

# West Point Band

Since 1817

The Military March:  
From the Parade Ground to the Concert Hall





# West Point Band History

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*West Point Band Mission: To provide world-class music to educate, train, and inspire the Corps of Cadets and to serve as ambassadors of the United States Military Academy to the local, national, and international communities.*

The West Point Band, the U.S. Army's oldest active band and the oldest unit at the United States Military Academy, traces its roots to the Revolutionary War. At that time, fifers and drummers were stationed with companies of minutemen on Constitution Island, across the river from West Point. In 1778, General Samuel Holden Parsons' 1st Connecticut Brigade crossed the Hudson River and established West Point as a permanent military post. After the American Revolution, Congress disbanded most of the Continental Army, but "the 55 men at West Point," members of the 2nd Continental Artillery, remained. Among their ranks stood at least one drummer and one fifer, who alone maintained the tradition of military music at West Point.

With the establishment of the United States Military Academy in 1802 came an increased demand for military music. As the academy grew, it needed fifers, drummers and buglers to drill the new cadets and provide an audible order to their duty day. In 1817 the ensemble was named the "West Point Band," and by this time was performing on a full range of instruments, which included two bassoons, two Royal Kent bugles, a tenor bugle, ten clarinets, three French horns, a serpent (an early bass horn), cymbals, a bass drum, eight flutes, and two trumpets.

Today's band consists of four components: the Concert Band, the Jazz Knights, the Hellcats and Support Staff. They combine to form the Marching Band. The organization fulfills all of the official musical requirements of the Academy, including military and patriotic ceremonies, public concerts, sporting events and radio and television broadcasts, as well as social activities for the Corps of Cadets and the West Point community.

As the senior premier musical representative of the United States Army, the band has appeared at many historical events. It performed at the

dedication of the Erie Canal; at the Chicago and New York World's Fairs; and for the funerals of Ulysses S. Grant and Franklin D. Roosevelt as well as the inaugurations of numerous presidents. Additionally, the West Point Band has collaborated with some of the finest musical ensembles in the country, including the New York Philharmonic and the Boston Pops. Members of the West Point Band have also been showcased in Carnegie Hall and featured on *The Today Show*, *60 Minutes*, *Dateline NBC* as well as on documentaries occurring on The History and Discovery Channels.

Comprised of graduates from America's finest music schools, the musicians of the West Point Band continue to present provocative performances while providing the Corps of Cadets with a piece of living history.



# Introduction

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The military march is a common component of both public school and university music programs, and a frequent addition to “pops” and community concerts. The material presented in this booklet is not intended to outline the definitive approach to performing a military march; rather, the goal of this presentation is to expand the performance possibilities for performers and educators, thereby enhancing the satisfaction of the concert patrons.

In an effort to increase the usefulness of the

information presented in this booklet, we have included music for three marches. Recordings of these marches without battery percussion are available on the West Point Band’s website ([www.westpointband.com](http://www.westpointband.com) under **resources/education**). Please visit the band’s website and download these files. This will allow you or your students to “play along” with the band and experiment with the topics and ideas discussed within these pages.

## Instrument Selection

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- A 6.5” concert snare drum is used for concert settings.
- An additional field drum is useful for doubling the concert snare drum in grandioso strains, increasing the depth of sound. In marches with bugle strains, the field drum replicates the sound of rope drums.
- A glockenspiel can be used to highlight the melody and provide contrast in the trio section of a march.
- Generally, a pair of 17-inch cymbals is used when playing marches so as not to overpower the ensemble. The weight of the cymbals should also be taken into account, as the performer is often required to play without pause throughout the entire piece.
- Most ensembles only own one large bass drum (at West Point we use an 18” x 36” bass drum). It is up to the player to manipulate the bass drum’s sound to fit his particular ensemble’s volume requirements and performance space. For general march performance, we prefer a felt-covered mallet that can easily articulate a well-defined pulse.
- Certain editions of marches include timpani parts. These parts have been added to the original score and often do little to enhance the character of the music. For this reason, our section typically does not use the timpani in a march.



# Military March Form

**Introduction** A brief melody (4-8 measures) that acts to gain attention from the audience.

**1st Strain** 16-32 measure melody (first theme).

**2nd Strain** 16-32 measure melody (second theme or counter-melody). Usually more ornate and complex.

**Trio** Main melody, usually repeated. Typically softer and more legato than first two strains.

**Break-up Strain** Loud exciting section that “breaks-up” the gentle trio through a series of call and response sections between woodwinds and brass.

