

★ LISTENING TO THE REVOLUTION ★



★ 250 YEARS OF AMERICAN MUSIC ★

Summer Concert Series *Celebrating 250 Years of American Music!*



JUNE 13, 2026 ~ 2:00 PM
Old Barracks Museum • Trenton, NJ

JULY 4, 2026 ~ 7:30 PM
Washington Crossing State Park • Titusville, NJ

JULY 8, 2026 ~ 6:00 PM
23 South Warren Street • Trenton, NJ

JULY 30, 2026 ~ 6:00 PM
Morven Museum and Garden • Princeton, NJ

Welcome to our Celebration of 250 Years of American Music!

The Blawenburg Band is delighted to perform for you today. Thank you for your continued support, which allows us to keep the music playing.

As a non-profit volunteer organization, we rely on the generosity of our patrons and community. We would also like to extend a special thank you to the following volunteers, whose dedication keeps the band running smoothly every day:

Dr. Jerry E. Rife – Music Director and Conductor

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The Band Board and Grants & Fundraising Committee – Thank you for playing such a vital role in making these concerts a success.

Edward Anastasio (Ephemera Photographics) – Thank you for generously donating your time and talent to capture the band in action during our performances.

Sheila Fernekes – Our sincere thanks for your work in designing, setting up, and managing the production of our printed materials.



This program is made possible, in part, by the Mercer County Cultural and Heritage Commission through funding from the Mercer County Board of Commissioners, and the New Jersey State Council on the Arts, a Partner Agency of the National Endowment of the Arts.

The Blawenburg Band: Captivating Audiences with the Best of Live Music



Widely recognized as the oldest community band in New Jersey, the Blawenburg Band has entertained audiences in Central New Jersey and adjacent Bucks County, PA for 136 years. Founded in 1890 in the Somerset County hamlet of Blawenburg, in a building that still stands today, the Band continues the community band tradition of performing an ambitious repertoire including marches, show tunes, movie themes, Dixieland, opera classics, and original compositions by band members, among other genres.

The Band's musicians are volunteers from all walks of life. They range in age from their teens to their nineties and include students, teachers, research scientists, computer specialists, homemakers, business people, doctors, lawyers, active retirees and many more. Some members bring decades of musical training and professional experience; others are dedicated and accomplished amateurs.

Notwithstanding their varied backgrounds, band members are alike in a most important way: they enjoy making music together, to the delight of young and old.

The Blawenburg Band has become synonymous with holiday parades and community celebrations, and frequently performs for area church socials and retirement centers. Recent performances have included well-known scores from celebrated films and TV series, Broadway themes, and soloists. In past years, the Band hosted guest conductor, noted arranger and band master Loras Schissel, senior musicologist at the Library of Congress and one of the nation's foremost experts on the music of John Philip Sousa, Aaron Copland, Percy Grainger, Leonard Bernstein and others.

About the Conductor Dr. Jerry E. Rife

A prominent educator, conductor and performer, Dr. Jerry Rife celebrates his 41st year as Conductor and Musical Director of the Blawenburg Band. Under his guidance, the band has grown from a local small-town band in 1985 to a 75-member, premier musical organization that has performed hundreds of concerts under his baton.

Dr. Rife's leadership has developed the band's prominence and quality reputation with concert performances at Princeton University's Richardson Auditorium, Longwood Gardens, The Sousa Centennial Ceremony and The White House. In addition, the band's performances are annual traditions at area holiday parades, church socials, community venues and celebrations. In some cases, the band has performed at the same occasions and venues for decades.

Dr. Rife is Professor Emeritus of Music at Rider University in Lawrenceville, New Jersey, where he taught music history courses and was Director of Bands. He served as Chairman of Music in the Fine Arts Department since 1984 and taught graduate-level musicology courses at Westminster Choir College in Princeton, once it became Rider's School of Music. He is a recipient of the prestigious Lindback Award for Excellence in Teaching.

