARRY BEGIAN AND WILLIAM REVELLI

AMERICAN

| | |
|-------------------------------|--------------|
| Americans We (Cincinnati Zoo) | H. Fillmore |
| Barnum and Bailey's Favorite | K. King |
| Battle of Shiloh | C. Barnhouse |
| Battle of the Winds | C. Duble |
| Battle Royal | F. Jewell |
| Boys of the Old Brigade | C. Smit |
| Bravura | C. Duble |
| Brighton Beach Concert 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. Duble |
| Colossus of Columbia | R. Alexander |
| The Director General | F. Jewell |
| El Capitan | J.P. Sousa |
| Emblem of Freedom | K. King |

E. Pluribus Unum
The Free Lance
From Topic to Topic
Gentry's Triumphal
Golden Friendships
Golden Jubilee
The Goldman Band
Hands Across the Sea
His Honor
Honey Boys on Parade
Independencia
In Storm and Sunshine
Joyce's 71 N.Y. Regiment
The Klaxon
Military Escort
National Emblem
Olympia Hippodrome
On the Mall
The Outlook
The Purple Carnival
Quality Plus
Ringling Bros. Grand Entry
Robinson Grand Entrée
Rolling Thunder
Revelation
The Royal Decree
Sarasota
The Southerner
Tenth Regiment
Washington Grays

SPANISH

Corazon Gitano
El Abanico
El Relicario
Espana Cani
Flores de Espana
Gallito
Gerona
The Golden Ear
La Calesera
La Sorella
Lola Flores
Pepita Greus
Sol y Sombra

ENGLISH

Army and Marine
Army of the Nile
B.B. and C.F.
The Contemptible
Dunedin
The Elephant
The Middy

F. Jewell
J.P. Sousa
Alexander
F. Jewell
H. Fillmore
J.P. Sousa
K. King
J.P. Sousa
H. Fillmore
E. Cupero
R.B. Hall
J.C. Heed
T. Boyer
H. Fillmore
H. Bennett
E. Begley
R. Alexander
E.F. Goldman
F. Jewell
H. Alford
F. Jewell
A. Sweet
K. King
H. Fillmore
P. Chambers
W. English
K. King
R. Alexander
R.B. Hall
C.S. Grafulla

M. Domingo
A. Javaloyes
J. Padilla
P. Marquina
P. Chovi
S. Lope
S. Lope
M. San Miguel
F. Alonso
C. Borel-Clerc
T. Tucci
P. Chovi
G. Gates

W. Zehle
K. Alford
J. Ord Hume
L. Stanley
K. Alford
J. Ord Hume
K. Alford

Pentland Hills
Punchinello
Sons of the Brave
Trafalgar
The Vanished Army

GERMAN AND AUSTRIAN

Action Front
Alte Kameraden
The Conqueror
Duetschmeister
Entry of the Gladiators
Florentiner
In Treue Fest
Nibelungen
Radetzky
Die Regimentskinder
Thrill of Victory
Under the Double Eagle
Wien Bleibt Wien

J. Howe
W. Rimmer
T. Bidgood
W. Zehle
K. Alford

H. Blankenburg
C. Teike
C. Teike
D. Ertl
J. Fucik
J. Fucik
C. Teike
G. Sonntag
J. Strauss
J. Fucik
F. Fuhrer
J. Wagner
J. Schrammel

OTHER NON-AMERICAN MARCHES

Athletic Festival
March of the Belgian Paratroopers
Corrida
March Electric
Inglesina
Le Regiment de Sambre et Muse
Laurentian
Le Grogard
March Lorraine
Pere de la Victoire
Sambre et Meuse
Symphonic March
Symphonic March
Valdres

S. Prokofiev
P. Leemans
D. Savino
G. Creatore
D. Della Cese
R. Planquette
L. Ganne
G. Pares
L. Ganne
L. Ganne
R. Planquette
E. Rivela
G. Bonelli
J. Hanseen

CONCERT MARCHES

Crusade for Freedom
The Dam Busters
The Golden Bear
Hail Miami
Hail to the Fleet
Marche Hongroise
Montmartre
The Sinfonians
Stars and Bars
March Symphonic Metamorphosis
Vilabella
World is Waiting for the Sunrise
American Salute
Children's March
Golden Cockerel

J. Richards
E. Coates
J. Richards
J. Richards
R. Maltby
H. Berlioz
H. Wood
C. Williams
R. Jager
P. Hindemith
M. Williams
H. Alford
M. Gould
P. Grainger
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 (Fillmore) |
| 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 and the University of Michigan Bands
Harry Began and the University of Illinois Bands
Service Band recordings

RESOURCES

Bachman, Harold. "Henry Fillmore: A Tribute to a Bandman." *Music Journal* 26, no. 10 (1968): 31-33, 72-74.

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Louisiana: Program Notes Press, 1993.

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Jim Daughters, daughtersjim@gmail.com, was most recently Visiting Professor and Director of Instrumental Activities at Xavier University (OH). He is the music director of the Fillmore Wind Band, the Cincinnati Junior Youth Wind Ensemble at CCM, and former band director at Conner Middle School in Hebron, KY. Jim is a candidate for the Doctor of Musical Arts at the University Degree at the University of Kentucky.

ENDNOTES

- 1 Paul E. Bierley and William H. Rehrig, *The Heritage Encyclopedia of Band Music: Composers and Their Music* (Westerville, Ohio: Integrity Press, 1991).
- 2 Bierley and Rehrig, *Heritage Encyclopedia*.
- 3 Harry Began, "Tempo, Style and Interpretation in Playing Marches" (lecture presented at the Midwest International Band and Orchestra Clinic, Chicago, Illinois, December 16, 1999).
- 4 The Interpretation of the March, Box 5, William D. Revelli Papers, 1907-1994, The Michigan Historical Collections Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan.
- 5 John Whitwell, "Using the March to Develop Every Aspect of Musicianship" (lecture presented at the Midwest International Band and Orchestra Clinic, Chicago, Illinois, December 20, 2013).
- 6 Whitwell, "Using the March."
- 7 Interpretation of the March, Revelli Papers.
- 8 March Interpretation, Box 17, Folder 8, Harry Began Papers 1926-97, The Sousa Archives and Center for American Music, The University of Illinois.
- 9 Interpretation of the March, Revelli Papers.
- 10 March Interpretation, Began Papers.
- 11 Henry Fillmore, interview by Jack H. Mahan, July 18, 1953, transcript.
- 12 Henry Fillmore, interview by Jack H. Mahan.
- 13 Began, "Tempo, Style and Interpretation."
- 14 March Interpretation by Harold Bachman, Box 17, Folder 8, Harry Began Papers 1926-97, The Sousa Archives and Center for American Music, The University of Illinois.
- 15 March Interpretation by Harold Bachman, Began Papers.