**Grandioso Strain** Finale of the march. Re-statement of the Trio theme using 1st and 2nd strain melodies as accompaniment.

This is the most commonly found structure for a march. However, variations exist that add or subtract sections from this form.

**The Stars and Stripes Forever**  
March

JOHN PHILIP SOUSA

Small Drum

Introduction

1st Strain

2nd Strain

Trio

Break-up Strain

Grandioso Strain

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# Marching Band Influence on Concert Band Performance

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The music played by a marching band was designed to move large numbers of troops in an orderly fashion. This requires us to make certain musical decisions that we would not make when performing this music in a concert setting. When playing a march on the move, we use rope snare and bass drums, play in a rudimental style, and have the bass drum play a consistent beat pattern to help everyone stay in step. The snare drummers play all strains of the march, performing the parts as written. Our interaction with the music in a marching band setting gives us perspective for musical decisions we make in concert venues.

At West Point, the standard Marching Band is supplemented by the field music detachment, The Hellcats, comprised of regimental bugles and drums. This detachment performs bugle tunes and drum cadences throughout the ceremony. The Hellcats also play a major role in marches that include regimental bugle strains, such as *Bugles and Drums* by Edwin Franko Goldman. During these strains, the bugles and drums play with woodwind and low brass accompaniment. In concert, the West Point Band percussion section performs the regimental parts on a field drum and with open rolls to match the sound of field music. Other marches that include bugle strains are:

## Marches with Bugle Strains

*America Exultant* by Henry Fillmore

*The Gallant Seventh* by John Philip Sousa

*The Official West Point March* by Philip Egner

*On Parade* by Edwin Franko Goldman

*Riders for the Flag* by John Philip Sousa

*Sabre and Spurs* by John Philip Sousa

*Semper Fidelis* by John Philip Sousa

*The Thunderer* by John Philip Sousa

*Sambre Et Meuse: French National Défilé* by

Jean Robert Planquette (arr. Rauski)



# Musical Considerations for the Following Marches

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Below is a list of recommendations for the marches included in this packet. Many of these suggestions can be applied to other marches.

## *BUGLES AND DRUMS*

- This is an example of a march with a regimental, or bugle strain.
- A field drum is used starting at the word “solo” in the written part and continues through the bugle strain to replicate the sound of marching rope drums.
- A cymbal solo announces the band’s entrance for the second sounding of the bugle strain.
- Cymbals do not play during bugle strains, unless accompanied by the band.

## *HAIL TO THE SPIRIT OF LIBERTY*

- The battery does not play during the trio (section immediately following the 2nd strain) or the first time through the grandioso strain to create dynamic contrast.
- For the trio and grandioso strains, the bells play the melody, borrowed from the oboe part.
- A field drum may double the snare drum during the final statement of the grandioso strain for added depth and presence.

