

Chapter 5

A National Anthem: Patriotic Symbol or Democratic Action?

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From its path to becoming an officially sanctioned musical symbol of a nation-state, to its being reinterpreted by immigrant groups or counterculture artists, the national anthem of the United States of America, "The Star-Spangled Banner," has been riddled in public controversies and challenges. In part, this speaks to its significance and meaning in U.S. society, as well as the norms and expectations of conformity surrounding its performance and appropriation. In this chapter, I seek to examine the history of this anthem and consider its social and educational functions in American society by using sociocultural conceptualizations as guideposts around which to wrap historical and autobiographical narratives. In so doing, I plan to build a case against absolutist engagements with this and other patriotic songs in the classroom, while suggesting alternative teaching models that encourage divergent thinking, interpretation, and understanding.

Introduction

After the attacks on the United States on September 11, 2001, a patriotic fervor swept the country. The prevailing form of patriotism was one of unquestioning allegiance to country and government and was an expected mode of operation, particularly in schools (Westheimer, 2006a). In fact, some states passed laws requiring a U.S. flag in every public school classroom and many school districts expected children to show reverence for the flag and be led in reciting the "Pledge of Allegiance" and/or singing the national anthem each school day (Westheimer, 2006b). School boards that failed to comply with patriotic teachings and behaviors were labeled un-American or communist by some (Ladson-Billings, 2006). In many schools, music teachers were expected to do their part by teaching the national anthem, a recognizable symbol of the U.S. The national music education organization (MENC) even launched a campaign promoting the song's use in the curriculum and in school performances.

The national anthem was later catapulted into the spotlight by the media over the release of a Spanish-language recording of the song. Quickly, many expressed their

opposition to a translation of the song. Former President George W. Bush issued a statement soon after its release, saying, “I think the national anthem ought to be sung in English, and I think people who want to be a citizen of this country ought to learn English, and they ought to learn to sing the national anthem in English.” (Carroll, 2006). U.S. Senator Lamar Alexander introduced a resolution in the Senate that the anthem should only be sung or recited in English (Alexander, 2006). The majority of Americans expressed similar sentiments as evidenced by a public poll conducted after the release of the song, which reported that 69% of U.S. citizens said it is only appropriate to sing the national anthem in English (Roper Center, 2006).

The language issue surrounding the anthem, as well as the concomitant pressures to teach for national pride and unity in schools give rise to important questions: In what ways does the anthem function in U.S. society? What is compromised or threatening about its being arranged, modified, or interpreted outside established norms? Does doing so compromise its symbolic meaning? Moreover, what does this say about our notions of patriotism? An understanding of the song’s origins, implicit and explicit meanings, and functions can shed light on these questions. These are matters affecting music educators who are often called upon to acculturate students under a national banner, through music. In this chapter I am not taking a stand for or against “The Star Spangled Banner” (SSB) as the official national anthem, which others have done already. The purpose is to examine this patriotic song as a way to make informed decisions about its use in the music curriculum. After providing a brief historical background of the song’s roots, I will examine the SSB through historical accounts and autobiographical narratives that shed light on its boundaries, roles, and functions, in society and school. Finally, I will discuss how this relates to patriotism and consider ways this knowledge can inform educators in constructing curricula designed to help students come to know the diverse meanings and soundings of culturally significant songs.

The Path to Canonization: A Brief History

According to autobiographical accounts and legend, on September 14, 1814, after a battle against the British, Francis Scott Key saw the U.S. flag waving from Ft. McHenry in Baltimore harbor in Maryland. Upon realizing that U.S. troops were victorious in battle,

he began to draft a poem that would later be called “The Defense of Fort McHenry” (Taylor, 2000). Overall, the poem is an expression of nationalistic pride in the U.S. for having survived an assault by the British. The first printing included a note indicating that it should be sung to the popular 18th century British melody from “The Anacreontic Song,” otherwise known as “To Anacreon in Heaven” (Taylor, 2000). Most scholars attribute the song to John Stafford Smith, a British composer of sacred and secular music (Lichtenwanger, 1978; Weybright, 1935).

