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| **Passage 1: The First American Superstar: The Sousa Band**by the Library of Congress |

1

         In 1892, John Philip Sousa was 35 years old. He had been the leader of the U.S. Marine Band for 12 years and was ready to do something different. On July 30, 1892, he resigned from the Marine Corps to start his own band. But what kind of band would it be?

2

         Sousa thought about the kinds of bands that were popular at the time: brass bands, military bands . . . and symphony orchestras. Then he combined all the things he liked about each type to form his new band, the Sousa Band. One newspaper called it “a military orchestra” because it had the instruments of a military band, but could sound like a symphony orchestra. It took a few months for the Sousa Band to get rolling, but once it did, the band stayed popular for almost 40 years. Year after year they played for sold-out crowds all over America, and, later, all over the world.

3

        As the leader of the Sousa Band, Sousa was very busy. He chose the music for each concert. Because the band was made up of a unique combination of instruments, Sousa had to adapt the written music for each song to the musicians in his band. Sousa also helped make managerial decisions, including the design of the band’s uniform and which towns they would visit on tour.

4

        Most important, Sousa was the band’s conductor. A band conductor, like a symphony conductor, is on stage with the musicians. The conductor interprets how the music will be played. During a performance, he tells the band how to play by moving his body and baton. Since it can be hard for the musicians to hear each other play, the conductor also sets the tempo (speed of playing) and makes sure all the musicians play together. Some conductors are very dramatic

and emotional, but not Sousa. His movements were energetic, but controlled and efficient. When he moved, his band responded. With a small wave of his baton, Sousa could command a very loud roar or absolute silence.

5

        With its popular reputation and good wages, the Sousa Band was able to recruit1 some of the best musicians around.

6

        For 39 years, this large group toured the country by train. A Sousa Band tour would last for many months, often with several performances each day and only a few days off for travel between cities. The band traveled to every corner of the United States and did several European tours and one world tour. Together they traveled more than 1 million miles, and they still managed to find the time for other fun. The band had its own baseball team, and Sousa was the pitcher. They played against local baseball teams and those of rival bands. Sousa even wrote a march song about baseball called “The National Game.”

7

        During his prime, Sousa was one of the best-known musicians in the world. Many consider him to be the first American superstar. He and his band had fans in every American town, as well as overseas. When the Sousa Band started touring, people didn’t have radios or televisions. Some members of their audience had seen smaller bands or played music at home with their families, but a Sousa Band performance was their first exposure to classical music and professional musicians. It was also their chance to see a famous composer. Sousa’s marches, from his dance hit *The Washington Post* to his patriotic march *The Stars and Stripes Forever,* were wildly popular. And people loved hearing them played by the actual composer and his band. Many towns declared it “Sousa Day” when the band came to town.

8

        The Sousa Band was an ideal band for their time. As a newspaper reviewer wrote, “A concert by Sousa’s Band is more than a mere concert, it is a dramatic performance, a stirring lesson in patriotism, and a popular musical event, all on the same program.”

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| 1recruit: to get to join |

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| **Passage 2: Mr. John Philip Sousa and Family**by *The Sketch* |

*The following is an excerpt from a 1902 interview with John Philip Sousa.*

9

        “How did I come to start my band? Well, when I was about twenty-four years of age, I was appointed Director of the Marine Band at Washington. After I had been there for ten or eleven years, I attracted the attention of several gentlemen interested in music, who formed themselves into a syndicate1 and made me an offer to leave Washington and start the new band. I did so, and it was a success from the first. Many people who had money in the concern2 were bought out by one man who subsequently had sole control until his death some ten years ago. Since then I have run the band myself, with the assistance of a very capable Manager.

10

        “How many marches have I written? That is a colossal task for my memory. From the time I first began to write marches, I don’t suppose I have written less than a hundred. Many of my marches have never been published, for the manuscripts have been lost, and I dare say some of them I should fail to recognise.”

         . . .

11

        “I have written six operas . . . . Before I was known to the public I had a wild enthusiasm to write an oratorio.3 I selected my words from the Bible and started it, and maybe one of these days I shall complete it. At present it still

remains in fragmentary form. Then I have written a large number of Suites, waltzes, songs, and miscellaneous pieces. My most popular march is ‘The Stars and Stripes.’4 ‘The Washington Post’ is what I call the landmark of my marches, for it was the first composition of its kind by which I met with success and also the first to cross the ocean.”

         . . .

12

         “My first opera . . . was not a success. Then, I wrote in 1884 ‘Desiré,’ but the public, for some reason which at the time I failed to understand, refused to let that live also. I tried to argue the point with them, but didn’t succeed in bringing them round to my way of thinking, though afterwards I came to see that they were pretty near the mark. My third opera was ‘El Capitan,’ which was also my first great success. . . . I am under contract to write another opera just as soon as I can. It is only during the summer months that I have any opportunity for composition. From the 1st June to the 1st October I am stationary with my band at Manhattan Beach, and my hours are pretty regular, so I can devote a certain part of the day to my operas. I never play my compositions until they are complete. I scribble down on any old scraps of paper hieroglyphics which are intelligible only to myself. After I have once thought out an idea, then I write very rapidly.”

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| 1syndicate: a group of individuals making a joint effort2concern: an establishment for business3oratorio: a large, extended musical composition that tells a story through instruments and voices only4”The Stars and Stripes”: full title known as “The Stars and Stripes Forever” |

Write a multi-paragraph response in which you analyze John Philip Sousa’s musical career. In your writing consider what skills and characteristics helped Sousa become successful. Your response must be based on ideas and information that can be found in the passages.

Manage your time carefully so that you can:

* review the passages;
* plan your response;
* write your response; and
* revise and edit your response.

Be sure to:

* include an introduction;
* use evidence from the passages to support your explanation;
* avoid overly relying on one passage; and
* include a conclusion.

Write your multi-paragraph response in the space provided.