## This Presentation on the Web

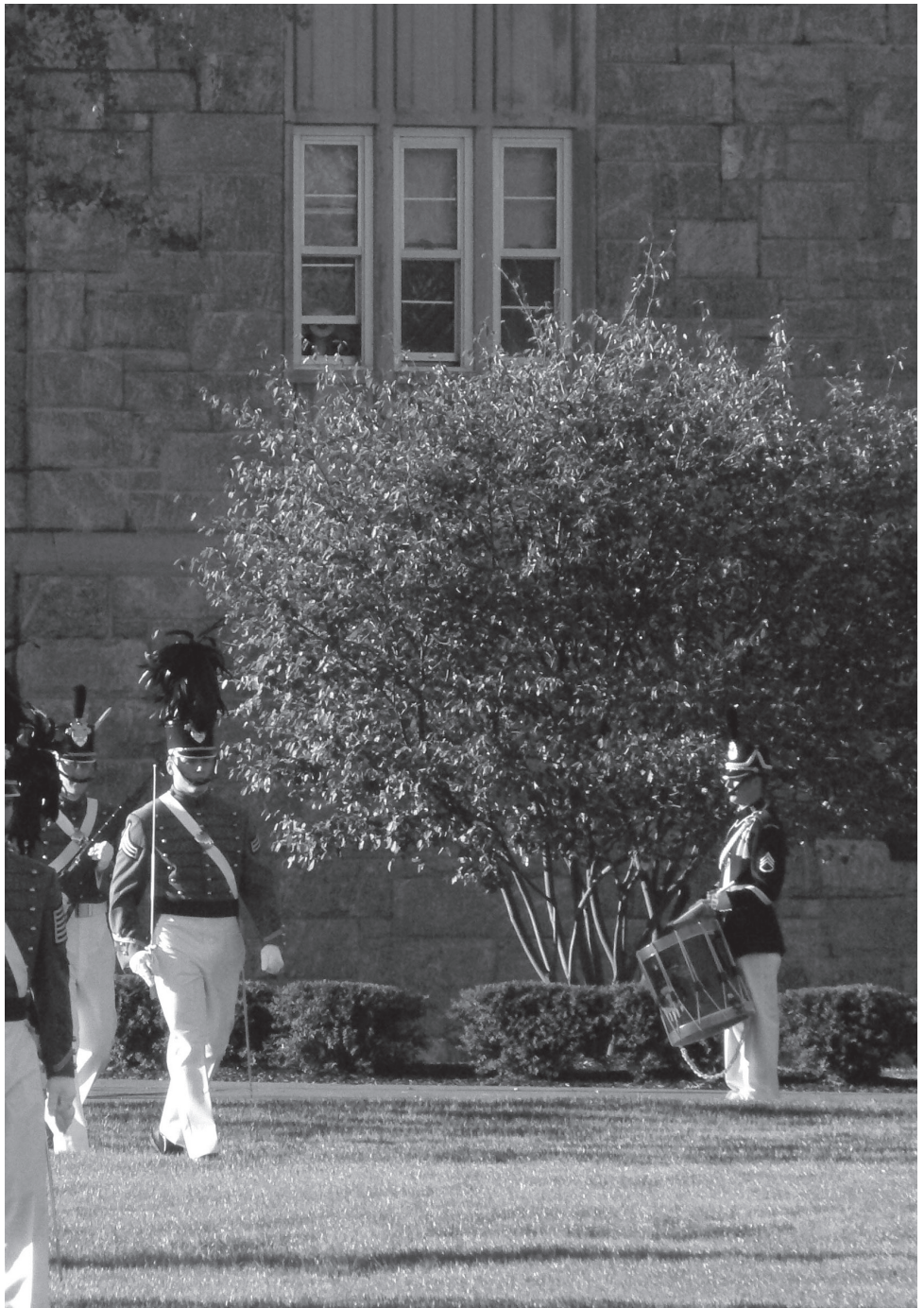
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This presentation is offered as a downloadable PDF with recordings. These recordings feature the West Point Concert Band without battery percussion. We invite you to perform the music of the clinic in your percussion studios to keep America’s march tradition alive.

**[www.westpointband.com](http://www.westpointband.com) under resources/education**

## *THE BLACK HORSE TROOP*

- Bass drum and cymbal are used to accentuate the melody and brass lines. Most of the time, these accents are dictated by the conductor.
- Temple blocks are used in the trio (5th system) and the grandioso strain to simulate a galloping horse.







# Hail to the Spirit of Liberty

Glockenspiel

Sousa

Musical notation for the first staff of the Glockenspiel part. It features a treble clef, a key signature of two flats (B-flat and E-flat), and a common time signature. The staff contains a first ending bracketed with '1.' and a second ending bracketed with '2.'. Measure numbers '4' and '15' are indicated above the staff.

Trio

Musical notation for the second staff of the Glockenspiel part, continuing the melody from the first staff.

Musical notation for the third staff of the Glockenspiel part, continuing the melody.

Musical notation for the fourth staff of the Glockenspiel part, featuring a triplet of eighth notes marked with a '3'.

Optional

Musical notation for the fifth staff of the Glockenspiel part, featuring a triplet of eighth notes marked with a '3' and a dashed line indicating an optional section.

Musical notation for the sixth staff of the Glockenspiel part, continuing the melody.

Musical notation for the seventh staff of the Glockenspiel part, continuing the melody.

Musical notation for the eighth staff of the Glockenspiel part, including first and second endings bracketed with '1.' and '2.' respectively.

# Hail to the Spirit of Liberty.

Drums.

March.

SOUSA.

The image displays a musical score for a drum set and sousa. The score is written on ten staves. The top staff is for the sousa, with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a common time signature. The remaining nine staves are for the drums, with various dynamics and articulations. The score includes a variety of rhythmic patterns, including eighth and sixteenth notes, rests, and accents. The dynamics range from *pp* (pianissimo) to *ff* (fortissimo). The score is marked with 'SOUSA.' at the top left and 'Dr.' and 'Cym.' (Cymbal) throughout. The piece concludes with a double bar line and a *ff* dynamic marking.

