

With Perfect Pitch: Patrick Sarsfield Gilmore

BY JARLATH MACNAMARA



Photo:
Patrick Sarsfield Gilmore in uniform as band leader for the 22nd Regiment of the New York National Guard. He signed a contract with the Regiment in the early 1870s. The regimental band played its first concert under his leadership at the Brooklyn Academy of Music in 1873. Courtesy of Jarlath MacNamara.

Patrick Sarsfield Gilmore, or P. S. Gilmore as he was once known across North America, is comparatively unknown today. However, in New York and other growing nineteenth-century cities, Gilmore was part of the effort to make America great. (Like most Irish immigrants, he was grateful to America for giving him refuge from the Great Famine—the term he used for America throughout his life was “the Haven of Hope.”) And in New York and elsewhere he was central to several important events of his day. Few Irishmen were as well known over such a long period as Gilmore.

After the Statue of Liberty was opened in 1886, *Harper's Weekly* named Gilmore's band New York's greatest attraction. So, who was P.S. Gilmore, and why should we know more about him?

Gilmore was born outside Dublin in 1829 and raised in Ballygar, Galway. Educated in the local school, he learned to play fife and drum in the village band. Music was one of the few liberties not controlled by the English of that time. At the age of fourteen, he moved to Athlone to serve his apprenticeship in the licensed trade, but he fell in love with the

music of the English bands in the town. The Athlone barracks at any point held up to four English regiments that gained experience dealing with various “Irish problems” of the time, and then dispersed to colonies in India, Canada, and elsewhere. Gilmore was taught the skills of instrumentation, composition, notation, and conducting by his mentor and local regimental bandmaster, Patrick Keating. Practice and performance was readily available in front of the hungry and starving people of the countryside who came to the town to get food and heard the dulcet sounds of Gilmore as he and his friends performed airs and melodies of the day. In Athlone, Gilmore learned the basic skills necessary for popular concerts, concerts which he later developed to become the inaugural Boston promenade concerts of 1856. In Athlone’s St. Peter’s Church, Gilmore assembled a thirty piece band to play for each mass, rushing out the sacristy door at the end to hear opinions of the congregation as they left. And so that Irish city was his classroom and Keating his professor, and it was on his teacher’s advice that he left Ireland and went to America in 1849.

IN BOSTON AND THE CIVIL WAR

Not long after arriving in Massachusetts as a nineteen year-old, Gilmore conducted bands in Salem and Boston, further developing his skills as an innovative conductor and band leader. While in Boston he started the annual July 4th celebrations in the Boston Commons and developed the Boston promenade concerts from 1857. That same year he was invited to lead the inauguration parade of President James Buchanan in Washington, the first of eight presidential inaugurations in which he would participate. Partly because of his success, at one point Gilmore became the target of threats from members of the Know-Nothing Party. On one occasion in the Boston

train terminal his band narrowly dodged a gang of thugs whose objective was to teach Gilmore “not to step beyond his station.” According to his daughter, Minnie, it was even

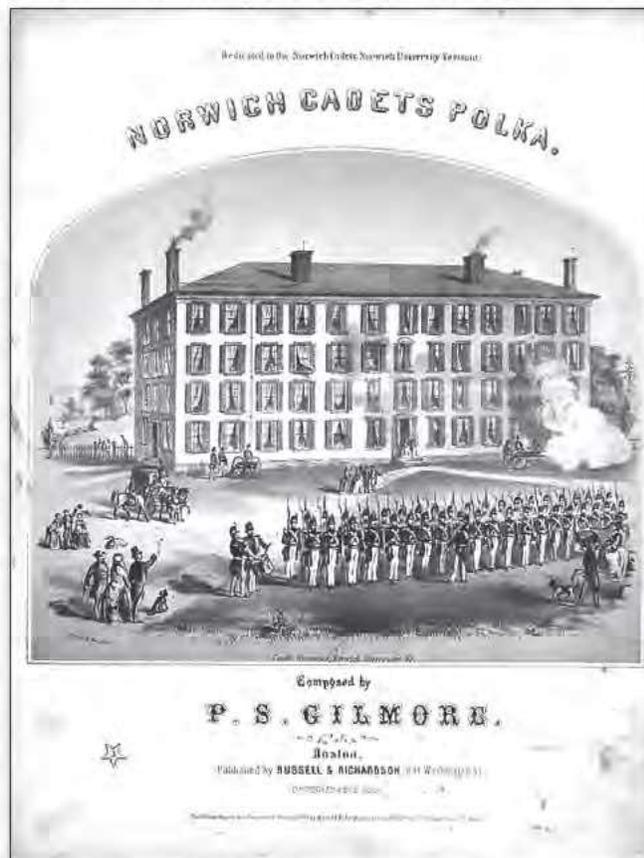


Illustration: Cover for sheet music composed by Gilmore in 1854. His compositions in the 1850s could be classified as polkas, ballads, or patriotic pieces. The latter compositions were dedicated to local military organizations such as the Norwich Cadets. Courtesy of Jarlath MacNamara.

