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A Star-Spangled Bicentennial

A close-up, artistic photograph of the American flag, focusing on the stars and stripes. The stars are white and five-pointed, set against a dark blue field. The stripes are red and white, with visible stitching. The image is slightly blurred, giving it a soft, ethereal feel.

A Star-Spangled Bicentennial

A CONVERSATION WITH
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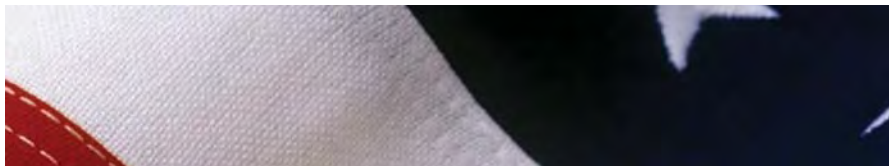
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Sunday, September 14, 2014,



marks the bicentennial of “The Star-Spangled Banner.” Written by amateur poet and lawyer Francis Scott Key in 1814, the song became the official national anthem of the United States of America by act of congress in 1931. The American Choral Directors Association, along with the Star Spangled Music Foundation, America Sings, the American Music Institute of the University of Michigan, the Library of Congress, and others are joining forces to inspire a national celebration of the anthem and American music. Friday, September 12, 2014, has been named “Star-Spangled Music Day,” and Americans throughout the country are invited to celebrate their musical heritage by singing the national anthem (see inset on page 8). The anthem’s anniversary provides a powerful opportunity to nurture community as well as citizenship and, further, to advocate for the power of song in American life.

A Star-Spangled Bicentennial



A Lyric History

The story of “The Star-Spangled Banner,” with its several dozen antecedents and offshoots, is the history of the United States of America itself. This history traces not only important events and national heroes but political conflict, philosophical debates, immigration, war, changing social mores, protests, and calls for civil rights—all embedded in a dynamic musical account of the democratic experiment.

The tale begins in London around 1775 with the writing of “The Anacreontic Song,” the club anthem of an amateur musicians’ society and supper club. Set to music by John Stafford Smith, the popular lyric escaped the confines of club ritual and came to be printed in collections and parodied in London’s many theaters. The tune arrived in the new United States by 1790, where it served as a core melody in an active broadside ballad tradition. Poets

responded to momentous happenings or political controversy in verses set to popular tunes. “Anacreon,” as it was known, became the vehicle for more than eighty-five different lyrics before 1820, so Key’s famous effort was just one of many.

These songs celebrated America’s Independence Day (July 4), praised George Washington, and articulated early partisan conflicts. Best known was “Adams and Liberty” (1798), mustered in defense of the nation’s second president, John Adams, during the so-called Quasi-War with France. For Francis Scott Key, the tune was definitively American, not British, and with its energetic, arching melody, it made a natural choice as a melodic vehicle to celebrate the nation’s unlikely victory at Baltimore in “Defense of Fort McHenry” (the original title of his song that would soon become known as “The Star-Spangled Banner”).

Key’s “Banner” quickly became popu-

lar and entered the repertory of American patriotic song, alongside “Yankee Doodle,” “America,” “Chester,” and the nation’s default anthem, “Hail, Columbia!” Each subsequent performance of Key’s future anthem inscribed words and melody more and more deeply into the collective national consciousness. Galvanized by the US Civil War, “The Star-Spangled Banner” came to represent not only the flag but the nation itself. Most significantly, the song inspired Secretary of the Navy Theodore Roosevelt in 1889 and President Woodrow Wilson in 1917 to revise military regulations to name “The Star-Spangled Banner” the official anthem of the US military. It would take Congress another fourteen years to officially recognize what had already become obvious to the general public. On March 3, 1931, “The Star-Spangled Banner” became the national anthem of the United States of America.

Recording Project

To explore the history of Key’s anthem, the American Music Institute at the University of Michigan released *Poets & Patriots: A Tuneful History of “The Star-Spangled Banner.”* This two-disc set of thirty-seven tracks features historically informed performances of “The Anacreontic Song,” the first 1814 sheet music edition of “The Star-Spangled Banner,” plus the genuine drinking song parodies from which the tune gained its reputation.