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# THE BLACK HORSE TROOP

JOHN PHILIP SOUSA

MARCH

Drums

ff

f

mf

ff

mf

p

ff

ff

ff

ff

cresc.

Dr.

Cym.

1

2

1

2

1

2

1

2

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# Presenters

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## **Sgt. 1st Class Craig Bitterman**

Sgt. 1st Class Craig Bitterman is from Buffalo, New York. He earned his Bachelor of Music in performance from SUNY Buffalo and relocated to Connecticut to pursue a Master of Music in performance from the Hartt School of Music. After completing graduate studies, Craig freelanced in the New England area and taught percussion at Holyoke Community College, Wesleyan University and Hartford Conservatory. Performance highlights include appearances with Nebojsa Zivkovic and the Jovan Perkussion Projekt; Maelstrom percussion ensemble; June in Buffalo new music festival; Ankara new music festival; Full Force Dance Theatre; Steelsunrise Steelband and worked with composers Steve Reich, David Felder, James Tenney, Lou Harrison and Amy Williams. Craig has recorded under hat(now) ART, mode, EMF, Yesa, Malletjazz, and Whitewater labels.

## **Sgt. 1st Class Rone Sparrow - Section Leader**

Sgt. 1st Class Rone Sparrow is originally from Fairfield, California. He earned a Bachelor of Music in percussion performance and pedagogy from Brigham Young University (1997) and a Master of Music in percussion performance from The University of North Texas (2000). While at North Texas, Rone taught percussion methods classes, directed percussion ensembles, instructed in the percussion studio, and was the coordinator for the UNT Green Brigade drum line. Rone's diverse freelance career includes performances with The Mormon Tabernacle Choir, Sundance Summer Theater, The Drifters, The Jerry Floor Big Band and the Walt Disney Corporation. Rone joined the West Point Band in August 2002 and has been featured with the band on steel pans, piano and mallet percussion.

## **Staff Sgt. David Bergman**

Staff Sgt. David Bergman is a native of Oregon. He received his Bachelor of Music in percussion performance from the University of North Texas and his Master of Music in percussion performance from Duquesne University. David has performed with the Oregon Symphony, Buffalo Philharmonic, West Virginia Symphony, Canton Symphony, and Youngstown Symphony. He was a member of the Blue Knights Drum and Bugle Corps in 2000 and the University of North Texas Indoor Drumline. David has received numerous awards and scholarships, including winner of the Pittsburgh Concert Society Competition. David has studied percussion under Ed Stephan, Christopher Deane, Mark Ford,

Andrew Reamer, and Chris Allen. He was also a student at Music Academy of the West for two summers where he studied with Ted Atkatz and Mike Werner. Prior to his appointment with the West Point Band David was a graduate student at Cleveland State University under Tom Freer.