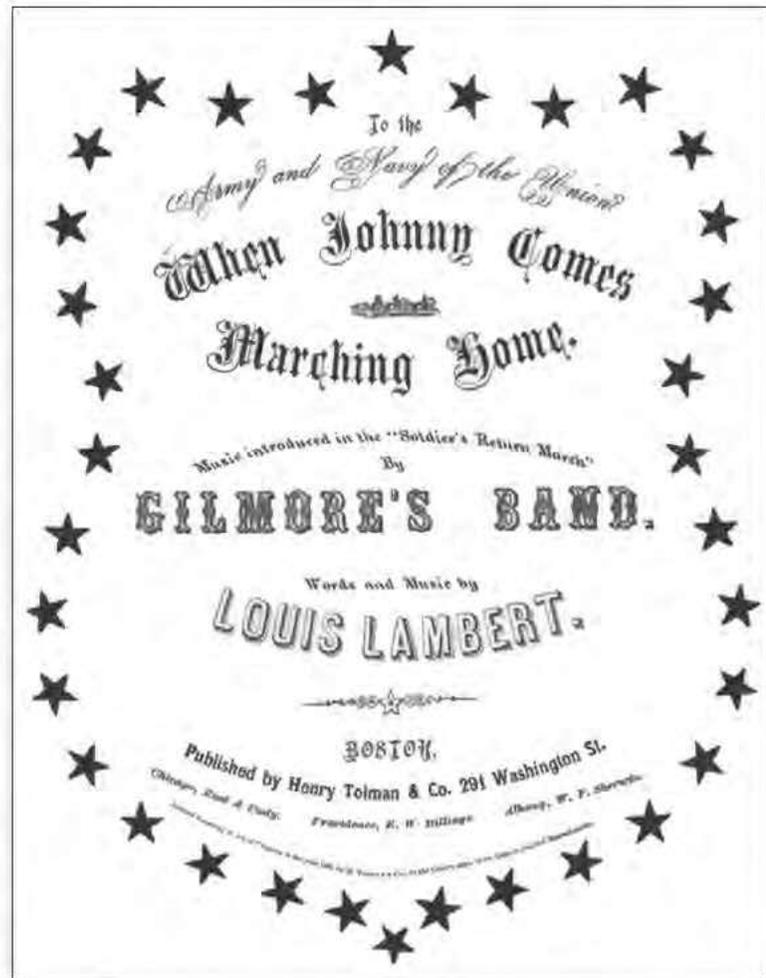
suggested that he should change his first name; after all it was not fashionable in many quarters for an Irishman to be intelligent, affable, innovative, and patriotic. To dilute his enemies’ attentions, Gilmore changed his middle name from Stephen to Sarsfield, and seemingly assumed an anglicized persona for his critics. In reality Gilmore was sending his detractors a message that, like the great Patrick Sarsfield who held off the Williamite forces in the Siege of Limerick in 1690, he too was a true Irishman who would never retreat from any adversary.

And so Gilmore was becoming popular throughout the East Coast of America and was developing a musical organization of the highest reputation which was professional in every sense. However, even as he referred to his organization as a “band,” they should be thought

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of as an orchestra in quality. From its inception the band mainly played concerts, not parade music. Up to the outbreak of the Civil War, over a thousand concerts in Boston were performed. And in this period Gilmore introduced one of the most important musical innovations by combining woodwind with brass Instruments in the proportion of 2:1, thereby allowing for dynamics or *pianoforte* (soft-loud) to be played in performances. This development affects bands in America even today, including the "President's Own," as the United States Marine Band is known.

During the 1850s, Gilmore developed his links with military organizations in Massachusetts. It was a relationship that would continue for all of his life. Both he and his bands were regular participants in militias' exercises in Salem, Boston, and Charlestown from 1851 to 1859. Gilmore would entertain the assembled forces but also participate fully in all exercises. In 1860 Gilmore's band played to both the Democratic and the Republican national conventions (Abraham Lincoln was selected as a presidential candidate at the latter event). When the first guns were fired on Fort Sumter in April 1861, he and his band stood ready to do their duty. And in August, immediately on the issuance of General Order 48 allowing bands to enlist, Gilmore and his band signed up en-masse for service with the 24th Infantry Regiment of Massachusetts and began training with the volunteers. He was given the standard title of Sergeant of the Band, but Gilmore was never interested in titles at any stage of his career. And so after training in Reidsville Camp outside Boston for four months, Gilmore and his



band as part of the 24th Massachusetts Regiment prepared to sail in January for the Carolinas as part of the famous expedition led by General Ambrose Burnside.

Landing in Roanoke Island he, along with the complete forces of the New England Guard, saw battle in Roanoke, New Bern, and Tranter's Creek. He and his band members are recorded as playing music for the regiments, doing roll call and signaling, and entertaining the soldiers on the battlefield, including General Burnside. They also acted as stretcher bearers on the battlefield and entertained Confederate prisoners. However, in August, 1862 all bands were mustered out of the Union Army by the Lincoln administration as a result of perceived excessive annual costs of four-million dollars. On officially leaving the Army, Gilmore became vital to the propaganda of winning the War. He played at meetings and concerts in Boston and elsewhere for the

Illustration: "When Johnny Comes Marching Home" was published by Gilmore in 1863 under the pseudonym Louis Lambert. Dedicated to the Army and Navy of the United States, it is unusual as a wartime ballad since it mentions neither victors nor vanquished. Courtesy of Jarlath MacNamara.

families of the soldiers, and before parades attended by many generals including Banks, Butler, McClellan, and Grant. These events became important for the cause of victory. In 1863 he composed a song that still lasts as a ballad which mentions neither victor nor vanquished, cause nor result: "When Johnny Comes Marching Home." Gilmore, who wrote the song using the pseudonym "Louis Lambert," was inducted into the American Songwriters Hall of Fame in 1970 for the composition.