The song is commonly thought to be of the drinking variety, in part because the lyrics are suggestive of love and wine, and because of the way the song was thought to function in the Anacreontic society, a British gentlemen’s club. However, some scholars dispel the image of rowdy drunkards singing the tune in a bar. National Museum of American History historian, Lonny Taylor (2000), explains:

Its foreign, seemingly disreputable origin was in the 1920s advanced as an argument against congressional recognition of ‘The Star-Spangled Banner’ as a national anthem. ‘Drinking song,’ in the sense of students with linked arms and raised steins, is in fact a misnomer...It was the ‘constitutional song’ of the mid- to late eighteenth-century gentlemen’s musical club called the Anacreontic Society...About a dozen times a year, Anacreontic Society members assembled in rooms above various London taverns to play instrumental music and dine together...and the meetings were described in 1787 as being ‘conducted under the strictest influence of propriety and decorum.’ (pp. 34-35)

Lichtenwanger (1978) shares a similar position, stating that “The Anacreontic Song” “was not a bar- room ballad, a drinking ditty to be chorused with glasses swung in rhythm. It is convivial, but in a special and stately way; and the text is simply a good-natured takeoff on a bit of pseudoclassical mythology” (Lichtenwanger, 1978, p. 63). The British song became popular in the United States where it could be found in several songbooks published before 1814 (Taylor, 2000).

The previously composed tune converged with the Key’s newly written poem and was published as sheet music by Thomas Cass music store in 1814. In the ensuing years, the SSB gained popularity in the United States and by the Civil War had solidified its role as a musical symbol of the country (Svejda, 1969). Evidence is found in a Civil War era mailing envelope depicting a woman draped in a Union battle flag. Above her, the last line of the SSB is notated with rewritten text resembling text in the third verse and

reflecting the Union's hopes for victory over the South: "For the Star-Spangled Banner in triumph shall wave. O'er the land of the free and the home of the brave."

Those in the South recognized the anthem as a symbol for the Union and resituated the text through vitriolic parodies. This excerpt was found in a biography of Francis Scott Key and is indicative of sentiments of the South during that time:

Oh, say can you see, through the gloom and the storm,
How peaceful and blest was America's soil,
'Till betrayed by the guile of the Puritan demon,
Which lurks under virtue and springs from its coil,
To fasten its fangs in the life blood of freemen.
(Weybright, 1935, p. 169)

This parody suggests that the song was sufficiently popular to be known around the country but associated with the northern states (i.e., the Union).

The road to become officially sanctioned began in the late nineteenth-century when the SSB became a required component of ceremonies and performances of the armed forces (Weybright, 1935). During World War I, external pressures led to its being performed regularly and formally during concert programs of some symphony orchestras (Tischler, 1986). Many national debates as to the suitability of the song as the official anthem ensued along that road. In 1909, Oscar Sonneck, Chief of Music for the Library of Congress, wrote that the controversy would be decided, "whether rightly or wrongly, by the American people regardless of critical analysis, legislative acts, or naïve efforts to create national songs by prize competition" (Sonneck, 1909, p. 7). His position was that the culture would determine what song would become the national anthem.

In the first decades of the twentieth century, many objected to its becoming the national anthem. In 1928, U.S. bandleader and composer, John Philip Sousa, wrote an article in the *New York Times* objecting to the SSB as an official anthem. He implored U.S. citizens to recognize the need for a musical hymn that represented the collective (not selective) identity of the country. He also examined other anthems (i.e., "Marseilles" of France and "God Save the King" of England) that he considered to be formidable examples within their genre, and compared them to the SSB, which he considered to be inferior. He primarily objected to its disreputable origins and difficult register (Sousa, 1928). Even the national organization for music education, The Music Supervisors'

Conference, which would later become MENC: The National Association for Music Education, voiced opposition to the song's becoming official on the following grounds: "(a) that it is too warlike in spirit; (b) that it is the product of a single historical event; and (c) that it is too difficult for school children to sing" (Weybright, 1935, p. 166). During the time leading to debates in Congress, critiques were primarily centered on its questionable origins (i.e., a drinking and violent song), challenging vocal range (i.e., too difficult to sing by most people), and lack of poetic merit (Weybright, 1935).

