

STAR SPANGLED MUSIC *Editions*

# When the Warrior Returns

*Earlier song by F. S. Key to same melody as future anthem*

December 1805



Words by Francis Scott Key  
Music by John Stafford Smith



*(C Major • High Voice)*

Edited by Mark Clague and Andrew Kuster

STAR SPANGLED MUSIC  
*Foundation*



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## When the Warrior Returns, 1805

Lyric by Francis Scott Key (1779–1843); Music by John Stafford Smith (1750–1836)

### Historical Note

Key wrote the lyric “When the Warrior Returns” in late 1805 for an “entertainment” (probably in Washington, D.C.) given by grateful citizens to honor U.S. naval heroes Stephen Decatur, Jr. and Charles Stewart, the leaders of a daring 1804 raid that destroyed the captured USS Philadelphia and thus helped turn the tide of the Tripolitan War in North Africa. According to Boston’s *Independent Chronicle*,<sup>1</sup> Key wrote the words on “an hour’s notice,” while the *Maryland Gazette* noted that the song was “prepared” and “sung by” Key.<sup>2</sup>

The lyric’s five stanzas welcome “the warrior” and “a band of your brothers” to claim their reward of gratitude. Key, as he would for “The Star-Spangled Banner” nine years later, prefers patriotic sentiment to topical detail and never mentions Decatur or Stewart by name. Instead his language rises to the abstract in praise of the bold sons who endured, fought, and fell in “the blaze of their glory.” The third stanza establishes another trope that would return in Key’s future anthem. He signals victory using flag imagery observing in his poetic eye that the “light of the Star Spangled flag of our nation” had obscured the Ottoman Crescent. Key undoubtedly saw the victory in religious terms as well, calling America’s foes “infidels” in the fourth stanza. Yet, the closing couplet of each stanza indicates Key’s vision that patriotic heroism (the laurel) and peace (olive) are intertwined. The closing rhyme of “wave” and “brave” in each verse again anticipates “The Star-Spangled Banner.”

Published as a song lyric to be sung to the melody of the London musicians’ club anthem “The Anacreontic Song,” *Warrior* contradicts claims by others, such as Ferdinand Durand and Key’s brother-in-law and Supreme Court Chief Justice Roger Taney, that they had first connected the lyric of “The Star-Spangled Banner” to its English melody. Nine years earlier, Key demonstrates familiarity with the tune and its unique eight-line, nine-rhyme stanzas. Key’s poetic tag, in its mixture of “laurel” and “olive,” even parallels the symbolic entwining conceit of “myrtle” and “vine” from the original 18th-c. lyric. Published in the 1857 posthumous collection of Key’s poetry, the text here

has been changed in stanzas two and three for clarity and precision. It remains uncertain but is likely that Key himself corrected the text.

### Performance Suggestions

As a song of celebration in praise of military heroes based on a song with the tempo marking “con spirito” [with spirit], the tempo should be faster and the overall color lighter than today’s anthem performances. The text should be declaimed clearly with a rolling triple feel and emphasis on beats 1 and 4. Originally each verse would have been sung through completely by a male soloist (mm. 1–20) with a chorus—probably made up of the party’s guests—echoing the final line (mm. 17–20), probably in unison. There is no keyboard introduction in the original source but the chorus (mm. 17–20 with pickup) can be used for this purpose. According to one source Key’s original performance was accompanied by a pair of clarinets, but any keyboard instrument can be used.

### Sources

The text of this edition is taken from the 1857 collection *Poems of the Late Francis S. Key, ESQ.* (New York: Robert Carter & Brothers), pp. 34–36. The musical is taken from on the original 1779 imprint of “The Anacreontic Song” by Broderip in London.

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<sup>1</sup> Poetry, *Independent Chronicle*, Boston: Adams and Rhodes (December 30, 1805), 4.

<sup>2</sup> “Poet’s Corner,” *Maryland Gazette*, Annapolis (December 19, 1805), C.