In late 1862, Gilmore was asked by Governor Andrews to reorganize the military bands of Massachusetts, a task to which he applied himself by training black bands for the Union cause, particularly the band of the 54th Massachusetts Infantry Regiment commonly known as the "Black Regiment." The Regiment was portrayed in the film *Glory*, starring Denzel Washington. When this Regiment was dispatched to war before the critical eyes of Bostonians and leaders of the anti-slavery movement (including Frederick Douglas), it

was Gilmore and his band that led them through the Boston streets on May 23, 1863. On their return to Boston on September 3, it was Gilmore's band that greeted them at the wharf and again marched them through Boston. It should be noted that when this task was completed, Generals Banks and Butler of the *Corps de Afrique* asked Gilmore to reorganize the bands of New Orleans and Louisiana. By this point in his career, P.S. Gilmore was effectively the "bandmaster general" of the Union Army.¹

"GILMOREAN" CONCERTS/JUBILEES

Beginning in 1864, Gilmore organized four massive "Concerts/Jubilees," which *Harper's Weekly* termed "Gilmorean" performances partly because of their size and quality. The first such event occurred in 1864 when Gilmore was asked by General Nathaniel Banks to organize the inauguration ceremony of Governor Michael Hahn, the first Union governor elected during the Civil War in Louisiana which by that year was under federal

Illustration:

In 1872 Gilmore saw realization of his conception—the World's Peace Jubilee—in Boston. This festival of international music lasted over eighteen days and was organized by Gilmore, in part, to celebrate the end of the Franco-Prussian War. In the foreground at bottom, President Grant is seen facing backwards and tipping his hat to the viewer. Courtesy of Jarlath MacNamara.





Illustration:
The Jubilee Waltz was composed by Johann Strauss in 1872 and dedicated, as the cover shows, to P.S. Gilmore. The Waltz was played at the World Peace Jubilee in Boston by the Viennese orchestra under the leadership of Strauss, with Gilmore in attendance. This was Strauss's sole visit to the United States—and it came at the invitation of an Irishman. Courtesy of Jarlath MacNamara.

control. For this occasion Gilmore conducted a band of 500 Union and Confederate musicians assisted by a choir of 5,000 voices, before an audience of 35,000 in Lafayette Square in New Orleans. His success was rewarded with a letter of commendation sent by Governor Hahn and General Banks to President Lincoln noting Gilmore's patriotism. Four years later, in 1869, Gilmore organized a second concert, the National Peace Jubilee festival in Boston, which lasted over five days when 1,000 musicians were accompanied by a choir of 10,000 before an audience of 50,000. The objective of this festival was to help heal the wounds of the Civil War. President Grant and his cabinet attended this event and it took place in Back Bay in Boston in a stadium, built for the occasion measuring 500 feet by 300 feet by 120 feet high. The festival, in 1869 the largest in the world, was a musical and financial success, and for Gilmore he was now known worldwide.² Next, in 1872 Gilmore organized the

World Peace Jubilee, which outwardly was designed to celebrate the end of the Franco-Prussian War. This festival took place over eighteen days in a custom-built stadium, again in Boston. Privately for Gilmore, this festivity was a test as to where Gilmore's band and that of the U.S. Marine Corps were placed as compared with leading music organizations from other countries. Participating bands included the French band of the Garde Républicaine, the Prussian band of the Kaiser Franz Grenadier Regiment, the band of Royal Grenadier Guards, the Austrian orchestra of Johann Strauss, Jr., and a band from Dublin simply called the "Irish Band" but, most important, representing Ireland as a country. (Gilmore had to pay Strauss to play in Boston because the Austrian worried that his locks would be removed by warring Indians.) By the end of this festival, Gilmore realized that his band and the Marine Corps band were vastly inferior to the bands of the Old World.

Consequently, he planned to put in place new standards which last to this day and which led to acceptance of America as a center of performance excellence. The final Gilmorean event was the 1873 Chicago Jubilee. Chicago had been ravaged by fires in October, 1871, and Gilmore agreed to give a five-day concert in Chicago's new railway passenger terminal building to help the city re-establish itself as a center of commerce. The building held 40,000 people, and Gilmore conducted an orchestra of 300 combined with choir of 3,000. The event helped to re-launch the city as a focal point of enterprise and innovation with its rail network a hub for American transportation.

REORGANIZATION AND NEW YORK

As a result of the poor performance of American bands in the World Peace Jubilee in

a larger population within which to build the greatest band in America and the world. By having that market, he could attract the best musicians, the best performers, and build an organization of which all would be proud. Entertainment in New York was developing, and approximately two hundred bands, plus orchestras, operated in the city at this time. But working with musicians and music could be a fickle business. Performers asked for too much pay, theatre promoters offered much but sometimes didn't pay at all, and professionalism in management did not exist. The conductor did everything. And some great conductors continually went bankrupt. But Gilmore proceeded and signed a new contract with the 22nd Regiment of New York, and in November, 1873 the band played their first concert in the Academy of Music in Brooklyn. Gilmore