In contrast, many were in favor of its being recognized as the first national anthem of the U.S. In 1930, almost five million people were reported to have signed a petition to make the SSB the national anthem and the House Judiciary Committee heard the case for making the SSB the official national anthem. *The New York Times* reported that "two sopranos, Mrs. Elsie Jorss-Reilley of Washington and Mrs. Grace Evelyn Boudline of Baltimore, sang the air to refute the argument that it is pitched too high for popular singing." Despite the years of debate on a national level, no one was reported to provide a dissenting view at the hearing.

In 1931, over one hundred years after its creation, the SSB was made official by act of Congress and signature of President Hoover (Taylor, 2000). In so doing, the anthem secured a position as a musical and poetic badge of the United States. Throughout most of the twentieth- and all of the twenty-first centuries, the singing and playing of the song has served as a ritual, punctuating concerts, sporting events, military functions, patriotic holidays, and school days.

Protecting and Testing the Boundaries of an Anthem

National anthems function as malleable and dynamic symbols of the collective unity of a country. Unlike more static national symbols that have clearly defined boundaries, such as monuments or flags, anthems are dependent on the interpretation and realization by a performer or performers (Guy, 2002). In its performance, where context is paramount, an anthem can be tested to the limits of social acceptance. Music that secures a sacred position in society and is in some way closely connected to group identity is likely to be scrutinized by its members, especially when performance or behavioral norms are violated.

The word norm comes from the Latin *norma*, which was a type of ruler used in carpentry and masonry to form right angles. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, a norm is “that which is a model or a pattern; a standard.” In social science, norms embody the standards of behaviors, values, and beliefs that are approved or disapproved by a culture (Brehm, Kassin, & Fein, 2005). Norms are essential for maintaining the traditions of a culture (Erickson, 2005), including its music and related practices (Nettl, 2004). The norms surrounding the SSB can be viewed on two levels: the musical and the behavioral. These are separated conceptually for purposes of this argument despite their being inextricably intertwined in practice. Normative musical characteristics of the SSB include: triple meter, moderate tempo, an unembellished and unaltered melody, simple harmonies, singing accompanied by a traditional ensemble (i.e., orchestra or concert band), and English-language lyrics. Behavioral norms include: standing as a sign of respect when they music is playing, facing the U.S. flag or a sound source, singing along to the melody, and expressing solemnity and respect through facial affect and appropriate body positioning (MENC, 2005). Over the years, many have deviated from these established and documented norms.

Cultural groups differ in their attitudes toward song maintenance. Nettl explains that “to some it is important that a song remain stable and unchanged, while in others individual singers are encouraged to have their personal versions” (2004, p. 11). The construction of rules and regulations governing musical stability are predicated on the notion that cultural change is equivalent to cultural loss. Erickson (2005) calls this the “leaky bucket perspective,” where members of a cultural group seek to maintain the established traditions and norms, for fear of losing that contained within the “bucket” (p. 44). Aside from very specialized populations, music alterations are of little consequence or importance to most. An exception to this generalization, however, is the SSB, which is guarded and monitored in public performance.

A brief reminder of the SSB’s lineage demonstrates how a song can be transformed over time and geography. “To Anacreon in Heaven” was a popular American and British song in the nineteenth-century. Its popularity in the U.S. waned as it was overshadowed by a new adaptation of the tune to lyrics penned by Key. Eventually it was made extinct in the pantheon of U.S. folk repertoire yet, over time, the SSB

became codified as an entity of its own, notwithstanding various interpretations, arrangements, and performances through the years. Even before the SSB became the official anthem, Sonneck (1909) claimed that no law or rule or regulations could stop music publishers, and arrangers from adding their own “individual marks of identity [on songs like the SSB] which are, after all, only traditional or folk-songs” (p. 7). Clearly, there is no one “authentic” version of any song that is part of folk or cultural tradition (Abril, 2006).