Also featured are temperance, abolitionist, and other protest lyrics that used the anthem’s tune in musical arguments to reshape the nation. Hundreds of sets of lyrics were written to this tune, but musical scores for the most important ones are compiled in the *Star Spangled Songbook*. The University of Michi-



Star-Spangled Music Day: Friday, September 12, 2014

The American Choral Directors Association is partnering with the Star Spangled Music Foundation and others to inspire

“Star-Spangled Music Day”—a day in which schools across the nation are encouraged to celebrate the anthem’s bicentennial with musical programs, classroom discussions, Banner birthday parties, and other events. Please share your experiences via social media and post videos of your group singing the Banner using #Anthem200 to connect with us and others across the nation. Visit <starspangledmusic.org> for historical information, recordings, and free musical scores.



Jerry Blackstone conducting a recording session for *Poets & Patriots*.
For videos, see <www.youtube.com/starspangledmusic>.

gan's director of choral activities, Jerry Blackstone, conducted the recordings. Musicologist Mark Clague uncovered, researched, selected, and edited the sheet music along with choral director and composer Andrew Kuster, who created the performance scores and produced the recordings. In hopes of sharing their insights with others, the trio sat down to discuss the experience and the song...

Conversation: The Anthem in American Life



The authors:
Blackstone, Clague, and Kuster

ANDREW KUSTER—Today, Americans sing “The Star-Spangled Banner” before every sporting event, and most orchestras perform it to begin their season-opening concerts. But in our tradition, Jerry, in choral music...

JERRY BLACKSTONE—We never do it. And if we did, it certainly wouldn't be one of these historical versions like those we've recorded. We'd just find some arrangement to which everyone could sing along.

MARK CLAGUE—It surprises me that the anthem is so rarely sung in choral concerts.

BLACKSTONE—It was sung more often after the tragedy of 9/11, at least for a while. I recall that “America the Beautiful” tended to be performed more, but there was certainly renewed fervor for “The Star-Spangled Banner.” I remember a School of Music concert here at the University of Michigan the Friday after 9/11. We performed the Zaninelli arrangement of the Banner. Everybody sang it: the audience and all the choirs. The whole community came together. The audience even sang “America the Beautiful” on its own! In the silence that followed the adagietto from Mahler Five, an audience member started singing, “O beautiful for spacious skies...” unaccompanied, and others simply joined in!

CLAGUE—I remember 9/11 vividly with the Banner in mind, because believe it or not, I was already working on this research project. What I recall is that Key's anthem largely moved to the background. I heard “God Bless America” more frequently, but the minute cruise missiles started going off toward Iraq, the Banner came to the forefront again.

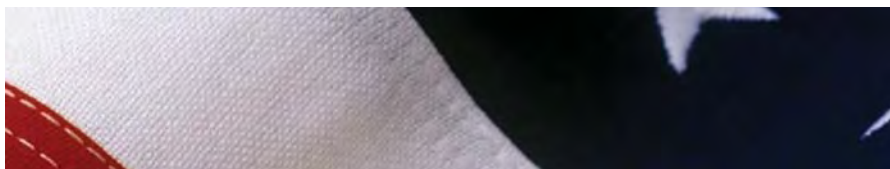
BLACKSTONE—Attending the first Michigan football game after 9/11 was overwhelming for me. When the flag was brought in, a hush came over the 100,000 people in the stands. The singing of “The Star-Spangled Banner” was incredible. People really sang.

1976 United States Bicentennial

CLAGUE—My memories of the anthem—and really, the whole field in musicology for researching the music of the United States—was born because of the 1976 US bicentennial. In 1974, the Society for American Music was formed in anticipation. I think that bicentennial celebration is one of the reasons why I've been attracted to studying the Banner on the occasion of its 200th birthday. I was nine years old on July 4, 1976, so the bicentennial was an influential time in my life. My mom took pictures of me that day riding a Schwinn “Stingray” banana-seat bike (my pride and joy) with red, white, and blue streamers on the handlebars and flags taped everywhere. I rode it in our neighborhood parade.

BLACKSTONE—Nineteen seventy-six was one of my very first years of teaching, and choirs had to perform American music for the bicentennial. But what do you do? I programmed arrangements of patriotic songs, and we did Barber and Rorem (*From an Unknown Past*, as I re-

A Star-Spangled Bicentennial



call), but there was just not a lot of great patriotic music available then. We did music by William Billings and other very early American music, but what about the nineteenth century? J.C. Penney's department store published a collection—I probably still have it—of patriotic choral music. It went to every school in the country and was really quite good. I hope our project works the same way and the *Star Spangled Songbook* offers some new options and brings a fresh perspective to the anthem story.

