

transcript.

Hey there and welcome to episode 67 of Busy Kids Love Music, a podcast for music loving families. I'm Carly Seifert, the creator of Busy Kids Do Piano, and I'm so happy you're joining me today.

Today we're going to be kicking off another 3-part composer series. If you're a regular listener to the Busy Kids Love Music podcast, then you know we like to do these series from time-to-time to allow us to spend a lot of time digging into the life of a composer and some of his or her more notable works over the course of 3 episodes. So today, we're going to start a new series today about American composer John Philip Sousa, and learn a little bit about his life and musical style in this first episode of the series.

John Philip Sousa was born in the capital of the United States – Washington, D.C. He was the 3rd of ten children born to parents who were immigrants from Portugal and Germany.

Sousa's father was a trombonist in the United States's Marine Band. Sousa studied piano and violin during his childhood at a musical conservatory, and at the age of 13 was very nearly persuaded to join a circus band. His father wasn't having it though, and enlisted Sousa in the United States Marine Corps as an apprentice musician in the Marine Band. In addition to the Marine Band, he also studied music theory and composition under the instruction of a private teacher who was a noted orchestra leader in D.C.

Sousa completed his internship with the Marine Band in 1875, and began performing as a violinist and a conductor of a theatrical pit orchestra. He met his wife, who was a singer, while playing and composing for the theater orchestra. They wed in 1879. While on tour as conductor for the theatrical production of *Our Flirtation*, he received a telegram offering him the leadership of the Marine Band in Washington D.C. He accepted, and on October 1, 1880, became the band's 17th leader.

transcript.

Because of Sousa's strict rehearsals and high standards, he shaped his musicians into the country's best military band. Word about the excellent band spread widely, which attracted more music-lovers from far and wide into its audience. During his 12 years as the leader, he served under 5 presidents and his band played at the inaugural balls of President James Garfield and President Benjamin Harrison. It was during this time that he also began to write some of his most famous marches. In 1888 he wrote "Semper Fidelis" which was dedicated to "the officers and men of the Marine Corps" and is traditionally considered the official march of the Marine Corps.

The following year, he wrote a march to promote an essay that was sponsored by the Washington Post newspaper, called "Washington Post". This piece became the most popular tune in America and Europe during that time, and a British band journalist said that since Johann Strauss, Jr., was called the "Waltz King", American bandmaster John Phillip Sousa should be called the "March King", a title which he has retained ever since.

Because the Marine Band was so popular, Sousa was given permission by the president to take them for their first tour – a tradition which has continued annually since then, except in times of war. After his second tour with the Marine Band, Sousa was approached by his manager to organize a separate, civilian concert band. In the summer of 1892, Sousa resigned as the Director of the Marine Band. He gave a farewell concert on the White House lawn, where he was presented with a conductor's baton engraved by the members of the Marine Band. In 1953, the baton would be returned to the Marine Band by Sousa's daughters and is now traditionally passed to the new Director of the Marine Band during the change of command ceremonies.

Sousa's civilian concert band toured for the next 39 years, and played for sold-out concerts all over the country as Sousa himself continued to soar in popularity. He died suddenly in 1952, after leading a band rehearsal in Pennsylvania. His body was brought back to Washington DC to lie in state in the Band Hall of the Marine Barracks. The

transcript.

memory, and he was also enshrined in a special ceremony in 1976 at the Hall of Fame for Great Americans in the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts. He leaves an important legacy in American music, and in the next two episodes we will learn a little bit more about some of his most famous works.

You can check out a curated playlist of John Philip Sousa that I've put together for you on YouTube, and the link to that can be found at busykidsdopiano.com/podcast/67. You'll also find this episode's show notes as well as a transcript for this episode at that link.

Thanks so much for joining me today to learn about the life of composer and bandmaster John Philip Sousa. I'm excited to continue exploring his music with you in our next episode of Busy Kids Love Music. Bye for now!