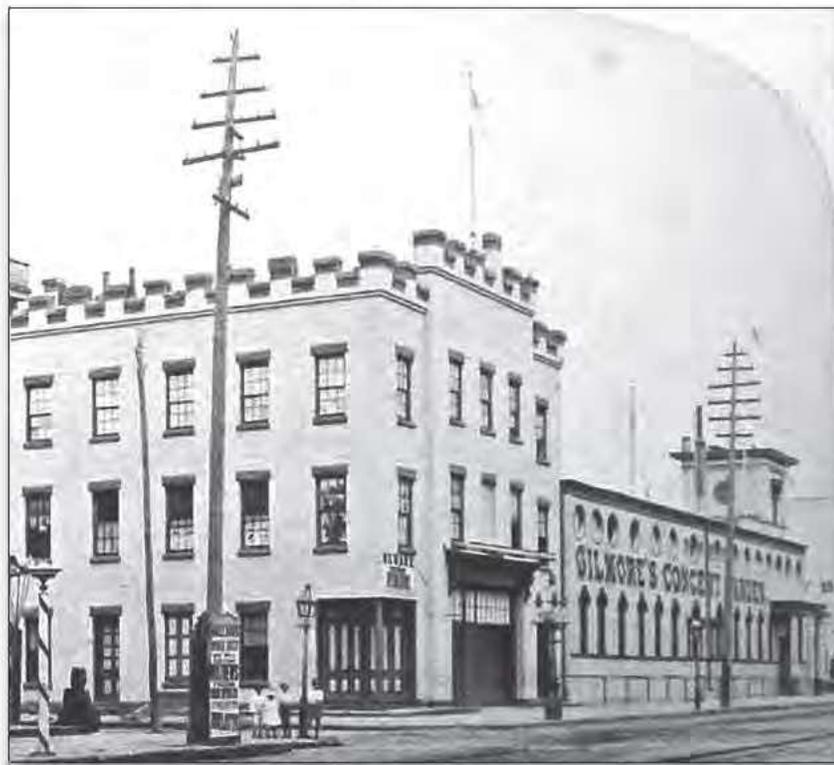


Photo:
Gilmore's Concert Garden on Madison Avenue and Twenty-sixth Street in Manhattan in 1879. The building had previously been used by P.T. Barnum and would later become known as Madison Square Garden. Courtesy of Jarlath MacNamara.

1872, Gilmore decided that improvement meant moving to New York. The city had a population of 950,000, and nearby Brooklyn (then an independent neighboring city) had 400,000 more people. Gilmore decided he needed a bigger market than Boston offered,

bought a house at 61 West Twelfth Street, in Manhattan. Nearby was a church, St Francis Xavier, at 46 West Sixteenth Street, which became his church for the rest of his life.

Gilmore set about hiring and firing musicians in his new organization. He was attempt-

ing not only to replicate the wonderful performances of the French, Prussian, and the English bands of his time, but also to surpass the delicate nature normally associated with

Garden.” For two months each year he played to throngs of people who would arrive to view the spectacle and listen to performances given daily by his fifty-five to sixty-five piece orches-



Photo:
The fifty-five piece Gilmore band (with leader at center) in Manhattan Beach during 1884. Attractions at Manhattan Beach drew visitors from other states and other countries, with Gilmore's band providing musical entertainment at day and evening programs. Courtesy of Boston Public Library.

typical orchestras of the same size. And so he re-equipped, retrained, rehearsed, and revised over the next six years. Newspapers during this period reported that Gilmore's performances surpassed those of his previous performances. His organization played for a minimum of six days out of every seven and mostly twice per day. To provide structure and to achieve it he designed the basis of entertainment management that exists today in which the conductor or performer assumes artistic control while promotion and business responsibilities are taken care of by a management team. He also needed financial security for at least half the year to ensure continuation of work for musicians who, he knew, played much better when they had no financial worries. To achieve this, he assumed the lease of the P. T. Barnum Hippodrome at East Twenty-sixth Street and Madison Avenue. Redesigning the interior of the building to include trees, fountains, tables, and gardens, he called it "Gilmore's Concert

tra or band. This venue also hosted the first boxing competitions (termed "pugilistic contests,") flower shows, and the Westminster dog shows which continue to this day. As a director of Gilmore's Garden he delighted with the success of his venture. However, this was a short term experiment which ended in 1879 when the lease reverted to the property owner, the Vanderbilt family led by William Kissam Vanderbilt. The building was renamed "Madison Square Garden." Gilmore's business relationship continued with Madison Square Garden for rest of his career and, through his band, even after his death. It should be noted that Gilmore's record of playing 150 consecutive times in the Garden to crowds of at least 10,000 people still remains unmatched.

Another opportunity developed for Gilmore in the late 1870s when the entrepreneur Austin Corbin decided that, in addition to his New York railroad empire, he would build two hotels to entertain New Yorkers each

summer at the base of Brooklyn called Manhattan Beach and Oriental Beach. These resorts were large and became attractions during summer months. And so for fourteen years Gilmore's band was the chief attraction for the Manhattan Beach Hotel, and each day crowds of tens of thousands were noted by the newspapers of the day, coming to Manhattan Beach using Corbin's Long Island Railroad to hear two daily concerts played by Gilmore. In the evenings, Gilmore entertained spectators who attended a huge pyrotechnics display which told the story of the "Fall of Pompeii" or the "Commune de Paris" or some other historical event. The attractions at Manhattan Beach became so well known that few visitors from foreign shores would fail to attend. Visiting dignitaries included royalty from across the globe, government ministers, and well-to-do Americans as well as the average American who came to listen to the concerts. Crowds in Manhattan Beach were so large that the police department had to set up a temporary precinct there to assist in crowd control.³ When the season closed at the end of August, Gilmore and his band were collected at the Beach by a private train sent by the St. Louis Exposition. The band was to play at the Exposition for the next two months.

MORE OPPORTUNITIES

In New York, opportunities continued to develop for Gilmore. His contract with the 22nd Regiment proved an ideal relationship for both parties. Most regiments in the city had bands, and special effort was paid to attract talented new recruits and display a regiment in the right light to the public. Events such as Decoration Day or visits by dignitaries or elections of officials all had parades, and the 22nd Regiment band was seen as the city's premier band for these occasions.⁴ When buildings were opened or inaugurated, Gilmore's band was, if available, always on duty. For such official events Gilmore and his band wore the uniform of the Regiment. And during each June, when annual training exercises took place near Peekskill, Gilmore's band was there to participate and compete in all exercises

whether marching across country with full kit for fifteen miles or shooting in target practice contests. In addition to performing normal signaling services in camp, the band would also present concerts in the evenings for the soldiers similar to those given in the Civil War. Gilmore and his band were not paid directly from Regimental funds. Rather the band was self-financing with the Regiment providing intermittent testimonial concerts to supplement its income. Singers who appeared in concerts with the band were paid directly by Gilmore himself. He generally treated money

