

“The Essence of Uncle Sam”: John Philip Sousa’s 1911 World Tour in the Foreign Press

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SAM, Cincinnati, 2011

World Tour Chronology

November 6, 1910-December 20: Concerts in the Eastern United States and Canada

January 2, 1911-March 3: Concerts in England and Scotland

March 24-May 12: Concerts in South Africa

May 15-August 31: Concerts in Australia, Tasmania, and New Zealand

September 12-September 21: Concerts in Hawaii and British Columbia

September 22-December 10: Concerts across the United States

“I’ve just been Sousa-ed. But, big as my admiration is for the Toot-toot-two Step King, I’ve always felt that his audiences over-estimated the value of his left hooks and uppercuts. Don’t you think the piccolo would be just as tremulous without the fingers twiddling at him? Don’t you reckon the big drum would butt in just as accurately in the dead centre without that jerk of an imaginary string? Doesn’t it strike you that the cornet and the trombones and the triple-barrelled brass instruments would be just as ferocious without that frantic baton sawing off the atmosphere and flinging the pieces to the dogs? I’ve got a suspicion that he might start and then sit down and read the newspaper comfortably, and his band would get along just as well. Yet, as a matter of business, I suppose he’s right. The people pay just as much to see him and his energetic counters and right-crosses and double-hand punch, his hypnotic passes, cut-and-thrust-exercises, wood-chopping contests and flag-wagging gesticulations as they do to hear his band. So he gives them the goods they come for.”

--Ballarat, Australia newspaper, July 7, 1911, HJ 34, p. 31

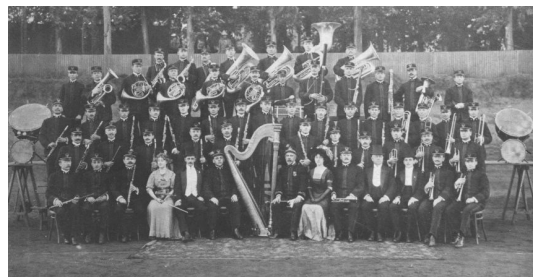


“Sousa’s marches have been done to death by German bands, have been mangled by barrel organs, hashed up by gramophones, and whistled fiendishly by street urchins, and perhaps one did not look forward to hearing them again. But as soon as the band struck up El Capitan, one realized that one had never heard a Sousa march played before. There is a vim about the Sousa march as played by the Sousa Band that sets the blood a-tingling, and you feel that you could march anywhere.”

--Pretoria News (South Africa), April 4, 1911, HJ 34, p. 8

“After listening to and seeing Sousa and his band one cannot resist the temptation to indulge in Yankeeism. My! but he’s the cutest man who ever did a stunt on a bandstand: he’s taught Johannesburg some, and his stars and stripes just lick creation. He’s shown us how to hustle, and is the biggest thing on earth. He plays so quick already, you can’t see him.”

--Johannesburg Observer, April 1, 1911, HJ 34, p. 7



“imprudence, carelessness, the joy of life and a robust independence—all these are in this ‘character’ of the citizens of the United States who demand that it be justly interpreted in their songs.”

--Bendigo Independent, July 6, 1911, HJ 34, p. 58

“the commonplaces of music, with the same old square cut phrases, the same old contrast of keys, and the same old cadences. For all that they really are marches—American marches—which bustle, hustle, dash round corners, and come to the right about almost before one has got the hang of the tune. They have no passion and practically no sentiment. Nevertheless they serve the purpose Sousa obviously has in view—to make the world merrier. Without question he succeeds.”

--Melbourne Age, June 6, 1911, HJ 34, p. 39

“One of their musical instruments must have been the great-great-grandfather of the xylophone. It had no definite scale and consisted only of four or five pieces of wood grouped in such a way that hammering on them produced an indefinable sound not worthy the name of music!”

--Sousa, *Marching Along*, 168-69

“All the savage music is much alike basically. When the savage tries to sing, his voice fails. He starts again, and again his voice fails. This is the characteristic of it all, when or where you find them, it is much the same; syncopation, and more syncopation.”

--Sousa in the *Minneapolis Journal*, November 22, 1911, HJ 36, p. 119

“A charming people. Here they have pushed the black people back into the ‘bush.’ They will need them later, if they grow cotton in Queensland.”

--Mrs. Sousa in an Australian newspaper, HJ 36, p. 101

“You have so many fine buildings, which goes to show the march of civilization—here you are so near New Guinea and the blacks that it would scarcely be surprising to find you living in tents!”

--Mrs. Sousa in the *Brisbane Courier*, July 19, 1911, , HJ 34, p. 71

“We all know that the Americans are the most sentimental people on earth, and at the same time the most material. At their best they are energetic, vital, and stimulating; at their worst, commonplace, vulgar, and trivial. They are devoid of poetry, but they possess technical ability and precisely the slap-dash effectiveness of a two-step. Further than that they cannot go. Morally and aesthetically they have never grown up, for their idea of aesthetics is to own as many expensive things as possible, and of morals to abolish nude statues. Curiously enough, too, these are just the qualities and defects of Mr. Sousa and his band. So are we not amply justified in welcoming him as the highest expression of genuine American music.”

--*Vanity Fair*, January 11, 1911, HJ 36, p. 13

“I’ve heard Sousa; now I want to see America, the land that nurtured such a thunderous son.”

--*Johannesburg Chronicle*, March 30, 1911, HJ 34, p. 5