KUSTER—The Second New England School of American composers from 1890 to 1920, including Amy Beach, George Chadwick, and Horatio Parker, all wrote interesting music—much in the late-Romantic style of Brahms or Elgar. But their music was hard to find in 1976.

“**The anthem becomes ingrained in our subconscious and unifies the nation through song.**”

The Banner in Sports

CLAGUE—The tradition of singing the anthem at each and every sporting event actually starts during World War II, but with hockey and in Canada. Canada entered WWII before the United States and began playing their anthem before games. So, when their teams played in the United States, American teams honored their international visitors by playing “O Canada” and, of course, they played “The Star-Spangled Banner.”

As war loomed, sports teams ramped up patriotic symbolism in part to galvanize the country for war and

in part to protect their own economic interests. After Pearl Harbor was attacked, the Banner was sung at each and every game, and when the war was over, we had established a tradition that continues today. The danger is that overexposure cheapens the anthem as a cliché, but the advantage is that the song is ever more deeply ingrained in the aural subconscious of everyone in the United States, enhancing its role of unifying the nation through song.

If you search the Internet for how the anthem first entered sports, you'll probably read about Babe Ruth and the 1918 World Series. It's a great story, and



Chesapeake: Summer of 1814— a patriotic cantata by Michael Gandolfi

The Reno Philharmonic Orchestra and Chorus under Music Director Laura Jackson and Chorus Director Jennifer Tibben commissioned acclaimed “Atlanta School” composer Michael Gandolfi, visual artist Anne Patterson, and lyricist Dana Bonstrom to create the patriotic cantata *Chesapeake: Summer of 1814*, a work for chorus and orchestra inspired by “The Star-Spangled Banner.” The twenty-seven-minute work premiered on March 17, 2013, to resounding success and is now available in two versions: one for full chorus and orchestra, and another for two soloists (in place of choir). For more information, visit www.renophil.com/chesapeake/.



it's a true one, but it's not the "first time" the Banner was played at a baseball game. That date was May 1862, during the Civil War, when a baseball promoter first put a fence around a baseball diamond and started charging admission. Ticket income allowed the teams to hire a band, and the ensemble played "The Star-Spangled Banner," probably in support of Union troops. Every game performance of the anthem had to wait until the 1930s for two technologies to make it economically feasible: recording and loud speakers.

The Banner and the US Civil War

BLACKSTONE—Did people know "The Star-Spangled Banner" during the Civil War?

CLAGUE—Absolutely. There's an explosion of published settings beginning in the 1850s. As tension between the North and South rose, "The Star-Spangled Banner" became increasingly popular. You also started to see instrumental variation sets on the melody.

BLACKSTONE—It was probably a Northern song.

CLAGUE—It was, although Key's family owned a plantation in Maryland called Terra Rubra, and they owned slaves. Key became US district attorney general in 1833 under Andrew Jackson—that is, a Southern president who defended slavery. Thus, Key defended slavery in court. Key was also one of the founders of the American Colonization Society, which was the "back to Africa" group that created Liberia. Their approach to solving the problem of slavery was to send Africans in America to Africa.

Key's relationship to slavery is complicated, though. In his law practice, Key also defended the rights of slaves—it depended on which side he was work-

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ing for. He also freed some of his own slaves, I believe. He lived at a turbulent time in race relations and in a place—Washington DC—which, like New Orleans, was a place of relative freedom with many free blacks. As the Civil War loomed on the horizon, however, racial boundaries were under pressure and often reinforced.

KUSTER—Francis Scott Key died in 1843 before the Civil War, which did not begin until nearly two decades later in April 1861.

CLAGUE—Yes, Francis Scott Key died on January 11. He was sixty-three years old. At the start of the Civil War, some in the South claimed Key and his famous song as theirs because he was from a slave state and owned slaves himself. By 1862, however, Confederates were singing “Dixie,” and a song titled “Farewell to the Star Spangled Banner” was published in the Confederate capitol of Richmond.

Francis Scott Key: Life and Poetry

KUSTER—Key wrote the words to the Banner during the War of 1812, but the words carry on, change meaning over time, and might have a different meaning for us today.