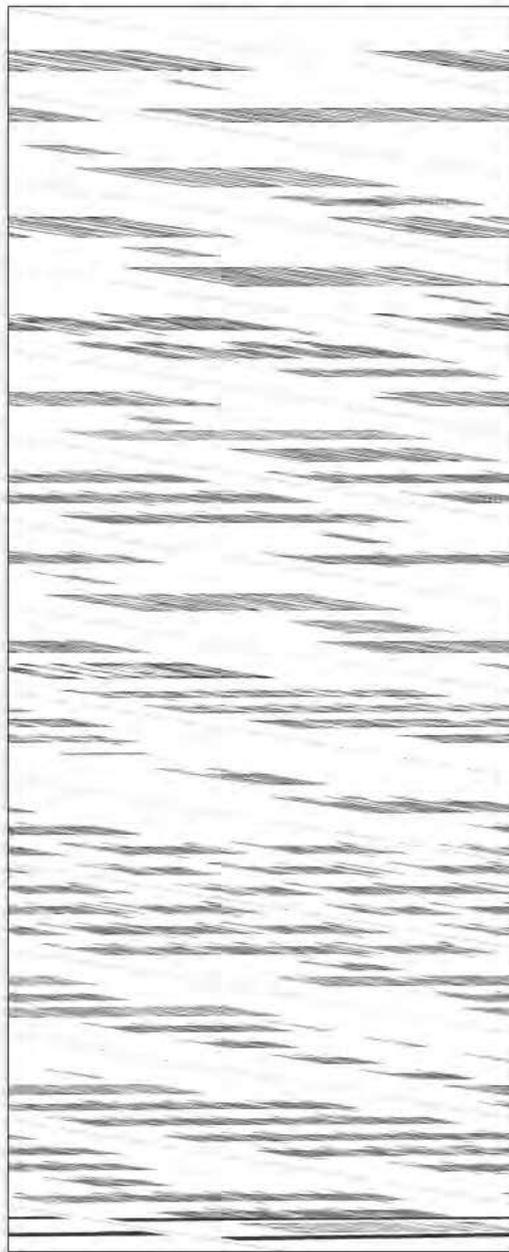


Illustration:
This advertisement appeared in Dublin's Freeman's Journal during May, 1878. It characterizes Gilmore's band as "the Representative Military Band of the United States" and—which is unusual—does not mention Gilmore's conductorship until further down. Courtesy of Jarlath MacNamara.

as a by-product of performance, but never the primary reason to perform.

By 1878, after a complete re-tooling of his band over the six years since the 1872 World Peace Jubilee in Boston, he decided that his organization were ready for testing against the best musicians in Europe. And so they embarked on a unique tour, to play before their peers throughout Europe, and let the European critics decide which band was the greatest. After disembarking in Dublin in May, 1878, they played to packed audiences in the Dublin Winter Palace (today's National Concert Hall) for six concerts. In the United Kingdom they played sixty-five concerts in thirty cities in thirty days and travelled 3000 miles by train. An estimated 250,000 people attended the concerts in Britain. In London's Crystal Palace they were introduced on the program as "Gilmore's American Representative Band" or the "Band of the 22nd Regiment of New York." Gilmore had to turn down an invitation from Queen Victoria to play in Balmoral Castle because he would be late for the July Fourth celebration in Paris. In Holland, the band played for the Dutch Royal family. They played in Belgium and through France, and eventually at July 4th celebrations in the Trocadero Palace in Paris. *Le Figaro*, *Le Gaulois*, and other newspapers, praised their performances, and in Paris they were awarded the Exposition medal for America. On tour the band played in Strasbourg, Coblenz, Hamburg, and Dusseldorf. In Leipzig, the home of Richard Wagner, Gilmore opened the program with the "Tannhauser Suite" before the great composer who sat in the front row. Wagner cheered for Gilmore's band and their performance and thereafter, the first scores of Wagner's new compositions were always shipped to Gilmore in New York. Finally, the band played for a month in Kroll's Opera House in Berlin where they were reviewed by Frank Abt and Ferdinand Hiller, composers and experts of German music of the period. Abt and Hiller agreed that never in the previous two hundred years of German music had such arrangements been heard by the German people. The Kaiser viewed Gilmore's perfor-

mance and was so impressed that he presented Gilmore with a gold baton. On August 14, 1878 an article appeared in the New York *Musical Monitor* written in Leipzig emphasizing why Gilmore's Band was probably the best in the world. On August 21, the Berlin correspondent of the London *Globe* commented about Gilmore's success in Kroll's Opera House in Berlin. He wrote that "Gilmore's style of conducting his orchestra and the elegance of their execution will possibly lead to the thorough reform of German music." He added that "Music critics not only praise the precision of their play but also the perfection with which they render most difficult compositions."⁵ Gilmore was delighted for his band and his country. America now would be treated as an equal on the world stage of musical performance. And on August 31, 1878, Gilmore wrote about the band to his commander in the 22nd Regiment stating:

*They had taken France, Holland and Germany by storm. The press everywhere has passed high encomiums on the band and has gone so far to assert that even here in musical Germany we have inaugurated a new era in the progress of military music—that now they begin to see how far inferior they are to the representative musical-military American Band. This is a positive fact.*⁶

Invitations were again given to Gilmore to bring his organization to St. Petersburg and the summer palace of the Russian Tsar. He respectfully declined as he also did to invitations from the Netherlands royalty who wanted to hear him again. Gilmore and his men had been on tour for four months and were tired.

