

QUARTER NOTES

MRP

QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER OF THE MUSIC REVITALIZATION PROJECT, INC. OCT/NOV/DEC 2001 VOL 2-1SSUE 4

NOTES FROM THE PRESIDENT

The tragic events of September 11 have undoubtedly stirred strong emotions in all of us, emotions that need the proper release. I've always been amazed how during times like this, music and song play such an important role in the way we as humans deal with complex situations and release our emotional energy. Just look at how *God Bless America* became our nation's rallying call out of despair and hopelessness. *America the Beautiful* sung and played at the National Cathedral instilled comfort and inner strength to all of us who watched.

Music, like no other form of expression, soothes the soul and lifts the heart. No doubt there will be several new compositions inspired by that fateful day that will seek to capture the feelings and grip us in their interpretation and delivery. Such is the awesome force of music, the most powerful form of human expression.

On behalf of the members of the MRP, I want to extend our heartfelt sympathies to the families and friends of the victims of this terrible tragedy.



Dave Rolince
Dave Rolince, Pres. MRP

INSTRUMENT PETTING ZOO HITS A HIGH NOTE

Our instrument "Petting Zoo" at the Attleboro Wednesday Market was a big hit again this summer. Kids and adults alike had the chance to try out a trumpet, clarinet, flute, trombone, saxophone and French horn under the cover of the new canopy we bring to outdoor MRP events. Not only does the canopy provide excellent cover, but it also helps us stand out in the crowd (as if the sounds of the instruments don't already do that!).

We had the good fortune this summer of having the "Petting Zoo" featured in the Sun

Chronicle, complete with several photos of kids checking out the instruments. In addition, we spoke to dozens of new people about the goals and objectives of the MRP, and even received a donation of a flute toward our instrument lending program. We'd like to extend a special thanks to MRP supporters Marie and Tanya Savas, Terry White, Barbara Kudzol, Gillian Velmer and Natalee Rolince for volunteering their time in the "Zoo."

ANNUAL MEETING SET FOR OCTOBER 12

You're Invited!

The MRP will hold its Annual Meeting on Friday, October 12 at 7:30pm. This event is open to all MRP members and supporters. The Annual Meeting is where we review the accomplishments of the past year and talk about plans for the coming year. It's a fun time and great opportunity for our supporters to learn more about the MRP. Call Dave Rolince at 508 226 6897 for more information and directions to the event.



RESERVE A HOLIDAY MUSIC CARD NOW!

Looking for that unique gift for the person who has everything? How about a 15 minute live concert on their doorstep. Musical Christmas Cards is the MRP's annual fund raiser where a group of volunteer musicians knock on the lucky recipients door and play

a medley of seasonal selections. This year we are offering "Cards" on the weekends between Dec 7 and Dec 22. The price is \$25, fully tax deductible, and all proceeds go to the MRP to help fund activities for the coming year. Call John Zawislak at 508 549 0923 for more information and to reserve a "Card." In addition, anyone interested in volunteering their time and talent by playing their instruments, should also call John.

...AND THE WINNER IS...

The MRP scholarship committee is pleased to announce that the 2001 scholarship has been awarded to Alyson Roberts of Attleboro. Alyson, a trumpet player at Attleboro High School, will be pursuing a Music Education degree at Bridgewater State College in the fall. Congratulations Alyson!! Thanks and best of luck to all who submitted applications this year.

MUSIC THROUGH THE CENTURIES: AMERICA THE BEAUTIFUL

The recent world events have triggered a renewed passion for Patriotism in America. We see and hear all around us the sights and sounds that reflect a new awareness of a national pride. As we expand our chests in this pride, as we raise our fists in defiance, as we bow our heads in prayer, as tears roll down our cheeks for the loss of lives, for acts of heroism, and a longing for things to be back the way they once were...there is Music. Music helps us express our feelings and provides a backdrop for our real life experiences, no matter what emotion drives a particular event in our lives. Some of this music is new; some has been around as long as this country is old. Some keeps coming back again and again, for it is the kind of music that never loses touch with our humanity and our needs.

Today, as flags are being flown all over America, there are many songs that help us

communicate as one voice. That voice most often seeking to sing of Patriotism and Love of Country. There are 3 songs that are being sung every day all over America in recent weeks. Rather than the usual biography in this issue, I thought it would be interesting to look into the history of these three inspirational songs.

O Beautiful for Spacious Skies, or America the Beautiful (1895)

In 1926 there was a strong push to adopt this hymn as the national anthem. Even today there are those who would prefer it to the *Star Spangled Banner*. It is a song that started in the heart of a poet who developed an intense love for her country during a trip that took her from her home at Wellesley College in Massachusetts to Colorado.

In 1893 Katherine Lee Bates (1859-1929), poet and teacher, went on a prairie wagon tour of Pikes Peak. At the top, Katherine would later recall, "we stood at last on that Gate-of-Heaven summit...and gazed in wordless rapture over the far expanse of mountain ranges and sea-like sweep of plain. It was then and there that the opening lines of *America the Beautiful* sprang into being." By the time she left Colorado Springs four stanzas were completed.

In 1895 she published the poem in a religious magazine, *The Congregationalist*. It became so popular that requests began to pour in for copies and permission to use it. A second revision of the poem appeared in the *Boston Evening Transcript*, November 19, 1904. This revision was made to simplify the text and make it easier to set to music.

