



PROGRAM NOTES



JUNE 19, 2026

STAR-SPANGLED BANNER

Renowned conductor Walter Damrosch played a pivotal role in popularizing "The Star-Spangled Banner". In 1917, he arranged a standardized, sing-able harmonization of the anthem in the key of A-flat, subsequently orchestrated by John Philip Sousa. This version became the standard for American schools, bands, and orchestras.

The 1917 Standardization

Prior to 1917, "The Star-Spangled Banner" was often performed in various keys, making it difficult for everyday audiences to sing. Recognizing its potential to unify the nation during World War I, conductor Walter Damrosch harmonized a rich, stirring, and highly sing-able version. Shortly after, he collaborated with legendary march composer John Philip Sousa, who created an expert orchestration for wind ensembles. Published by G. Schirmer, the Sousa-Damrosch Star-Spangled Banner Sheet Music remains one of the most widely used and recognizable settings in American music history.

The Carnegie Hall Premiere and Advocacy

Damrosch didn't just arrange the music; he actively promoted its usage in public venues. In February 1917, during a Symphony Concert for Young People at Carnegie Hall, Damrosch surprisingly opened his program with the anthem, catching the audience off guard but prompting a rousing, patriotic reception. He famously argued that "what the flag is to the eye the national anthem is to the ear". His advocacy set a precedent for playing the song at public gatherings, years before it was officially adopted as the U.S. national anthem in 1931.

LIBERTY BELL MARCH

John Philip Sousa

For \$500 more, this march probably would have been named "The Devil's Deputy." Sousa was composing music for an operetta of that name at the request of the celebrated comedian Francis Wilson. Sousa asked \$1,500 for the work, but Wilson offered \$1,000. When they could not come to an agreement, Sousa withdrew with his partially completed manuscript, which included this lively march.

CHESTER

William Billings

Arr. by Gerald Tolmage

"**Chester**" is a patriotic anthem composed by William Billings and sung during the American Revolutionary War. Billings wrote the first version of the song for his 1770 songbook *The New England Psalm Singer*, and made improvements for the version in his *The Singing Master's Assistant* (1778). It is the latter version that is best known today.

The name of the tune reflects a common practice of Billings' day, in which tunes were labeled with (often arbitrarily chosen) place names. Billings' tune evidently has little more to do with any particular town named Chester than his famous hymn "Africa" has to do with Africa. The idea behind this practice was that by labeling the tunes independently, one could sing them to different words without creating confusion

AMERICAN RIVERSONGS

Pierre La Plante

American Riversongs is a tribute to the time when rivers and waterways were essential to America's development.

The piece weaves together four folk songs: "Down The River," "Shenandoah," "The Glendy Burk," and a Creole bamboula tune.

The music is meant to evoke the sounds of rushing water, a calliope, and a Mississippi steamboat.

The piece was commissioned in 1988 by the Oberlin High School Band in Ohio.

Composer Pierre La Plante also wrote Prairie Songs, based on Midwestern folk tunes.

THE BLUE AND THE GRAY CIVIL WAR MEDLEY

Clare Grundman

Notes by Richard Carlson

Docent/Volunteer Historian

Doylestown Civil War Library and Museum

The Civil War was fought from 1861 to 1865 after 11 southern states seceded from the union following the election of anti-slavery candidate Abraham Lincoln.

The Blue and the Gray Civil War Medley was arranged by Clare Grundman in 1961.

Grundman is best known for his many compositions and arrangements for symphonic band. He also served as a military musician in the United States Coast Guard from 1942 to 1945.

You may recognize the following tunes:

Kingdom Coming, an abolitionist song by Henry Clay Work, was written in 1862. It portrays slaves celebrating their impending freedom. Fun fact, Work's biggest hit was "Grandfather's Clock". Yes, that same Grandfather's Clock tune you hear on kid's toys.

Next is Marching through Georgia, also by Henry Clay Work, celebrating Sherman's March from Atlanta to Savannah in 1864. It is said that Sherman got so tired of hearing it played at every event he went to that he threatened to boycott events that played it.

Tenting Tonight was composed by Walter Kitterdige in 1863. It was a favorite of soldiers, maybe because of its sense of longing to be back home. Lyrics such as:

Many are the hearts that are weary tonight,
Wishing for the war to cease;

The Yellow Rose of Texas was naturally a favorite of southern troops. It is a traditional American song dating back to at least the 1850s. An altered version by Mitch Miller reached No. 1 in the United States in 1955.

The Bonnie Blue Flag was a marching song based on an old Irish tune with 1861 lyrics by Harry McCarthy. It was a pro-Southern song referring to an early version of the confederate flag.