CLAGUE—Three things jump out for me about the history of the lyric. First, in many ways Key was more “American” than most people of his time. Most people considered themselves citizens of a state first, not of the nation. Key, however, lived in the District of Columbia, which was of course part of no state. He worked for the federal government and had been affiliated with federalism for decades. So, in some ways, he was not so much a Marylander as he was an American.



Portrait of Francis Scott Key, attributed to Joseph Wood, about 1825.
The Walters Art Museum, Baltimore

Second, Key was present at the burning of Washington. His wife and children had to flee their home, but he was in the Georgetown militia. So this defines Key’s own emotional journey before writing the anthem’s lyric—he goes from despair to relief and then triumph. He witnessed one of the most embarrassing defeats of the war—of American history, really—and as a result, a month

later he was on a British ship trying to negotiate the freedom of one of the people taken prisoner in the aftermath of that battle: Dr. William Beanes. Like any logical person, Key would have feared that the British would be similarly victorious at Fort M’Henry (see photo on opposite page). Everybody thought the same thing would happen and Baltimore would be burned. Miraculously, it



Fort McHenry, the site of inspiration for Francis Scott Key's now-famous lyric. Baltimore, Maryland. Photographs in the Carol M. Highsmith Archive, Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division.

wasn't. The forces of the US army and Baltimore Militia held. So there was a huge emotional reversal for Key, which was what inspired his song.

The third thing is that a typical broadside ballad of the day written in honor of a military victory would be a recitation of names—a list of the victorious heroes and defeated leaders of the enemy. But Key didn't know all that many details; he was stuck aboard a ship during the bombardment. Certainly he knew the names of the British commanders; he had just met with them. But again, Key doesn't mention them, and if he had, we wouldn't sing the song today—it'd just be an historical curiosity, not a timeless symbol of the nation. So what makes the Banner work as an anthem is Key's affinity for philosophical abstraction; he writes about justice and truth and bravery and courage and God's trust and perseverance and all of these idealistic things. He offers a vision for the future of the nation, not a narration of the present.

BLACKSTONE—What other poems

did Key write? Was he wealthy? Did he come from a privileged background?

CLAGUE—After Key's death, a single, slim volume of his poetry was published in 1857. Most of the poems were little gifts to family members or eulogies for relatives who passed away. He only wrote two patriotic songs and another song verse; he also wrote lyrics for several Episcopal hymns. He was an amateur, certainly, in that he wrote poetry for pleasure and for those he loved.

Professionally, Key was a lawyer and well educated. He was pretty well off financially, but he still worked for a living. The War of 1812 was tough for him financially, though. He had a wife and five children at the time and bills to pay, but there was not much work because the government was at war. So, he was reading literature and poetry at the office.

The Words and Music

KUSTER—So many of the old patriotic songs are based on British tunes.

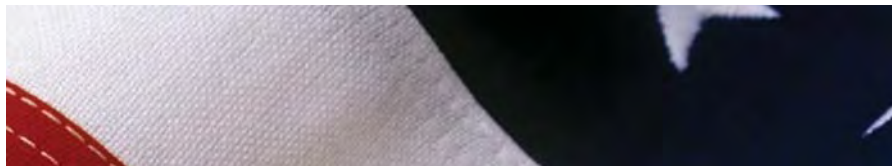
CLAGUE—Yes. Because the United States was a former British colony, most of the well-known tunes in our broadside repertory are of British origin. It's no surprise that "God Save the Queen/King" became "My Country 'Tis of Thee." "The Star-Spangled Banner" and the "Liberty Song"—all of these tunes are British.

The Banner's source tune, "The Anacreontic Song," has a unique and unusual rhyme scheme: octameter with an extra internal rhyme in line five. All told, there are eight lines with nine rhymes. So if you find a text that's eight lines long and has nine rhymes, there's no controversy about what tune it belongs to, because "Anacreon" is the only tune that fits. One of the apocryphal stories too often told about the Banner is that someone other than Key matched text to tune—a musician named Ferdinand Durang gets credit or sometimes even Key's brother-in-law, Supreme Court Chief Justice John Taney, is claimed to have been the musical matchmaker.

BLACKSTONE—So Key wrote this poem thinking of the music at the same time?