He holds a Ph.D. in musicology from Michigan State University, a Master of Music in clarinet performance and an undergraduate degree in music education from Kansas State University. Prior to his appointment at Rider, Dr. Rife was an Assistant Professor of Musicology at Michigan State University and taught doctoral- and master's-level musicology courses and in the undergraduate music history curriculum.

He studied clarinet performance with Fred Ormand, past president of the International Clarinet Association, Elsa Ludwig-Verdehr of the Verdehr Trio, Clark Brodie of the Chicago Symphony, George Silfies of the St. Louis Symphony and Frank Sidorfsky at Kansas State University.

Dr. Rife has also been a contributing writer for the *Saxophone Journal* since 1988 and has reviewed performances and recordings for *Jazz Player Magazine*. He was the Associate Producer of the documentary



"If You Knew Sousa," a 90-minute film funded by WGBH public television in Boston and aired as a flagship show of the PBS series "The American Experience."

Dr. Rife readily shares his decades of experience and expertise with concert audiences, often with entertaining commentary and anecdotes on marches, film music, other genres and composers. As much as concertgoers enjoy his podium banter, longtime band members likewise commend his stage presence and engagement with the musicians as well as the audience.

As one veteran band member observes, "I thoroughly enjoy playing for our audiences, knowing that they are having as much fun as we are!"





American Music for the Semiquincentennial *The Blawenburg Band*



By Dr. Jerry Rife
Music Director/Conductor

It is a special treat to bring our *Listening to the Revolution: 250 Years of American Music* concert to audiences this summer. We will be performing at the actual sites where pivotal Revolutionary events occurred. As one of the oldest community bands on the East Coast, and the only one located between Trenton and Washington's Crossing, we feel uniquely qualified and honored to perform at the sites where our democracy was created.

I took great care to select music for these concerts that was composed and heard in New Jersey during the Revolutionary War era. This music includes *Chester*, *Washington's March*, *Yankee Doodle*, *The Federal March*, and the original form of *America* from 1770, as well as some obscure works from these times. We will start our concerts with this "authentic" music to set the musical scene firmly in our distant past.

My secondary goal was to perform music reflecting the vibrancy and longevity of our nation over its 250-year growth. This group includes many tunes you will recognize, drawing from folk songs, popular dance music, hymns and spirituals, blues and film scores, marches, musicals, popular songs and jazz. To my thinking, these songs are "essential" music representing in real terms the history of our country—*America*, *The Beautiful*, *Selections from the Civil War*, highlights from *Ragtime-The Musical*, *The Wizard of Oz-The Book and Filmed Musical*, *Amazing Grace*, *The Battle Hymn of the Republic* and many more.

In addition, we have commissioned a brand-new piece, *Under One Flag: Struggle and Resilience*, by Philip Orr, a Hopewell, NJ composer. It contains 49 American melodies that you will recognize. This unique piece highlights in new ways the great diversity of our music over the last 250 years while



looking forward with optimism and a bit of humor to our next quarter-millennia.

Each concert will be loaded with American music from many different time periods in our history. Our goal this summer is to shed new light on how music can portray the energy and spirit of what it means to be an American.

Enjoy!

Philip Orr

Under One Flag: Struggle and Resilience

To mark the 250th anniversary of the *Declaration of Independence*, I aimed to musically capture and celebrate the determination and costly sacrifice of the generations who have fought to gain and defend our freedom.

I approached this in two ways:

first, by composing recurring serious themes, often accompanied by tumultuous drumming, that evoke striving, pushing, and yearning for progress; and second, by weaving together traditional and popular American melodies that have woven us—our richly diverse citizenry—together *Under One Flag*. These are melodies we have both adopted and birthed; songs learned in school, church, camp; danced to, marched to, wept to; songs of pride, protest, whimsy, joy; folk, holiday, protest, spiritual, cowboy, theater, and celebration songs. Some blend smoothly side by side in harmony, while others create dissonance—much like some people you know. Whether the listener recognizes all 49 melodies is less important than feeling the dynamic texture they create overall: the shifting, vibrant landscape of life passed forward to us by freedom-loving people, diverse and resilient. May we continue to persevere.





