

Our Students *Can* Sing the National Anthem

BY EILEEN M. BALLONE

We are able to conduct a music class or choir rehearsal, giving instruction in the proper disciplines, in a country that has fought for its freedom and is presently fighting to preserve that freedom under threat of terrorist attack. So who among us, standing in front of a classroom full of students, would not feel a surge of patriotism? But, if you want that classroom full of students to express their patriotism, could you honestly affirm that all of your students can sing our national anthem? And even if they can sing it, do they understand what they're singing? Have you offered them any history of the birth of our national anthem?

A major campaign is scheduled to begin in September 2004 to help review national awareness of the patriotic traditions of the United States and to highlight the efforts of The Smithsonian Institution in Washington, DC, to preserve the original Star-Spangled Banner—the flag that flew over Fort McHenry in Baltimore's harbor during the Battle of Baltimore in the War of 1812. This campaign will include major singing celebrations throughout our country—at schools, professional sporting events, and other venues in cities, towns, and rural areas. It is expected that this program to get America singing our national anthem will culminate with the nation's largest performance of "The Star-Spangled Banner" on the National Mall in Washington, at the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History—the home of the flag that inspired the anthem.

Three Suggestions

Here are some suggestions to help you develop a meaningful lesson on "The Star-Spangled Banner." Two are websites to visit; one is a video.

History Channel. Log onto the History Channel website: www.historychannel.com. Enter the "classroom" area at the top of the page. Scroll down to "Save Our History" and click on that button. Then scroll down to "The Star-Spangled Banner Project" and click

on that. This site offers information about the many reasons for the War of 1812, the British interest in the port of Baltimore, Maryland, and the events leading up to Francis Scott Key's composition of his famous poem, which was eventually set to the tune "Anacreon in Heaven." At this site, you can request a teacher's manual that may be downloaded in three sections: Grades K-2, Grades 3-5, and Grades 6-8.

Video. Another teacher's aid that helps to give the students an understanding of the national anthem is *Save Our History: The Star-Spangled Banner*—a wonderful video from A&E Home Video (2001). This video not only reviews the historical events that inspired Francis Scott Key but also includes film clips of John Philip Sousa conducting his band and people's reactions to the anthem. It is an excellent instruction tool.

Star-Spangled Website. The Smithsonian's National Museum of American History has a special page on its website dedicated to the Star-Spangled Banner—<http://www.americanhistory.si.edu/ssb/index.html>. The anthem plays as a brief clip reviewing the battle introduces you to the main page. The site contains many useful areas and resources.

Together We Sing

If we unite our efforts, we can show the world that our students can sing their national anthem. This is a project to be proud of, so that we can keep America singing. For additional information on how your school can participate in events of the National Anthem Project, contact American Musical Salutes at (800) 289-6441.



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