## **Staff Sgt. Nathan Eby**

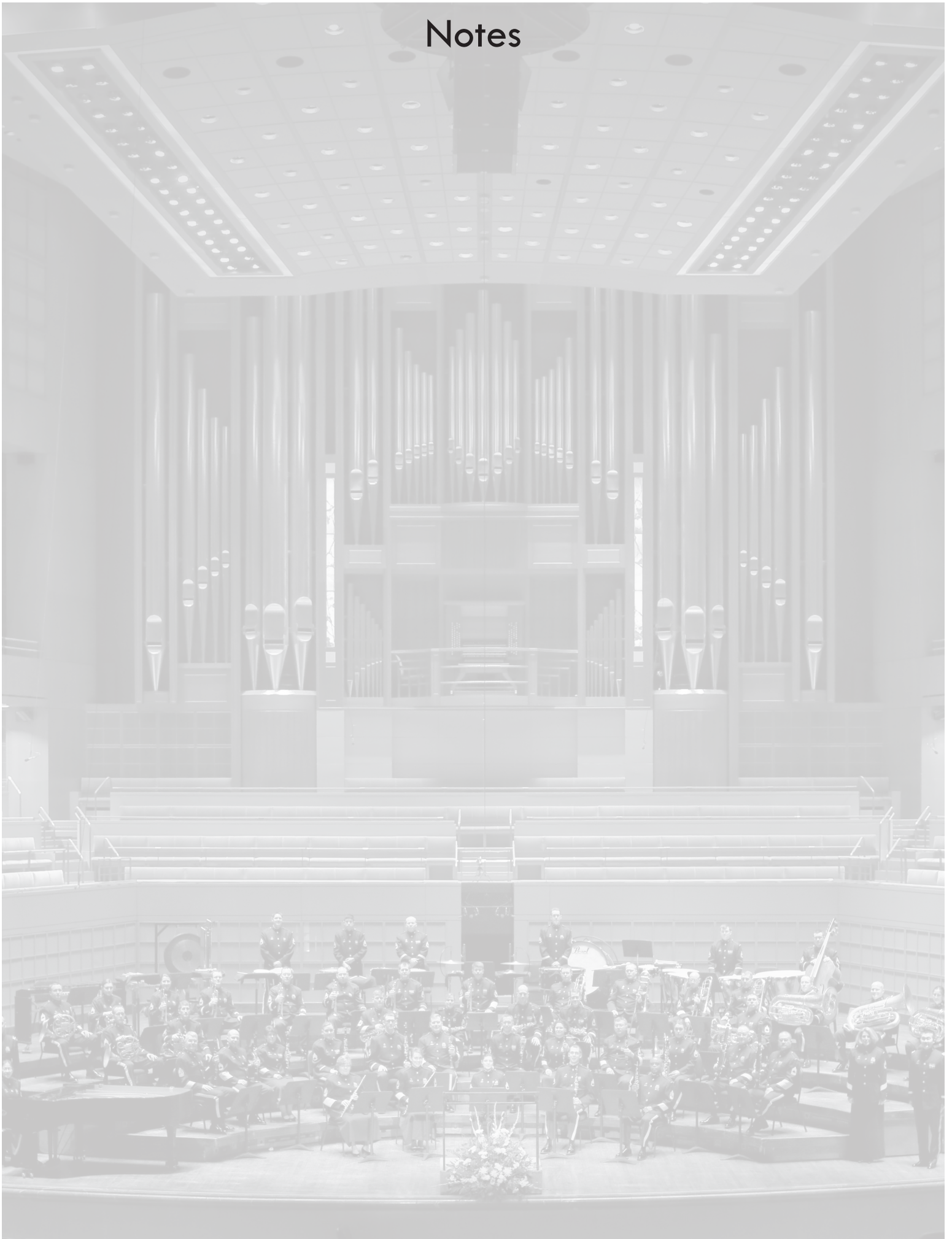
Staff Sgt. Nathan Eby is originally from Redlands, California. Prior to arriving at the West Point Band in September of 2007, he earned his Bachelor of Arts and Master of Music in music performance from California State University-Fresno and University of California-Los Angeles, respectively. He is currently working towards a Doctorate in Musical Arts at UCLA. Nathan serves as Concert Band percussionist and Assistant Marching Band Drum Major. Nathan was a member of The Velvet Knights Drum & Bugle Corps, and was the Drum Section Leader of the Concord Blue Devil Drum & Bugle Corps winning two DCI World Championships, two High Percussion Awards and was awarded Most Valuable Percussionist. He has held performing positions with Blast Inc. in their shows Shockwave and Cyberjam, and the Rhythm Slam Percussion Ensemble. During his time in Los Angeles, Nathan was the instructor and music arranger for the UCLA Drumline, and a member of the Los Angeles Philharmonic Education Department. His percussion teachers include, Mitchell Peters, Dr. Matthew Darling, Scott Johnson, Tom Float, and Paul Rennick.

## **Staff Sgt. Eric Garcia**

Staff Sgt. Eric Garcia, a native of Hendersonville, Tennessee, joined the West Point Concert Band Percussion Section in 2006. He earned a Bachelor of Music from Northwestern University, where he studied with Michael Burritt and Jim Ross. Eric continued his studies at Cleveland State University, graduating with a Master of Music in percussion performance as a student of Tom Freer. Eric also serves as the Principal Timpanist/Percussion with the New Amsterdam Brass Band in Montclair, New Jersey. Prior to moving to the Hudson River Valley, Eric performed with the Youngstown Symphony, West Virginia Symphony, Mansfield Symphony Orchestra, and Civic Orchestra of Chicago.