On the way home Gilmore and the band sailed on the German steamer *Mosell*, which stopped en-route at Southampton. Forever an Irishman, Gilmore greeted and paid for upgrading to first class for two passengers who boarded in Southampton. These were Edward Meagher Condon and Patrick Melody, two of the convicted members of the 1867 Manchester Martyrs group who had served

time in England and narrowly escaped the gallops. On arrival in New York, Gilmore held his band on the docks till the Irish patriots had clearance to land and then played "Hail Columbia" as a welcome to the two Irishmen.⁷

POPULARITY AND GENEROSITY

By the 1880s, Gilmore and his band enjoyed widespread popularity among all sectors of American society. For example, in 1883 the annual Vanderbilt Ball received the usual newspaper commentary as it did each year because of its extravagant cost estimated at \$1,000,000. Some expenses included \$155,000 for gowns, \$20,000 for floral arrangements, and \$10,000 for pastries from Delmonico's. Gilmore's band, made up of 65 musicians, was selected to provide musical entertainment at a cost of \$1500 or \$20 per man. But Gilmore also performed for more modest purposes. He used Madison Square Garden and other venues to play charity concerts for causes as diverse as support for victims of storms or fishing boat disasters, always paying members of the band himself. Gilmore annually played for the Emerald Ball in New York where receipts always went to support orphans in the city, a huge proportion of whom were Irish. Gilmore and his band performed to help support the Society for the Preservation of the Irish Language, the Friendly Sons of St Patrick, and *Clan na Gael*. On the death of *Clan na Gael* founder, Jerome Collins, Gilmore's band led the funeral music in St. Patrick's Cathedral and in the march to the port for sailing to Queenstown (Cobh).

There seems no evidence that Gilmore and his band participated in any New York's St. Patrick's Day parade, perhaps because he was usually on spring tour. However, in 1883, he was in the city on March 17, and a report in the *New York Times* states that "Mr. P. S. Gilmore with characteristic magnificence will give three concerts on St Patrick's Day, in the morning, afternoon, and evening at Madison Square Garden for the benefit of the Irish Relief Fund." On March 17, 1889, Gilmore again was in New York, but this time he was performing at the inauguration of a new hall

in St. Francis Xavier's College with congressman and Irishman, William Bourke Cockran, a close friend who delivered the oration.⁸

GILMORE, PARNELL, AND HOME RULE

This event at the College was important to the Irish and Ireland because Gilmore used it to launch a ballad he wrote called "Ireland to England," a ballad dedicated to Charles Stewart Parnell and William Gladstone which was written, as Gilmore put it, "by a simple peasant." St Francis Xavier's College was the ideal location to launch this song and statement. After all he had participated there in Papal Medal presentations, he raised funds for the church, but mostly because this was his parish church. Each year he took the third pew from the front behind Eugene Kelly, chairman of the Parnell Parliamentary Fund. Gilmore's ballad was simultaneously published and printed in the *New York Herald*, which sold out two editions that day. The song set out the case for home rule and why all parties must look toward agreement. This was an important endorsement of home rule by the most popular Irishman in America at this time. Gilmore had also endorsed home rule in his concert programs on his recent 1889 "Jubilee Tour" of 110 cities across America. In addition he included commentaries about Parnell, Davitt, and home rule in all the twenty-four page concert programs which he wrote for the Tour. These concerts had been attended by huge audiences, and included all major cities in America. Based on newspaper reports at the time and Gilmore's comments in later program booklets, more than one million people attended his concerts in this "Jubilee Tour."

He and his Band had previously played for Charles Stewart Parnell and his party colleagues in Madison Square Garden in 1880. He again played in 1886 when the Parnell Parliamentary Party Fund needed money to finance the bi-election being fought in Galway. Chairman Eugene Kelly and his committee approached Gilmore in



Illustration:
On February 14, 1886 Gilmore presented two concerts before some twelve-thousand people to raise money for the Parnell Parliamentary Fund. Approximately \$6,000 was presented to Fund chairman Eugene Kelly two days later. The concerts represented part of Gilmore's continuous support for the Home Rule Movement and for Parnell.
Courtesy of Jarlath MacNamara.

December, 1885 to organize a concert for the election fund. Gilmore's immediate response was to organize two concerts for February 14, 1886, before twelve-thousand people. The next day he presented a \$6,000 check to Kelly in the Hoffman House hotel for the Parnell Parliamentary Party election fund. The program for that concert was entitled "Erin Go Bragh, Gilmore's Parnell Parliamentary party fund, Grand Concerts." A year later, for the visit of Michael Davitt, Gilmore again organized a concert in Madison Square Garden, but this time he was not in control of receipts or the accounting. The *New York Times* estimated that \$5,000 would be raised, but two months later a finance committee announced that the total raised was \$500. Other money had disappeared. This would be Gilmore's last time to be involved with Irish fund-raising committees. However, Gilmore would never dilute his opinions or comments on Irish topics such as:

Boycott in 1886 before a Parnell fundraising meeting—

*"The people of Ireland have invented the greatest implement of modern warfare, viz., the boycott. England would not let the Irish have guns or pistols for fear that they would hurt each other. For want of other weapons, therefore, the Irish invented the boycott, a gun that made no noise, but killed every time."*⁹

Irish Flag in the *Irish World* newspaper—

*"Other flags belong to nations who exalt the dragon, the reptile, the vulture, while my nation alone has the harp, 'the soul of music,' emblazoned upon its Emerald Flag."*¹⁰

His ambition to live long enough—

*"I hope to live long enough to lead my band into the Irish Parliament in College Green playing Irish melodies."*¹¹

OTHER ACTIVITIES IN NEW YORK AND ELSEWHERE

In New York City, Gilmore and his band were active in the inauguration of statues in Central Park, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and similar ceremonies. The Brooklyn Bridge would have been opened by Gilmore's band in April, 1883; however, he was on tour and his friend, Alberto Cappa, leader of the 7th Regiment Band was deputized for this occasion. In relation to the Statue of Liberty, Gilmore played an important role in completion of its structure. In April, 1886, installation of the Statue's plinth was not completed because of financial issues. Gilmore and his band from the 22nd Regiment gave a concert to raise the \$15,000 shortfall, and in October of that year, President Grover Cleveland and his new wife sat with other dignitaries while the Galway man led celebrations as musical director of the inauguration. (Earlier that year the Clevelands had been entertained in the Blue Room of the White House as Gilmore played to the guests after their wedding.)