Nonetheless, there have been various attempts to regulate the music, as well as performances of the SSB. In the 1942, the “Code for the National Anthem of the United States of America” was created by a committee which included members of the Music Supervisors National Conference, U.S. military, and music industry. The code provided specific guidelines for performing the SSB that stipulated (or reinforced) the norms. These included indicators as to the acceptable key signatures, tempi, harmonies, and behaviors surrounding the performance, as well as admonitions for “sophisticated ‘concert’ versions” (MENC, 2005). This code was recently resuscitated on MENC’s National Anthem Project website. Attempts to regulate the anthem occurred on the national level again in 1971, when a House joint resolution sought to establish specific criteria (much like those found in the “Code”). This time, however, the document allowed for “reasonable latitude” in interpretation by performers (Kennicott, 2004, CO1). As is the case in other circumstances, these rules, laws and regulations were meant to ensure the maintenance of the music, as well as conformity to social norms surrounding the SSB experience. There is no other song in U.S. history that has been so closely guarded and defended by law makers.

Arranging

Musical arrangements of the anthem have tested society’s tolerance for such deviations. Composer Igor Stravinsky created an arrangement of the anthem in 1941, for what seemed to be primarily aesthetic reasons. Quite simply, he wanted to create a more musically satisfying piece to perform. In Stravinsky’s memoir, he states “I was obliged to begin my concerts during the war with the [SSB], the existing arrangements of which seemed very poor to me.” Of his arrangement, Stravinsky stated,

I went back to the music of Puritan times to obtain a choral like treatment of the anthem. I gave it the character of a real church hymn not that of a soldier's marching song or a club song [alluding to its origins], as it was originally, I tried to express the religious feelings of the people in America. (Boucourechliev, 1987, pp. 211-212).

While Stravinsky's simple arrangement did not deviate significantly from more commonly performed versions—albeit major seventh chords in the second strain and some simplified rhythms—it was not well-received in print or in performance. Stravinsky sent the manuscript to First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt with a letter explaining that he wrote the piece in gratitude for becoming a U.S. citizen and was offering it as a gift to be auctioned for the war effort. It was returned to the composer with a curt letter stating that it could not be accepted (Wenborn, 2000). Curiously, the “Code for the National Anthem of the United States of America” was created one year later.

The arrangement was programmed for a 1944 performance with the Boston Symphony Orchestra. Stravinsky described the consequences for such an action:

Though no one seemed to notice that my arrangement differed from the standard offering, the next day, just before the second concert, a Police Commissioner appeared in my dressing room and informed me of a Massachusetts law forbidding any tampering with national property. He said that policemen had already been instructed to remove my arrangement from the music stands. I argued that if an Ur-text of the SSB existed, it was certainly infrequently played in Massachusetts—but to no avail. (Boucourechliev, 1987, pp. 211-212).

His reference to an Ur-text indicates that Stravinsky recognized the song as a folk tune rather than a composed one, giving him the freedom and flexibility to arrange it. If the arrangement were played today it would be unlikely to raise an eyebrow, which is indicative of the shifting societal norms pertaining to the anthem.

Interpreting

Certain latitudes in performing the SSB are inevitable, especially when a soloist is involved or some less traditional instrumentation is utilized, but certain performances have tread a fine line between interpretation and desecration. Take Jimi Hendrix's legendary performance of the SSB at the Woodstock Music Festival in 1969. The highly improvisatory and emotionally charged musical interpretation of a sanctified national symbol, was interpreted by a rock-and-roll musician, performed in a climate of national