Free Concert Series
Celebrating 250 Years of American Music

JUNE 13, 2026 ~ 2:00 PM
OLD BARRACKS MUSEUM
101 Barracks Street • Trenton, NJ



The Old Barracks Museum is a popular destination for visitors from all over the world who are interested in learning about the history of the Revolutionary War. The museum preserves the building's history, which was constructed as a military barracks in 1758 during the French and Indian War and later used as a Revolutionary War hospital. It also witnessed Washington's critical victory at the Battle of Trenton. During the 20th century, the Daughters of the American Revolution and the Colonial Dames led the fundraising campaign to purchase the building. Today, the Old Barracks Museum continues to welcome guests from across the globe, sharing the rich history of the site through interpretive programs, exhibits, and preservation so that visitors can appreciate New Jersey's history, the diverse people who made it, and why it matters.



Free Concert Series
Celebrating 250 Years of American Music

JULY 4, 2026 ~ 7:30 PM
WASHINGTON CROSSING STATE PARK
355 Washington Crossing-Pennington Road • Titusville, NJ



Washington Crossing State Park is located just eight miles north of Trenton, at the site of General Washington's historic Christmas Night Crossing of the icy Delaware River prior to his surprise attack at Trenton on December 26, 1776. For almost ten hours, boats and ferries carried men, horses and cannon to the Jersey side. Landing at Johnson's Ferry, the Continental Army faced an arduous nine-mile march to Trenton in a snowstorm. Reaching Trenton in the early morning of December 26th, the Continentals surrounded, defeated and captured over nine hundred Hessian soldiers, securing a morale boosting victory of immeasurable proportions.

The Johnson Ferry House is the only building on either side of the river that was standing at the time of Washington's crossing of the Delaware, making it a "witness" building. The restored George Matthews Harding Mural of the Crossing hangs in the new Washington Crossing State Park Museum & Visitor Center.



Free Concert Series
Celebrating 250 Years of American Music

JULY 8, 2026 ~ 6:00 PM

23 SOUTH WARREN STREET • Trenton, NJ

(concert venue - 10 minute walk from the Trenton Battle Monument)



Our performance takes place at 23 South Warren Street where the *Declaration of Independence* was read to the public on July 8, 1776.

This is a 10 minute walk from the Trenton Battle Monument, where commander George Washington led Continental forces to a pivotal victory during the American Revolutionary War.

Built between 1891 and 1893, the monument was officially completed and dedicated on October 19, 1893. Designed by architect John H. Duncan, the column is crowned with an observation deck and a statue of Washington pointing towards the battle site. The base is styled with bronze plaques as well as statues of John Russell of the 14th Continental Regiment and Blair McClenachan of the Philadelphia Troop of Light Horse. The posterior of the monument contains a historical tablet presented by the New Jersey Society of the Cincinnati. Today, the monument preserves the legacy of Trenton with ongoing community programs such as Patriots Week, annual reenactments of the Battles of Trenton from December 26 through December 31, and community tours and programming.



Free Concert Series
Celebrating 250 Years of American Music

JULY 30, 2026 ~ 6:00 PM

MORVEN MUSEUM AND GARDEN

55 Stockton Street • Princeton, NJ



Morven Museum & Garden in Princeton, NJ is the only original house of a signer of the *Declaration of Independence* that is open to the public. Built in the 1750s for Richard Stockton and his wife, Annis Boudinot Stockton, an early published poet, Morven was home to five generations of the Stockton family and generations of enslaved men and women, as well as immigrant servants. It later became home to the innovative industrialist and humanitarian Robert Wood Johnson, Jr. and served as New Jersey's first governor's mansion. Today, Morven welcomes visitors to explore this layered history through its museum exhibitions, educational and cultural programs, and historic gardens. Learn more at morven.org.