Aura Lee, written by WW Fosdick and George Poulton, reflects a popular topic among soldiers: the fair maiden they had to leave behind. You may recognize the melody, which was used in Elvis Presley's 1956 hit song "Love Me Tender"

Of course everyone will recognize the song Dixie, written in the 1850's and attributed to Daniel Emmet. While primarily associated with the south, it was adapted by both sides. In fact, the song was a favorite of President Abraham Lincoln who said, as the war neared its end, "I have always thought that 'Dixie' was one of the best tunes I ever heard... I insist that we had fairly captured it."

The Battle Cry of Freedom by George Frederick Root was an 1862 song advocating the causes of Unionism and abolitionism.

Finally we hear the great Battle Hymn of the Republic with lyrics written by abolitionist writer Julia Ward Howe in 1861. That's the song that begins with: "Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord." Howe adapted her new lyrics to the song "John Brown's Body".

Around 700,000 Americans, North and South, died in the civil war. It was, by far, our bloodiest conflict. While it served as the catalyst to end slavery, it left the nation with many issues to work through.

It is fitting that today is June 19th. Given the slow pace of communication at the time, the news of slavery's demise did not reach all the slaves in the south until June 19, 1865, the day when Major General Gordon Granger finally got to Galveston, Texas and ordered the enforcement of the Emancipation Proclamation. And that is where Juneteenth comes from.

We hope you enjoy these selections and maybe leave with a little extra hop as you march out

EXCERPTS from APPALACHIAN SPRING

Aaron Copland

Arr. by Robert Longfield

Appalachian Spring is a masterpiece of American music and dance created as a collaboration between composer Aaron Copland and choreographer Martha Graham.

Set on the 19th-century Pennsylvania frontier, it tells the story of a newlywed couple's hopes and apprehensions as they build a new life together.

The Narrative

The ballet centers on a young pioneer husband and his bride in the early 1800s as they celebrate the building of their new farmhouse. Their optimism, represented by sweeping, graceful movements, is balanced by the arrival of an austere preacher and his followers, along with a steadfast pioneer woman. Ultimately, the young couple stands quiet and strong in their new home, embodying the resilience of the American pioneer spirit.

THE BLACK HORSE TROOP (1924)

John Philip Sousa

Sousa's love for horses is reflected in this march dedicated to the mounted troops of a Cleveland National Guard unit. Their exclusive use of black horses was the inspiration for the title. Troop A, once known as the First City Troop of Cleveland, was originally an independent militia group and has had a long, distinguished history since its formation in 1877. Sousa's most noteworthy association with the troop came in 1898. The Sousa Band, having arrived in Cleveland just as the troop was preparing to leave for the Spanish-American War, marched in a parade escorting them from the Armory to the train depot. His first association was much earlier, however. As leader of the U.S. Marine Band in 1881, he marched with the organization in the funeral cortege of President James A. Garfield.

At a dinner held in Sousa's honor in November, 1924, the march was requested by Captain Walker Nye of Troop A. The request was fulfilled promptly, and the march was presented in Cleveland on October 17, 1925, at a Sousa Band concert which also marked the forty-eighth anniversary of Troop A. For the occasion, the mounted troopers were dressed in the

blue uniforms of 1877, complete with black fur busbies. Sousa presented a manuscript of the march to Captain Nye. Troop A reciprocated by presenting Sousa with a beautiful bronze statuette entitled "The Last Drop," which depicted a trooper on horseback. Many of the former Sousa Band members expressed their fondness for this composition and commented on the descriptive character it assumed when performed by Sousa himself. Part of the effect was due to the 6/8 rhythm, which suggests the canter of horses. Also contributing to the effect was Sousa's use of simulated hoofbeats.

Paul E. Bierley, The Works of John Philip Sousa (Westerville, Ohio: Integrity Press, 1984), 42. Used by permission.

INTERMISSION

OVERTURE TO CANDIDE

Leonard Bernstein

Arr. by Walter Beeler

Candide (1956) is operetta in the vein of Offenbach and Gilbert and Sullivan. Its music has all the wit, élan, and sophistication that is associated with that genre. This is

immediately apparent in the Overture (who ever wrote a special overture—in sonata form, no less—for a musical comedy?). It begins with a fanfare built on the interval of a minor seventh, followed by a major second—typically Bernstein, which serves as a motto and as a basis for development, throughout the entire operetta. This seventh sets up an expectation of B-flat major; but, instead, there is a stumbling, like a pratfall, into E-flat. This, in the body of the show, becomes "battle scene" music. Next, a lyrical contrast from the duet "Oh Happy We" is stated. This entire section is then repeated with lighter orchestration and is succeeded by a brilliant codetta derived from the end of the aria "glitter and Be Gay." The Overture concludes with a shower of musical sparks utilizing fragments of everything already heard.