CLAGUE—Absolutely. The "poem" is not really a poem at all; it's a lyric. And we know this for two reasons. First, Key had used the tune before in 1805 for a song titled "When the Warrior Returns"; second, you don't accidentally write a lyric with eight lines and nine rhymes. Key wrote "When the Warrior Returns" for a DC dinner party. Three newspapers printed Key's lyric, and each one said something like, "About an hour before the party, Esquire Francis Scott Key got the idea of writing a lyric in honor of Commodore Stephen Decatur and Lieutenant Charles Stewart, who had just returned victorious from fighting the Barbary pirates." Again the lyric

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celebrates a great military victory, and the up-tempo, athletic tune works well for this purpose.

KUSTER—The words even use the term “star-spangled.”

CLAGUE—Several words in the lyric connect “Warrior” with the Banner. It uses the phrase “star-spangled flag of our nation,” the rhymes wave/brave and desolation/nation, and includes similar themes of freedom and liberty. So it seems inconceivable to me—and this is the general consensus—that nine years later Key happens to write a lyric with exactly the same weird rhyme scheme, using a lot of the same specific words, but that gets matched up later to the only tune that would work by somebody else. I think it’s difficult to argue that Key didn’t have the “Anacreontic” melody in mind while he wrote the Banner’s lyrics.

BLACKSTONE—Some might not realize that Key didn’t write the music. Key was the lyricist and wrote the words to fit a well-known melody.

Community and Meaning

KUSTER—The tune for “The Star-Spangled Banner” was the club anthem of the Anacreontic Society, written by a club member to sing the club’s story and to explain why the club existed. The members joined in at the end—for the chorus. Interestingly, “The Star-Spangled Banner” begins with the words “O say can you see,” so that even if a soloist sings it alone, the words bring the audience into the story. There’s intrinsically a sense of community that calls for everyone to join in—a unity. Maybe that’s why it works so well with choir.

CLAGUE—The melody is part of it too. Some feel the wide range makes it too hard to sing, but it also requires commitment and energy, which the typical anthem with a compass of only a fifth doesn’t really need. For the Banner, you have to take a deep breath and give it your best shot to make the high notes sound.

BLACKSTONE—Bravery!

CLAGUE—And that sense of energy, so that when the country is challenged and questioned, this song responds with strength and commitment. That sense of determined response doesn’t necessarily happen with a tune like “America the Beautiful,” even though some might prefer its sense of wonder and peace as our national symbol of song.

KUSTER—In many settings, the high part is the most beautiful part: “And the rocket’s red glare...” When we recorded Stravinsky’s setting for the project, the singers wanted to keep singing it even though we had perfect takes. One of them said, “You know, we have to do verse two again.” And I listened to the tape later... It was perfect. He just wanted to sing it again.

BLACKSTONE—It’s always puzzling to me when people say “The Star-Spangled Banner” is so hard. And then they back off; they don’t really go for it. While “America the Beautiful” is wonderful to sing, there’s something just absolutely thrilling about “The Star-Spangled Banner.” Part of it is that we don’t sing as much as a community anymore. The vast majority of folks never sing, and if they do, they don’t really sing it. When I’m at a game, I hear most people around me singing the opening, but by the time we get to the high parts, many sing down an octave or not at all.

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Con Spirito

O, say can you see by the dawn's early light, What so
proudly we hail'd at the twilight's last gleaming, Whose broad stripes & bright stars thro'
perilous fight, O'er the ramparts we watch'd, were so gallantly streaming, And the
Rockets' red glare, the Bombs bursting in air, Gave proof through the night that our

(Adapt'd & Arr'd by T.C.) (PL 1.)

2^d time Chorus.
Flag was still there, O! say does that star spangled Banner yet wave, O'er the
Land of the free, and the home of the brave.

Sym. L.H.

On the shore dimly seen through the mists of the deep,
Where the foe's haughty host in dread silence reposes,
What is that which the breeze, o'er the towering steep,
As it fitfully blows, half conceals, half discloses,
Now it catches the gleam of the morning's first beam,
In full glory reflected new shines in the stream,
'Tis the star spangled banner, O long may it
O'er the land of the free, and the home of the brave.

(3)
And where is that land who so sentimentally swore
That the home of war and the battle's confusion,
A home and a country shall leave us no more,
Their blood has wash'd out their foul footsteps' pollution,
No refuge could save the hireling and slave,
From the terror of flight or the gloom of the grave,
And the star spangled banner, in triumph doth
O'er the Land do.