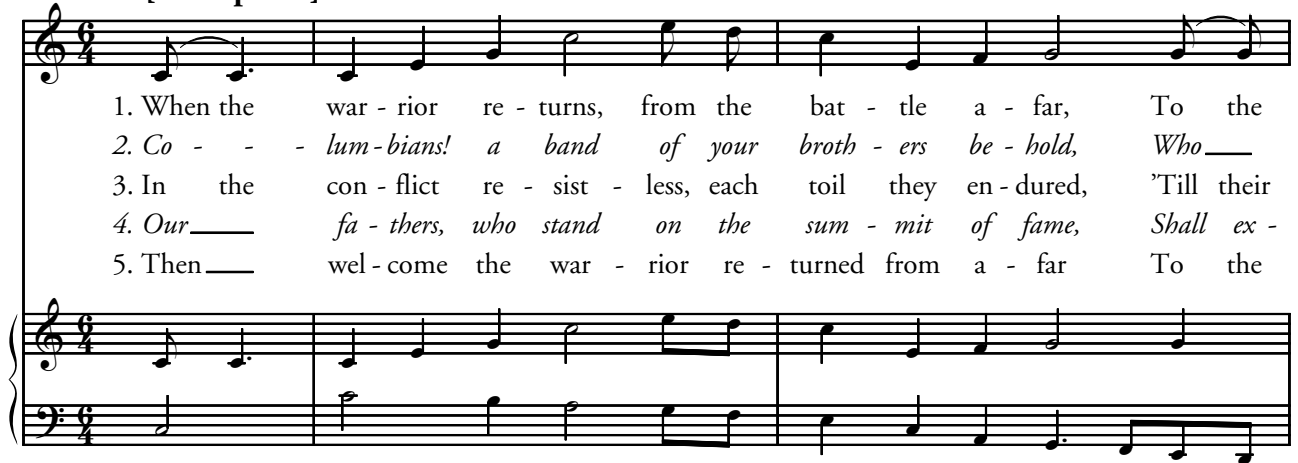
# When the Warrior Returns

**Words**  
**Francis Scott Key**  
(1779–1843)

In honor of Stephen Decatur, Jr. and Charles Stewart  
on their return from the war with the Barbary pirates.  
*Lyrics set to Smith's arrangement of The Anacreontic Song.*  
1805

**Music**  
**Anacreon in Heaven**  
**John Stafford Smith**  
(1750–1836)

[Con spirito]



1. When the war - rior re - turns, from the bat - tle a - far, To the  
2. Co - - - lum - bians! a band of your broth - ers be - hold, Who—  
3. In the con - flict re - sist - less, each toil they en - dured, 'Till their  
4. Our— fa - thers, who stand on the sum - mit of fame, Shall ex -  
5. Then— wel - come the war - rior re - turned from a - far To the

3



home and the coun - try he no - bly de - fend-ed, O!— warm be the wel - come to  
*claim the re - ward of your hearts' warm e - mo - tion, When your cause, when your hon - or, urged*  
foes fled dis - mayed from the war's des - o - la - tion: And— pale beamed the Cres - cent, its  
*- ult - ing - ly hear of their sons the proud sto - ry: How their young bo - soms glow'd with the*  
home and the coun - try he no - bly de - fend-ed: Let the thanks due to val - or now

6



glad - den his ear, And— loud be the joy that his per - ils are end-ed: In the  
*on - ward the bold, In— vain frowned the des - ert, in vain raged the o - cean: To a*  
splen - dor ob - scured By the light of the Star Span - gled flag of our na - tion. Where—  
*pat - ri - ot flame, How they fought, how they fell, in the blaze of their glo - ry. How tri -*  
glad - den his ear, And— loud be the joy that his per - ils are end-ed. In the

## When the Warrior Returns

9

full tide of song let his fame roll a - long, To the feast - flow - ing board let us  
*far dis - tant shore, to the bat - tle's wild roar, They— rushed, your fair fame and your*  
 each ra - diant star gleamed a me - teor of war, And the tur - banded heads bowed to its  
*- um - phant they rode o'er the won - der - ing flood, And— stained the blue wa - ters with*  
 full tide of song let his fame roll a - long, To the feast - flow - ing board let us

12

grate - ful - ly throng, Where, mixed with the o - live, the lau - rel\_\_ shall\_\_ wave, And  
*rights to se - cure: Then, mixed with the o - live, the lau - rel\_\_ shall\_\_ wave, And*  
 ter - ri - ble glare, Now, mixed with the o - live, the lau - rel\_\_ shall\_\_ wave, And  
*in - fi - del blood; How, mixed with the o - live, the lau - rel\_\_ shall\_\_ wave, And*  
 grate - ful - ly throng, Where, mixed with the o - live, the lau - rel\_\_ shall\_\_ wave, And

## Chorus

15

form a bright\_\_ wreath for the brows\_\_ of the\_\_ brave. Where, mixed with the o - live, the  
*form a bright\_\_ wreath for the brows\_\_ of the\_\_ brave. Then, mixed with the o - live, the*  
 form a bright\_\_ wreath for the brows\_\_ of the\_\_ brave. Now, mixed with the o - live, the  
*form a bright\_\_ wreath for the brows\_\_ of the\_\_ brave. How, mixed with the o - live, the*  
 form a bright\_\_ wreath for the brows\_\_ of the\_\_ brave. Where, mixed with the o - live, the

When the Warrior Returns

18

lau - rel shall wave, And form a bright\_ wreath for the brows of the\_ brave.  
*lau - rel shall wave, And form a bright\_ wreath for the brows of the\_ brave.*  
lau - rel shall wave, And form a bright\_ wreath for the brows of the\_ brave.  
*lau - rel shall wave, And form a bright\_ wreath for the brows of the\_ brave.*  
lau - rel shall wave, And form a bright\_ wreath for the brows of the\_ brave.

The musical score consists of three systems. The first system includes a vocal line with lyrics and a piano accompaniment. The second system continues the vocal line with lyrics and piano accompaniment. The third system continues the piano accompaniment. The lyrics are: 'lau - rel shall wave, And form a bright\_ wreath for the brows of the\_ brave.' The lyrics are repeated in italics for the second and fourth lines. The piano accompaniment features a steady bass line and chords in the right hand. A trill (tr) is marked above the final note of the vocal line in the first system.