As musical director, Gilmore and his band participated in opening ceremonies for many buildings throughout the city, and they helped to commemorate the four-hundredth anniversary of the arrival of Columbus in the New World in the first New Year's Eve celebrations in front of City Hall on December 31, 1891. A resolution read in the City Council chambers by Alderman Flynn states, in part, as follows:

Whereas, Patrick Sarsfield Gilmore, A public spirited citizen, has with his associates of the 22nd Regiment Band (which for this occasion will number 100 pieces) volunteered to discourse patriotic melodies from the steps of the City Hall of the great metropolis of the Western Hemisphere on New Year's Eve... [it is hereby resolved that permission]... is hereby given to Patrick Sarsfield Gilmore to occupy the front steps of City Hall between the hours of 12 midnight of December 31, 1891 and 1 a.m. of January 1, 1892 and be it further... [resolved] that all windows of the City Hall be illuminated and that the commissioner of Public Works be... respectfully requested to appropriately light the front entrance to City Hall on that night.¹²

Reports after the celebration state that "Flags floated over City Hall: small boys festooned the bare limbs of the trees: calcium lights shed a glare upon the crowd and people pushed and jostled and tooted horns and gave each other a good greeting." At the moment the City Hall clock pointed at 12, Gilmore's band stationed in front of City Hall struck up "Hail Columbia." Men shouted, the band played, the elevated and bridge locomotives shrieked their welcome, and red lights were burned.¹³

DEATH AND AFTERMATH

Patrick Sarsfield Gilmore died in September, 1892 in St. Louis while playing at the St. Louis Exposition. His wife and daughter accompanied his coffin by train back to New York where his body was brought to his home, then



at 164 West Eighty-sixth Street. Three days later, his funeral procession went to St. Francis Xavier Church down the same route that Gilmore and his band had walked as they accompanied the casket of General Tecumseh Sherman during the preceding year. Some estimated that upwards of 500,000 lined Fifth Avenue. When the church received his body, 9,000 people stood outside, and more than 2,000 women tried to enter the church because of their love and admiration of him. In honor of Gilmore, President Harrison cancelled his meetings for the day in the White House. Newspapers across America and Canada, and in the United Kingdom and Europe, reported of his passing. Chief mourners at his funeral, apart from his wife and daughter, were representatives from the New York Press Club and the Lotos Club (Gilmore was a life member of each.) After High Mass, his coffin was taken for burial to Cavalry Cemetery in Queens. For weeks afterwards, reports of the demise of Gilmore's band were treated with shock by the public.

Gilmore might have disappeared from memory were it not for his admirers.

Photo: Gilmore, at age sixty and at the height of his fame, in 1889 as photographed in St. Louis. In this year, Gilmore and his band were seen by crowds of more than 750,000 during their two months of performance at the St. Louis Exposition. Later in the year, they toured from the Mississippi Basin to the West Coast and back. Courtesy of Jarlath MacNamara.

BANDMASTER GILMORE'S FUNERAL.

IT WILL BE HELD WEDNESDAY AT HIS LATE RESIDENCE IN THIS CITY.

ST. LOUIS, Sept. 25.—The remains of the late P. S. Gilmore were sent to New-York to-night. The party accompanying them was composed of Mrs. Gilmore, Miss Minnie Gilmore, Valet Donahue, and the following committee of the band: William F. Schultz, Heran E. Zelm, Laurence O'Reilly.

It has been arranged that the funeral shall take place from Mr. Gilmore's New-York residence on Wednesday morning. The body will be taken to St. Francis's Jesuit Church at mass, and after the services will be removed to Calvary Cemetery, where it will be interred in the family tomb. The funeral will be private.

The informal agreement made last night to carry out all engagements under the leadership of Sergeant Freudenvoll was formally ratified at a business meeting of the band.

No arrangements for the funeral of Bandmaster Patrick Sarsfield Gilmore, who died suddenly Saturday in St. Louis, are likely to be made until the return of Mrs. Gilmore and her daughter, who are now on the way East. Yesterday Col. Camp of the Twenty-second Regiment, of which Mr. Gilmore was bandmaster for many years, was greatly shocked to hear of the great leader's death.

"I saw him on the eve of his departure for St. Louis," he said, "and he seemed to be in his usual health. I never knew him to have an attack of heart disease. Our contract with Mr. Gilmore did not expire until 1891, but what the regiment will do regarding his successor I do not know. Whether there will be a military funeral is a question which will not be decided until the arrival of Mrs. Gilmore."

The New-York Press Club will hold a special meeting to-morrow afternoon at 3:30 o'clock for the purpose of taking suitable action concerning the death of Patrick S. Gilmore. The band leader was a life member of the club, and at all times manifested a deep interest in its progress and welfare.