(4)
O, thus be it ever, when freemen shall stand,
Between their lov'd home, and the war's desolation,
Blest with vict'ry and peace, may the heav'n rescued land,
Praise the Pow'r that hath made and preserved us a nation,
Then conquer we must, when our cause it is just,
And this be our motto, "In God is our Trust."
And the star spangled banner, in triumph shall wave,
O'er the Land do.

For the Flute.
Con Spirito

(Adapt'd & Arr'd by T.C.) (PL 2.)

The first printing of "The Star Spangled Banner" (1814), facsimile courtesy of the William L. Clements Library, University of Michigan.

KUSTER—Was American music education a higher priority years ago? Did people sing more in public?

BLACKSTONE—Seems like kids used to sing patriotic songs more in elementary school. I grew up singing patriotic songs in school. Everyone knew "My Country 'Tis of Thee." That was even a piece we used for University of Michigan Men's Glee Club auditions, but by 2000, we needed to hand applicants a photocopy of the music because many had never heard the song or didn't know the words.

Drinking Song Misnomer

KUSTER—Wasn't the original Anacreontic tune a drinking song?

CLAGUE—The drinking song issue is vexed and overblown. In some ways, it's true: the Anacreontic Song ends with a toast, and it's a joyful, raucous song. But when someone says, "Oh, the anthem is an old drinking song," I think of a bunch of drunken guys holding tankards of ale, rocking back and forth in a smoke-filled pub. This was not the case. The Anacreontic Society was a gentleman's club. Its meetings were held in a classy, prestigious restaurant. Think wine, powdered

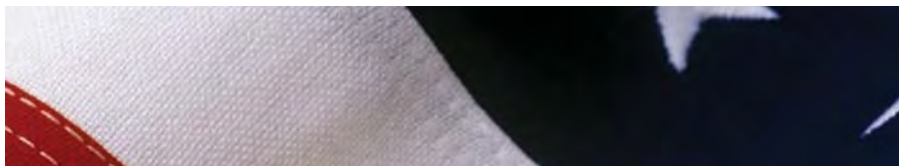
white wigs, and joining together to sing this song about liberty and friendship.

KUSTER—Philosophizing.

CLAGUE—It's a very upper-crust (or at least aspiring professional class) thing to do. Those club meetings started with a two-hour symphony concert, then dinner; then they sang "The Anacreontic Song," and afterwards it was like a Friar's Club concert. The song created a jovial atmosphere, but its bawdy reputation is undeserved. This reputation, however, comes from three places.

First, the eighteenth-century restaurant they met at was named the Crown

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and Anchor Tavern, so that confuses the issue. Also, there were two later sets of lyrics that used the same tune that talk about drunken sailors (we recorded these): “The New Bibbo” and “Jack Oakum in the Suds.” Finally, the debate in Congress about making the Banner the official US anthem took place in the 1920s during the Prohibition Era, so the song’s ribald association with alcohol was an effective gambit for those opposing the song; they exaggerated the connection.

BLACKSTONE—Bawdiness shouldn’t automatically be associated with taverns and men getting together. Before football or hockey games—even baseball at that point—became part of the national mentality, you got together with your friends, your buddies, and society was more separate, so no women were there, and you sang about important things and everyday things.

Interpretation

CLAGUE—During our recording sessions for the *Poets & Patriots* project, Jerry, you did such a great job of bringing the song to life, treating it not as an artless throwaway or overused cliché but as an expressive and powerful musical experience. Were there things about the Banner that the recording experience taught you or interpretive decisions you wanted to feature?

BLACKSTONE—Your comments on the song’s history were certainly helpful in shaping my ideas regarding tempo and emotional intent. But recording two-dozen tracks with basically the same melody was a new challenge for me! I think the hardest thing was to make the texts interesting in so many, not identical but pretty similar, musical settings. In strophic music generally when you have several verses, it’s already a challenge to

make each verse come alive. So we responded to the words carefully, looking for emotional clues that would shape the performance and suggest color.

The song honoring George Washington’s death, for example, invited us to slow down and use a darker timbre. The original Carr Banner (see page 15) is fast and celebratory. We also experimented with different voicings, solo and tutti, TTBB and SATB. If you’re doing more than one “Star-Spangled Banner” or all these variants, it’s challenging to keep it fresh. For the singers, the biggest challenge was to sing what was actually on the page rather than what they knew from habit. Overall, I think music lovers of all kinds will connect with this whole set of recordings. It was a revelation for me to experience them all.