protest and social discontent. Clarke (2005) notes that matters were further exacerbated by Hendrix's identity as performer "whose status as a black American rock musician and 'countercultural hero' aligns him with an antagonism towards conventional American nationalism" (p. 60). These jarring juxtapositions might help explain why the performance, in its time, was considered to be a desecration of a national symbol (Sarrio, 1983). On the other hand, the performance resonated with anti-war, counterculture groups of Americans. Decades later it has become more accepted as evidenced by its being arranged and performed by classically trained musicians such as the Kronos Quartet and cellist Matt Haimovitz, as well as its being performed for the grand opening of the Rock-and-Roll Hall of Fame in Cleveland, Ohio. Today it is widely considered to be a ground breaking performance of profound musical and social impact, symbolic of democratic dissent and anti-authoritarianism. This performance of the SSB stretched it beyond mere patriotic symbol. In this case, the anthem served as a musical vehicle through which to voice dissent and discontent, something more in line with a democratic action.

Translating

Over the years, the SSB has been translated into various languages as a way to facilitate communication with various segments of the population. Given the number of German immigrants in the U.S. at the time, the song was translated into German in an 1894 version called "Das Star-Spangled Banner" (Svedja, 1969). In 1919, the U.S. Bureau of Education commissioned a Spanish version of the SSB called "La Bandera de las Estrellas." More recently, in 2006, I attended a concert where the SSB was performed by an orchestra, choir, and over one dozen students from a school for the Deaf, who translated the text into American Sign Language (ASL). This translation of the text did not change the essence of the song; the signing merely facilitated communication with a different segment of the population. In so doing, those members of society were better able to participate in performing, as well as understanding the song. One must ask why a Spanish-language version of the song in early 2006 caused such controversy.

The song, called "*Nuestro Himno*" (Our Anthem), was released during a time of war and national debate regarding immigration. General coordinator of the National Capital Immigration Coalition, Juan Carlos Ruiz explained one of the reasons for the

songs creation: “In our countries, national anthems are a beautiful expression of who we are. Our immigrant communities want to be part of this country [U.S.]. We want the American dream” (Avila, 2006, p. A1-16). Music producer Adam Kidron said the idea for the Spanish version “has never been to discourage immigrants from learning English and embracing American culture but rather seeks to provide an outlet for patriotism for those who have not yet learned English” (CBS News, 2006). For some conservative columnists, “the project symbolizes a frightening prospect: that Hispanic immigrants do not want to assimilate but want to remake America on their terms” (Avila, 2006). Nationally syndicated columnist, Michelle Malkin, referred to the Spanish-language version as the “Illegal Alien Anthem” and claimed that it sends an anti-American message (Montgomery, 2006). Like Hendrix decades before, this version of the anthem gave voice to marginalized perspectives. It also served to unite Hispanic-Americans and give them a way to partake in the SSB experience.

Since being designated the official anthem, the SSB has existed in tension between preservation and innovation. On one side, there are those who have made concerted efforts to protect the anthem by establishing rules and regulations. These efforts were precipitated by controversial performances that challenged the status quo. At the other end of the spectrum are those who move the anthem in a new direction, using it as a vehicle for social commentary, aesthetic pleasure, and/or social binding. As long as there is an anthem, these tensions are unlikely to disappear, and that is not necessarily a bad thing. Respectful debates and dialogues reflect a democratic process and may even help to give the song new meanings.

In School: Personal Narratives

Emotional Function

In this section of the chapter, I use various social functions of music (Merriam, 1964) as guidepost around which to present autobiographical narratives of my experiences with the anthem in education and to pose questions that relate to teaching and learning.

I cannot recall a time when I didn’t know the anthem. Some of my earliest school memories include the morning ritual marking the start of each day. It began with the sound of a recorded voice emanating from a public address speaker perched high above

the classroom door, commanding us to “please rise for morning exercises.” Standing tall behind our desks, monitored by the teacher, my peers and I would partake in a monotonic recitation of the “Pledge of Allegiance,” and a sing-along to a recording of the SSB. The arrangement, including an assertive drum roll, dramatic trumpet calls, and full SATB choir, was meant to rouse the spirit. In my early years in school I couldn’t understand the lyrics of the song, let alone the story they told. Nonetheless, I remember the dramatic dynamic swells and melodic contours capturing my attention as a young student.