OKLAHOMA

Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein II

Arr for Band by R. Mark Rogers from orchestral score

by Robert Russell Bennett

Oklahoma! is the first musical written by the duo of Rodgers and Hammerstein. The musical is based on Lynn Riggs's 1931 play, *Green Grow the Lilacs*. Set in farm country outside the town of Claremore, Indian Territory, in 1906, it tells the story of farm girl Laurey Williams and her courtship by two rival suitors, cowboy Curly McLain and the sinister and frightening farmhand Jud Fry. A secondary romance concerns cowboy Will Parker and his flirtatious fiancée, Ado Annie.

This musical, building on the innovations of the earlier *Show Boat*, epitomized the development of the "book musical", a musical play in which the songs and dances are fully integrated into a well-made story, with serious dramatic goals, that evokes genuine emotions other than amusement. In addition, *Oklahoma!* features musical themes, or motifs, that recur throughout the work to connect the music and story. A fifteen-minute "dream ballet" reflects Laurey's struggle with her feelings about two men, Curly and Jud.

"Not only is *Oklahoma!* the most important of the Rodgers and Hammerstein musicals, it is also the single most influential work in the American musical theatre. ... It is the first fully integrated musical play and its blending of song, character, plot and even dance would serve as the model for Broadway shows for decades." (Thomas Hischak, playwright, theatre writer)

STAR WARS SAGA

John Williams

Arr. Stephen Bulla

Spanning four decades, the dramatic and evocative themes by John Williams for the Star Wars movies have become a treasured part of our musical heritage. This stunning medley for the concert stage features the familiar main theme along with music associated with Darth Vader, Han Solo, Princess Leia, and recent themes for Rey, Kylo Ren, as well as the dramatic *March of the Resistance*. A guaranteed highlight for any program.

CANTINA BAND

John Williams

Arr Johnnie Vinson

Step into the lively atmosphere of an intergalactic cantina. This piece captures the whimsical and jazzy essence of a space-age speakeasy. The *Star Wars Cantina Band* theme is one of the most well-known in the *Star Wars* movies. It is arranged here with a big band swing feel, with the drum set in a shuffled tom-tom groove, in the same vein as ***Sing, Sing, Sing*** to give it more of a bounce. By the end of the piece, everyone will be swinging hard and driving it to the tag ending.

SING, SING, SING

Louis Prima

Arr. Jerome Thomas

Our arrangement is for Concert Band but here's a bit of history on the song's development:

Louis Prima's wife Gia claimed the song's title originated at a racetrack with Bing Crosby. When Crosby started singing, Prima jokingly told him, "Sing, Bing, Sing!" which inspired the song.

Benny Goodman's 1938 Carnegie Hall performance of "Sing, Sing, Sing" was a pivotal moment for jazz, cementing his reputation as "The King of Swing."

Goodman felt pressured to play the song at every show, even though he wanted recognition for his more complex musical work.

"Sing, Sing, Sing" evolved organically during live performances. Fletcher Henderson, Goodman's arranger, described how different musicians contributed to its structure.

The song was featured in the 1937 film *Hollywood Hotel* and the 1955 biopic *The Benny Goodman Story*.

SEVENTY SIX TROMBONES

Meredith Willson

Arr. Leroy Anderson

Adapted by Jay Bocook

This fabulous arrangement has been a trademark of the Boston Pops Orchestra for years! Legendary arranger Leroy Anderson cleverly mixes Sousa march strains in and around the rousing march from "The Music Man" with a skill that just can't be duplicated!

THE STARS AND STRIPES FOREVER

John Philip Sousa

It was first performed at the Philadelphia Academy of Music on May 14, 1897, and was immediately greeted with enthusiasm. Following an Act of Congress in 1987, it was officially adopted as the national march of the United States of America.

The march begins with a four-bar introduction, following with the first strain, which is repeated; then the second strain, which is also repeated; and sometimes both are

repeated again if (the band is) marching in parade (or the breakstrain may be interjected and repeated). Now follows the dominant woodwinds in the first run of the Trio strain which repeats, and later repeats again as the piccolos obligato. (Here, in some performances, Sousa's patriotic lyrics may be sung in a choral overlay.) Then follows the breakstrain, the final strain, and the breakstrain repeated. The final repeats of the Trio (the Grandioso) render the famous obligato of the piccolo players—joined to a subdued but prominent countermelody by the brass section, then bringing everything to a close with once-more repeats of the grand finale.

Sousa explained to the press that the three themes of the final trio were intended to represent the three regions of the United States. The broad melody, or main theme, portrays the North. The South is represented by the famous piccolo obligato, and the West by the bold countermelody of the trombones. The three come together in the climax, representing the Union itself.