Initially there was no music to go with the poem. There have been at least 60 compositions used with it. In 1928 a contest sponsored by the National Federation of Music Clubs failed to come up with music for the poem. Of all the music tried, only one really fit and lasted. It is from an 1882 composition by Samuel A. Ward, a New Jersey musician. His tune was written for the 17th century poem, *Materna*, whose meter was the same as Katherine's poem.

Why is this song so loved by all? Katherine Bates probably struck the right chord when she said, "That the hymn has gained...such a hold as it has upon our people, is clearly due to the fact that Americans are at heart idealists, with a fundamental faith in human brotherhood."

God Bless America (1938)

God Bless America. Just these three words have been repeated by so many people from Presidents to common folk when we want to express our desire for a safe and strong nation. These words are also the repeated refrain of the song of the same name; a song

that unites and raises patriotic emotions whenever a crowd gathers and sings it. This song was composed by an immigrant who left his home in Siberia when he was just 5 years old, but grew up in the New York City area to become one of America's song writing icons, Irving Berlin (1888-1989).

Originally written in 1918 for one of Irving Berlin's Zeigfeld-style stage reviews called "Yip, Yip, Yaphank," it was shelved before anyone heard it. It was not in keeping with the more irreverent and comedic aspects of that show. Twenty years later, as war was threatening in Europe, Berlin decided to write a song for peace. He remembered this early work, pulled out the original version and made changes to reflect his new vision.

"*The Kate Smith Show*," a very popular radio program at that time, was chosen as the vehicle to introduce this new song to the American public. It was Armistice Day in 1938. The song was an instantaneous hit! It became Kate Smith's trademark song. And it was the emotional standard bearer that carried Americans through WWII.

My Country 'Tis of Thee, or America (1831)

This enduring song was written by Samuel Francis Smith (1808-1895) while attending the Andover Theological Seminary. He was asked by pioneer music educator Lowell Mason (1792-1872) to examine German songbooks and translate promising hymns that would be sung by a children's choir.

He came across one hymn that had a patriotic flair to it. He claims he did not at the time recognize the tune to be the same as *God Save the King*, which had been around since at least 1740, and had been used for many other inspiring songs as well. Be that as it may, the German hymn inspired him to write an American patriotic hymn. Within half an hour he drafted new lyrics on a scrap of paper.

The first performance of Smith's song was by Mason's children's choir at the Independence Day celebration (July 4, 1831) in Boston's Park Street Church. It was then used by Mason as an example of his controversial claim that most children could benefit from musical instruction, and he claimed it demonstrated the potential of song in the cultivation of civic virtue. In 1838 the Boston School Committee approved music instruction in all city schools and Mason became the nation's first Superintendent of Music Education.

The Mason music education program and songbooks spread far and wide. *America* was

quickly adopted for use in schools and civic ceremonies. This song is still relevant because it speaks of this country's humble beginnings and evokes an expression of nationalist ideology on behalf of citizen singers who pledge their loyalty and support.

Oliver Wendell Holmes, a Harvard classmate of Samuel Smith, summed it up this way; "Everybody who sings the song at once feels a personal ownership in his native land. The hymn will last as long as the country." And indeed, it has.

What more is there to say....

-John Zawislak



SUMMER OUTDOOR HIGHLIGHTS

The MRP, in cooperation with the Norton and Seekonk Public Libraries, continued its summer concert sponsorship with two outdoor events this past July. The *Con Brio Quintet* performed under the gazebo at the Norton Library Park to an enthusiastic audience who was especially pleased with group's rendition of *Peter and the Wolf*.

Earl Raney's Epic Brass entertained a packed crowd with jazz and ragtime sounds on the lawn at Seekonk Library's Summer Concert Series. Both concerts were funded by grants from the Massachusetts Cultural Council through its local cultural councils.

COMMUNITY CALENDAR:

- 10/28 SE Mass Wind Symphony - 3 pm
Halloween Concert - Norton MS
- 11/3 Metropolitan Wind Symphony
Sorenson Center, Babson College - 8pm
- 12/11 Norton MS Band Concert - 7 pm
- 12/16 MWS Holiday Pops Concert
Natick H.S. - 3pm
- 12/18 Attleboro HS Winter Concert- 7pm
- 12/19 Norton HS Holiday Concert - 7pm
- 12/20 N. Attleboro HS Winter Concert - 7pm

If you would like to serve on the Board or volunteer for a committee, meetings are held the 2nd Friday of every month. Call 508-226-6897 for details.

The MRP QUARTER NOTES Newsletter is a quarterly publication. Contributions are welcome by sending to the Music Revitalization Project, Inc. P.O. Box 709, Norton, MA, 02766. All articles included are at the discretion of the editor as space allows.

IT'S NEVER TOO LATE TO THINK ABOUT YOUR 2001 TAXES!

Wow, it's already October! Soon the hectic holidays will be upon us. Why not plan now on making a tax deductible donation to the MRP! This gives you the benefit of a tax deduction, and helps the MRP continue its work to provide scholarships to music students, purchase music for schools and organizations that lack the financial resources, and sponsor music events in your community that are both educational and entertaining. Send your donation with the form on the right. It's as easy as that!!!

THANK YOU

Name _____

Address _____

Amount \$ _____ (Direct my Contribution to:)

General Fund Music Library Scholarship Fund

Checks can be made payable to: Music Revitalization Project, Inc
Mail to: MRP, PO Box 709, Norton, MA 02766.