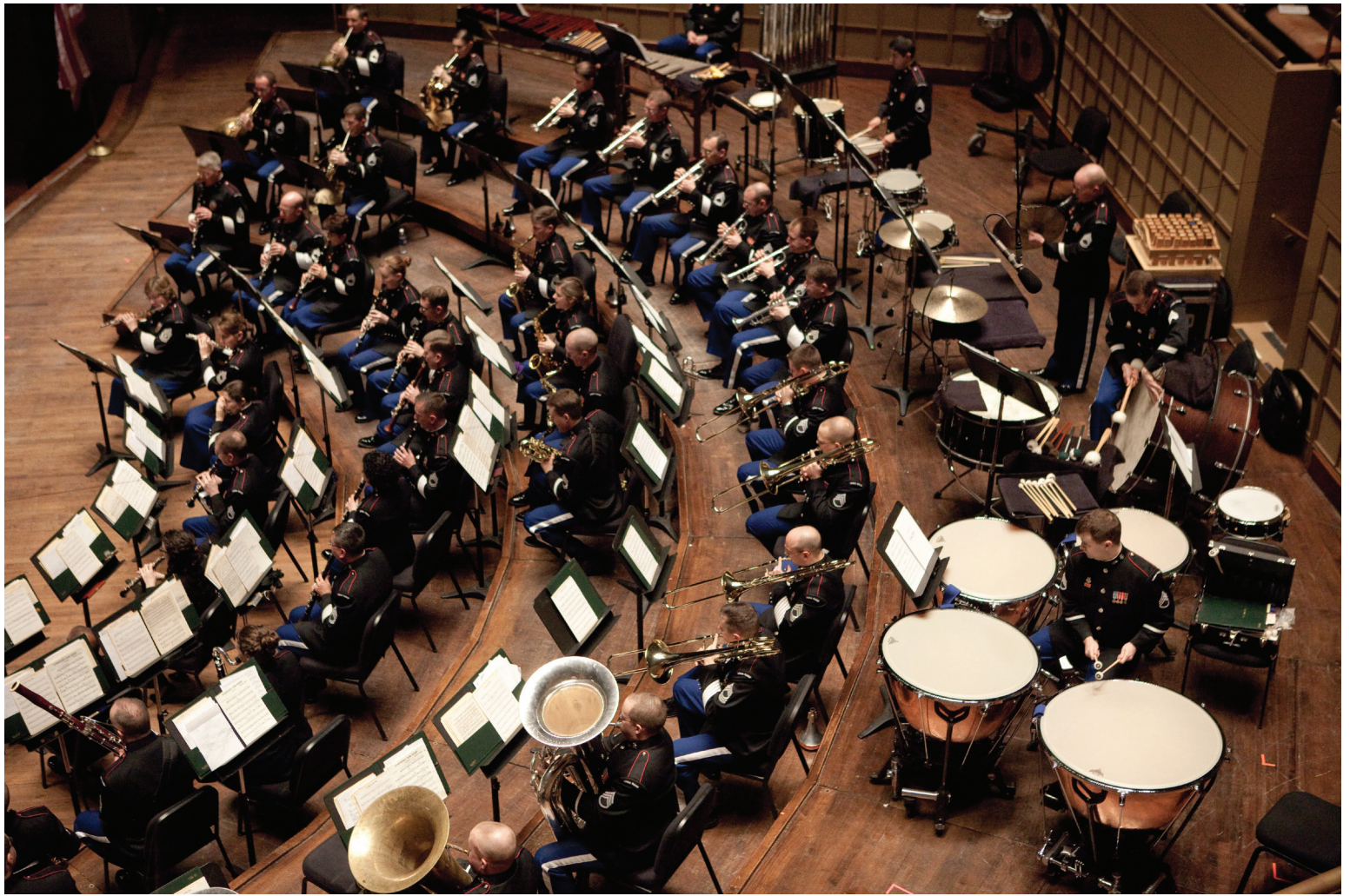
Program design by Staff Sgt.. Chrissy Clark, proofing by Sgt. 1<sup>st</sup> Class Diana Cassar-Uhl, photos by Staff Sgt. Torin Olsen, Staff Sgt. Chrissy Clark, Beverly Cooper, Jim Gardina, John Pellino, and Ernie Tacsik.

# Notes



# Notes





# West Point Band

Since 1817

Comprised of graduates from America's finest music schools, the professional musicians of the West Point Band are honored to provide world-class music to educate, train, and inspire the Corps of Cadets and to serve as ambassadors of the United States Military Academy and the Army to local, national, and international communities. View our schedule, join our email newsletter and download free music of The Hellcats, Concert Band, Jazz Knights, and various chamber ensembles at: [www.westpointband.com](http://www.westpointband.com)

This presentation is available with recordings from our website: [www.westpointband.com](http://www.westpointband.com)