*The Blawenburg Band greatly acknowledges
the generosity of the following donors,
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The Blawenburg Band is a charitable organization under 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code and is listed as such on the IRS website. You can search the IRS website for qualified charities at <https://www.irs.gov/charities-non-profits/tax-exempt-organization-search> and type in the Band's EIN: 22-3602598.

The Blawenburg Band is also registered as a charity with the NJ Office of the Attorney General, Charities Registration Section. Interested individuals can make a gift to the Blawenburg Band by writing a new Will or adding to an existing one.

For more information:
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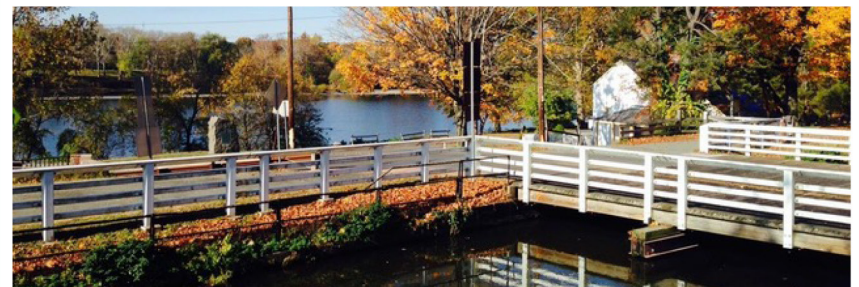
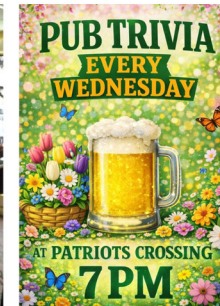
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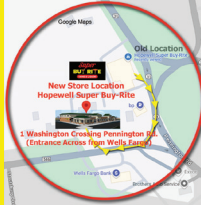
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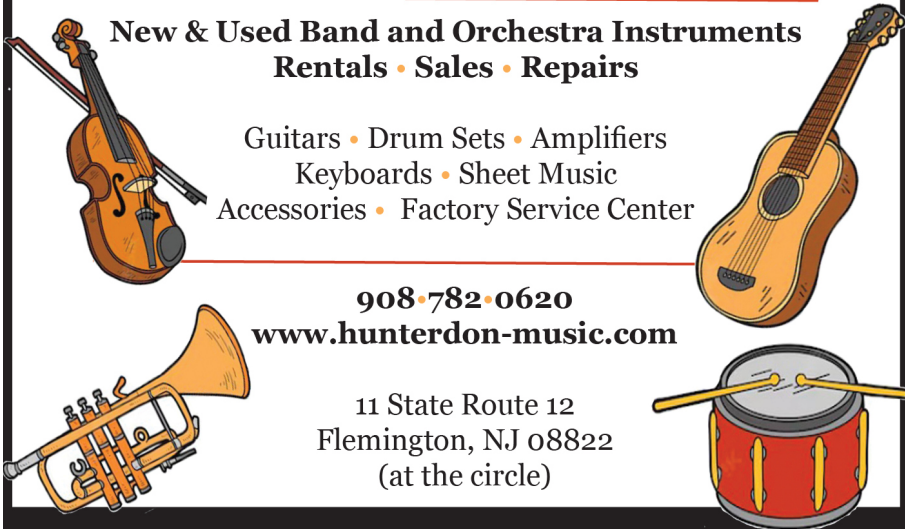
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Your support means the world to us.

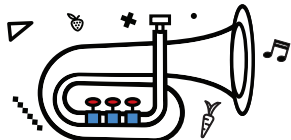
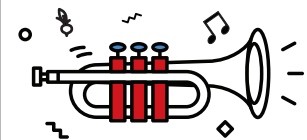
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