



The United States Army Field Band

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The Musical Ambassadors of the Army
Washington, DC

THE SOLDIERS' CHORUS OF THE U.S. ARMY FIELD BAND

Feature Story

The Soldiers' Chorus is the vocal complement of The United States Army Field Band of Washington, DC. The 29-member mixed choral ensemble travels throughout the nation and abroad, performing as a separate component and in joint concerts with the Concert Band of the "Musical Ambassadors of the Army." The chorus is currently conducted by Captain Leonel A. Peña and has performed in all 50 states, Canada, Mexico, India, the Far East, and throughout Europe.

Though a chorus of "singing instrumentalists" often performed with the Field Band in its early history, the Soldiers' Chorus was officially formed in 1957, when trained vocalists were first hired. Since the Army was an all-male entity at that time, the original chorus was an all-male ensemble. The later restructuring of the Army Bands program led to the hiring of the first full-time female vocalist in 1974. From that point, the Soldiers' Chorus has evolved into the traditional mixed chorus of sopranos, altos, tenors, baritones, and basses.

Early chorus highlights include performances for President John F. Kennedy's Inaugural Prayer Breakfast in 1961; the New York, Seattle, and Knoxville World's Fairs; and Expo '67. In 1986, the Soldiers' Chorus performed for the rededication of the Statue of Liberty. European travels include appearances in France, Belgium, the Netherlands, and Germany for the 40th anniversary of D-Day, and a 1987 performance at the Berlin Philharmonie, celebrating the city's 750th anniversary. A 1987 tour to the Far East included concerts in South Korea, Okinawa, and Japan. During a 1989 visit to the Republic of India, the Soldiers' Chorus performed for Indian President R. Venkataraman and Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi. In 1992, the vocalists traveled to Puerto Rico to celebrate the 500th anniversary of Christopher Columbus's first voyage to the New World. More recently, the Soldiers' Chorus has been honored to participate in the state funerals of Presidents Ronald Reagan and Gerald Ford as a part of The Armed Forces Chorus.

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The musical backgrounds of Soldiers' Chorus personnel range from opera and musical theatre to music education and vocal coaching; this diversity provides unique programming flexibility. In addition to presenting selections from the vast choral repertoire, Soldiers' Chorus performances often include the music of Broadway, opera, barbershop quartet, and Americana.

This versatility has earned the Soldiers' Chorus an international reputation for presenting musical excellence and inspiring patriotism. Critics have acclaimed recent appearances with the Boston Pops, the Cincinnati Pops, and the Atlanta, Dallas, Detroit, Nashville, and National Symphony Orchestras. Other notable performances include national and regional conferences of the American Choral Directors Association, the Music Educators National Conference, and Chorus America.

The Soldiers' Chorus has worked under some of the finest conductors in America, including orchestral maestros Keith Lockhart and Erich Kunzel, and choral masters Paul Salamunovich and Weston Noble. It has performed in the nation's foremost venues, including Symphony Hall in Boston, Carnegie Hall in New York, the Mormon Tabernacle in Salt Lake City, the Ravinia Festival in Illinois, the Hollywood Bowl, the Dorothy Chandler Pavilion of the Los Angeles Music Center, and the Kennedy Center in Washington, DC. Also heard frequently in radio and television broadcasts, the Soldiers' Chorus continues to carry the message of patriotism and goodwill to audiences across the nation and around the world.