

**Basic performance practices of marches
From the “Classic Concert Band” era
and their application today**

- Generally, notes are well articulated and played on the short side (unless otherwise indicated) (songs vs. dances.)
- Dynamics are carefully observed; almost to the point of exaggeration
- Dynamics belong to the pickup note, even if it’s not marked that way.
- Dynamics are not always marked in the printed music
- Tempos are constant throughout the work
- Style: aggressive, firm, solid, bold
- Articulations were “understood” (often not on the printed page.)
- Bass Drum and Cymbals play a critical role (drum notation)
- Accents are often not on the printed page (in original editions)
- “De-orchestration” was a common practice
- Deal with condensed scores, e-flat horns, and “little” music

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John Philip Sousa: “A march should make a man with a wooden leg step out.”

Karl King: “You can’t listen to a really fine band play ‘The Stars and Stripes Forever’ and keep your chin down.”

Columnist Hugh Sidey: “The U. S. Marine Band can still take to the street with the marches of its old leader John Philip Sousa and say more about liberty than a dozen orators.”

“A march will stay in the heart and soul of the listener.” (*anonymous*)

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Bass Drum and Cymbal accents

Play the melodic line/melodic emphasis

- Gallant Zouaves – 2nd strain, last trio
- Barnum and Bailey's Favorite – 1st strain

Play the harmonic line/rhythmic line

- Gallant Zouaves – last strain – both harmonic and rhythmic lines

Soft/weak beat

- Purple Pageant – trio (1st and last)

Different ways different times

- Valley Forge – 2nd strain
- Purple Pageant – last strain

Is it legal?

Who decides where these accents go?

Other points to remember

Silence is music too – (“Drake Relays,” 1st strain endings.)

It is harder to play soft, musically than it is to play loud, musically.

It’s awfully hard to play loud, musically – especially with younger players.

Good bands can play softly by cutting down the number of players. Great bands can play softly with all players playing.

Loud sections will sound louder when your soft sections are played more softly.

BD&C accents are a matter of degree. They should always compliment the music, not take away from it.

Articulation is important on BD&C

Audiences will never get tired of hearing marches.

Good bands have good players on 1st parts. Great bands have good players on ALL parts. Three trombone parts are important.

Players should never rest on introductions, endings, and stingers.

Don’t quit one note too soon.

If your students don’t like playing marches, you aren’t approaching them properly.

Play it like ‘ya mean it!