The New York Times

Published: September 26, 1892
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Fundraising was started in Chicago, St. Louis, and New York to erect statues in his honor. However, his wife and daughter would not give permission for such memorials. Fourteen years later, in 1906, news spread that Gilmore's wife and daughter were destitute. A committee of one-hundred important citizens volunteered to raise funds for their care. An executive committee included President Theodore Roosevelt, former President Grover Cleveland, financier-builder August Belmont Jr., producer David Belasco, financier Austin Corbin, editor Patrick Ford, publisher William Randolph Hearst, New York

Archbishop John H. Farley, New York Governor Frank Higgins, New York Mayor George McClellan, Congressman W. Bourke Cockran, composer Victor Herbert, and director of the United States Marine Corps Band, Francesco Fanciulli.

On May 15, Madison Square Gardens was packed with 12,000 spectators to hear conductors Walter Damrosch, Frank Damrosch, John Philip Sousa, and Victor Herbert lead an orchestra composed of 1,200 musicians from the New York City musicians union. Gilmore was one of the founders of the union, formed for the protection of musicians' welfare. It was estimated that over \$10,000 would be raised for Gilmore's family. However, because of an internal row the union insisted that their members be paid and, as a result, Mrs. Gilmore received a total of \$300—a sad reflection for years of patriotism and dedication to the union and America.

In conclusion, Patrick Sarsfield Gilmore can be seen to have made a huge contribution to the people of America and particularly to the Irish in America. He was grateful for the refuge given to him from the Great Famine, and he continuously felt an obligation to thank America and American citizens for their graciousness. He knew he had a duty to contribute to America's future. His ambition for America was to set it on the course to being recognized by Europe as a center of entertainment and to be treated as an equal with the Old World. He achieved that goal after his European tour in 1878, and he put in place the foundations necessary for a strong entertainment industry. With Gilmore's passing in 1892, came the young and talented John Philip Sousa and the launch of his band just two days later. It is fair to say that without Gilmore, Sousa would have had no footprints to guide his path and no void to fill. His road would have been much harder without Gilmore's guidance. Presumably, this is why Sousa named Gilmore "Father of the American Band."

Illustration: Gilmore died suddenly on September 24, 1892 in St. Louis. The New York Times published this description of people's reactions to his death and some plans for his funeral later that month. The plans reflect part of his longtime membership in New York organizations. Courtesy of The New York Times.



As an Irishman, Gilmore was vital to the Irish in America as a role model during a time they were generally lampooned and ridiculed. He rarely would play a concert without including the music of Irish composers such as Thomas Moore, William Vincent Wallace, or Michael Balfe, in his repertoire. He laid foundations and opened doors for others, such as John McCormack, to follow. But he also put in place standards of excellence followed to this day by thousands of bands and musical organizations across America, from high-school bands to military bands including the “President’s Own” Marine Band. He truly was “Father of the American Band.”¹⁴

Sources

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Photo:
Gilmore was buried in Old Calvary Cemetery in Queens, New York. His gravestone is a few steps from the cemetery entrance. Courtesy of Margaret Fitzpatrick.

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- his latest musical idea—the creation of a police band with details on how it would be formed, why it should be formed, how it would be paid, and how it would operate within the rules of the police force. The structure and content of the band were outlined in detail by Gilmore with the emphasis that the ownership of this band would always remain with the city's citizens. Gilmore stated that "... under such controls New York should have a band worthy of such a great Metropolis." Thirty years later the New York police band was formed. See "A Novel Proposition," *New York Times* (July 27, 1878).
- 4 Gilmore's 22nd Regiment Band was also asked by other regiments to perform on occasion for their regiments. An example is provided in a letter providing Gilmore's response to a request by Col. Emmons Clark of the 7th New York Regiment in November, 1881.
 - 5 Sept. 4, 1878. *New York Times*, "Gilmore's Band in Germany."
 - 6 Sept. 28, 1878. *New York Times*, "Gilmore's Band Coming Home."
 - 7 Sept. 18, 1878. *New York Times*, "The Released Fenian Prisoners."
 - 8 St. Francis Xavier's College, on West Sixteenth Street, was founded in 1847 by Father John Larkin, S.J. The institution later became Xavier High School.
 - 9 Feb. 9, 1886. *New York Times*, "Energetic Irishmen."
 - 10 Jan. 22, 1887. *Irish World and American Liberator*, "Gilmore the Napoleon of Bandmasters." p.1 (full page).
 - 11 Oct.1, 1892. *Irish World and American Liberator*, "Tributes to Gilmore." p.1 (full page).
 - 12 *Proceedings of the Board of Aldermen of the City of New York from Oct 6th 1891–Jan 4th 1892* . vol. CCIV. New York: M.B. Brown .
 - 13 Jan.1, 1892. *New York Times* "The New Year Welcomed." p.2.
 - 14 Today, in all the places that Gilmore visited, performed and lived, there are just two memorials to him. There is one street, in St. Louis, called Gilmore Avenue and one stone plaque, in Ballygar, County Galway, to his memory.

Endnotes

- 1 Gilmore applied himself, organizing completely trained black bands for New Orleans, developed in Boston, to perform in the city for the local people. The effect of having trained black musicians and black bands is something that cannot be underestimated for the future of music and, indeed, the future of black culture and music.
- 2 For the capacity audience they had the luxury of forty restrooms and the first press room with ten telegraphs. Gilmore received telegrams and messages from all over the world, including one from a woman in Liverpool who said that she would sit on her top floor in Liverpool and gaze in the direction of Boston and hope that some of the dulcet sounds would waft its way to her . These concerts were designed to help heal wounds of the Civil War. President Grant and his cabinet attended this event.
- 3 Gilmore's loyalty and support for the police was equal in all ways to his devotion to the military. While he was in New York, every year his band would lead the annual festivities of the New York police department, usually in the June Police Parade when the force was reviewed by the mayor and cheered by the public. In 1875, two years after arriving in New York, Gilmore announced in the press