This version of the song, which I can still hear in my mind today, is demonstrative of the “emotional expression” function of music (Merriam, 1964, p. 219). Merriam referred to this function as one in which music serves as an expression of emotion and a vehicle for evoking emotional responses that cannot be attained through ordinary discourse alone. Social theorist, Fredrick Erickson (2005), asserts that “culturally defined love objects,” such as music, serve as reflections of one’s culture, which can lead to strong emotional attachments, especially when these experiences or objects have been reinforced through repetition (p. 36).

After years of hearing the same arrangement of the SSB, I habituated to the music. Daily encounters with the music failed to evoke any emotional responses. However, the cumulative effect of singing/hearing the song over the years seemed to facilitate emotional responses in future encounters. For instance, I recall performing the SSB one U.S. Independence Day with a high school summer camp orchestra for a standing crowd of hundreds who sang along. As we played the last two phrases in dramatic conclusion, the music evoked a visceral response, which seems to have been made possible by my prior experiences hearing, singing, and responding to the song. Should school music programs provide an intellectual space for students to reflect on and discuss the emotional impact of listening or performing a patriotic song like the SSB? If not in school music programs, where?

Symbolic Function

The lyrics made little sense to me in my first years in school. They primarily served as musical utterances or misinterpreted text (it seems logical that a native Spanish speaker might hear “José can you see” rather than “Oh say can you see”). Nonetheless, I began to construct an understanding of the song. From as far back as I can remember singing the

anthem in school, (about 1st grade) we were required to demonstrate dignity and respect as the music played. Inside the classroom our teachers monitored us to ensure we rose, faced the flag, and refrained from talking. All but one of my peers, whose religion forbade him from singing patriotic and holiday music, was expected to comply with these rules. Outside the classroom, school patrols (older elementary students who policed the halls before and after school) were strategically staked-out through the hallways to ensure no one talked or moved while the song was playing. Any behaviors that deviated from this norm were viewed as transgressions, punishable by verbal reprimand or after-school detention. I do not recall being encouraged to sing or admonished for not singing; nor do I remember being formally taught the song at any point in my schooling. Nonetheless, through experiences in and outside of school, I came to learn that the song should be respected and honored as a significant, if not sacred, national symbol. Over time, the song would come to represent things beyond the music and the story (which I eventually learned). It came to symbolize school ritual, patriotic events, nation, and authority.

A song's text can communicate concrete information to those capable of understanding the language. But beyond surface level communication, the song transcends the music and text, functioning as something Merriam (1964) refers to as *symbolic representation*. He says that a symbol "involves, first, the abstraction level of the thing or behaviors which we wish to define as symbol. That is, a symbol in the first instance seems to be the sign of a sign" (p. 232). Assuming this is the case for the SSB, does the chord chosen in the second strain or the language it is sung in really matter? For many, the anthem serves as a symbol of national pride and/or national identity, and it is one of the most recognizable symbols of the United States (Harris, 2002). The recognition of one's anthem as a national symbol has been documented internationally. One study conducted with British participants found that by the age of 11, children were able to identify their national anthem and other national symbols as successfully as adults (Jahoda, 1963). In a more recent study conducted in Israel, Gilboa and Bosdner (2009) found that upon hearing their anthem, participants made similar nationalistic associations, despite their being representative of diverse cultures and age groups.

In a book examining patriotic songs of the U.S., author Ace Collins (2003) called the SSB "the musical representation of American democratic ideals" (p. 158). But one

must question if this is the case in reality as we experience it in our society and as we teach it in schools? As a symbol, does it actually represent a brand of patriotism which is blind and unquestioning, or does it represent patriotism that embodies the democratic ideals espoused by Dewey (1916), in which citizens recognize their commonalities, while freely and fully discussing issues from multiple perspectives. If the song is a representation of democratic ideals, it only seems logical that members of a democratic society should be free to ascribe personal meanings to the song in its transmission, interpretation, adaptation, and appropriation. This is something I never learned through my experiences with the anthem in school.