KUSTER—The rhythmic and harmonic variations were subtle, just close enough to what we already know to be tricky. During the sessions, we sang the same tune over and over again but with different words evoking contrasting moods, so some settings are much slower than others. Most of it had to do with the text. We talked about the original Carr setting of Key’s Banner as a song of triumph, of celebration—they had just won the Battle of Baltimore against a better trained and more equipped foe, and they were surprised and excited. Therefore, the music moves—it’s a party piece and the tempo is marked “Con Spirito.”

CLAGUE—Jerry’s use of rubato was especially interesting to me as one of the singers, particularly when we sang three or all four of Key’s verses. With multiple verses, I think you have to move through the text. Performing just the first verse, you can make it very majestic and weighty, but the anthem also loses something when it’s so slow. Maybe the

Banner Educational Resources

The Star Spangled Music Foundation offers many useful national anthem-related resources, such as free educational materials (e.g., sheet music, lyrics, informative scholarly essays, and a YouTube channel with moving performances). Its *Poets & Patriots* double compact disk recording (available from iTunes and Amazon) contains thirty-seven historically informed performances of “The Star-Spangled Banner” and its historic antecedents and variants, plus related patriotic songs. Scores for selections featured in *Poets & Patriots* can be found in the foundation’s *Star Spangled Songbook*. Alternate transpositions and ensemble configurations ((e.g., SATB, SSA, TTBB) can be downloaded for free from <starspangledmusic.org.>



most powerful rendition for me in terms of rubato and flexibility was when we sang the military's "Service Version."

In the last verse, Jerry broadened the tempo unexpectedly as we approached the phrase "In God is Our Trust." It was powerful, but it wouldn't have worked so well if Jerry hadn't been moving through the text up to that point. Even if you sing only one verse, a bit of expansion can make the last phrase more dramatic, even spiritual, but it only works if the music anticipating the ritardando is fast enough to create a sense of contrast and arrival.

There's a lot of flexibility in how one might perform the Banner, and this flexibility is part of the tradition. Over time the tempo has slowed down, the song has become more sacred. The rhythms have changed a bit too. The earliest settings don't use many dotted rhythms, which today tend to give it a stentorian, pesante character. The original's even eighths made it easier to sing "con spirito."

BLACKSTONE—Dotted rhythms tend to be patriotic, like in the "Battle Hymn of the Republic." Whenever I hear a dotted rhythm, I think that way.

KUSTER—Martial. Even in Monteverdi, dotted rhythms are connected with the martial. And with Kurt Weill, all the music around World War I incorporates military band music; everything is overwhelmingly dotted.

BLACKSTONE—It's interesting to vary the tempo substantially, and we did on these recordings. Just go to football games, and you'll hear the tempo vary radically from week to week. I've heard it really slow, and it can be quite strong and fast depending on who's conducting. I'd bet much slower tempi were chosen after 9/11.

Programming

KUSTER—Jerry, how would you incorporate a performance of the original 1814 version of "The Star-Spangled Banner" or maybe some of the other songs based on the Anacreontic melody into a concert program?

BLACKSTONE—Well, ninety percent of Americans have no idea there's more than one verse to "The Star-Spangled Banner," so performing the other verses would be something in itself. If I were to program some of the alternate historical versions back to back, I'd vary them by dynamic level and who sings them—in unison or parts, accompanied or unaccompanied. Just the fact that you're performing different words to the Banner melody will be quite surprising to a lot of people.

There are so many versions and variations available now because of your work with the Star Spangled Music Foundation. "Adams and Liberty," for example, and the original song "To

Anacreon in Heaven" would be great to feature. Even Francis Scott Key's earlier song that uses the same melody, "When the Warrior Returns," would be wonderful for contemporary audiences to hear. For all of these you have to bring the text to life.

I might perform a set of Banner variants for a concert segment in which three or four would be woven around other Americana or works having to do with a theme such as freedom. Perhaps an early version, then Stravinsky, then today's traditional version—so it's not just a set of Banners, because that's a challenge to keep interesting. Perhaps one could even weave it together with some sort of narrative, which could be very informative for the audience.

An especially interesting program might address the influence of war on music and "The Star-Spangled Banner" in particular. What caused it to go from being an amateur musicians' club song to being raised to its place of honor in our national consciousness today? **CJ**



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