Integration Function

The first time I taught the SSB was in fourth grade. Aware that the newest member of our class, Pepe, was not participating in our patriotic morning ritual, my teacher asked me to teach him the SSB and “The Pledge of Allegiance.” Pepe had recently immigrated to Miami from Cuba as part of the Mariel boatlift of 1980. He spoke little English at the time but was not shy and could communicate effectively in his fast-paced Spanish banter. Reflecting on this experience, I realize my teacher was making an effort—consciously or unconsciously—to help Pepe assimilate into our school, and at a broader level, to U.S. society. His sincere efforts to learn the national anthem may have been among his first overt efforts to integrate. Despite my modest teaching efforts, he was unable to comprehend or memorize the words, let alone reproduce the tune. Nonetheless, I remember his making a connection to the Cuban National Anthem, “La Bayamesa.” As I reflect today, I recognize the complexity of Pepe’s experience, where in less than one month he had gone from pledging his allegiance from one red, white, and blue flag to another. Those initial experiences may have functioned to break down Pepe’s past affiliations with one nation and reconstruct them with another. As a fourth grade student, he probably did not give it much thought but on a more subconscious level, the song may have functioned to help him integrate by partaking in the rituals of a new society.

Merriam (1964) identified this function of music as the *contribution to the integration of society*. In other words, the music serves to facilitate social cohesion. Merriam writes:

Music, then provides a rallying point around which the members of society gather to engage in activities which require the cooperation and coordination of the group. Not all music is thus performed, of course, but every society has occasions signaled by music which draw its members together and reminds them of their unity. (p. 227)

This unity is a way people feel secure and connected to something larger than themselves (Bader, 2006). In a school context, the SSB is intended to function in the way described by Merriam. Singing the anthem in school might be the only time of the day when the entire school population is doing exactly the same thing. However, to think that it is going to help all students integrate may be overestimating its abilities to unite people of all social and economic backgrounds under one nation. Researchers studying responses to national anthems in Israel found that immigrants identified less strongly with the anthem of their newly adopted country, suggesting that social identity moderates responses (Gilboa & Bosdner, 2009). I wonder how Pepe came to ascribe meaning to the anthem through his years in school and in what ways if any it helped him feel connected to the U.S.

The narratives I have shared above are uniquely mine and they may or may not bear resemblance to the experiences of others. Nonetheless, they offer the chance for me to make a few conjectures about the function of the anthem in society and how that might have implications for education. Assuming that the SSB is a daily ritual in school, children will partake in the SSB experience at least two thousand times. This repetition builds familiarity, which facilitates visceral responses when the song is heard in new or emotionally charged contexts. In this capacity, the anthem serves as a vehicle for evoking emotional responses. Through enculturative processes, the anthem also functions as a symbol of things beyond the music and the narrative. These symbols are likely to be shared by many but individual and cultural variations are also likely. Finally, through the shared symbols and emotional experiences, the SSB functions as a way of uniting a people under a common banner. The history and functions of the anthem in society provide us with the knowledge to proceed in considering its relationship to patriotism and potential role in a music curriculum.

Patriotism and an Anthem in School

Constructs of Patriotism

Gloria Ladson-Billings (2006) asserts the term “patriot” has been “hijacked by an increasingly narrow and undemocratic sector of society,” (in the U.S.) especially after September 11, 2001 (p. 13). The term has come to be associated with an unquestioning and unwavering loyalty to country. Despite her critiques of these constructs, Ladson-Billings considers herself a patriot and does not view patriotism as inherently evil. It can be a force of good on one end, and evil on another. As Bader (2006) points out, “wars of national liberation depend on patriotic fervor to oppose colonial rule” and “ethnic cleansing draws on the same fervor” (p. 39). Clearly, the term is more complex than its common-use applications imply.

In their study of patriotism in a democratic society, Kahne and Middaugh (2007) described three types of patriotism. The first is called “blind patriotism,” which is characterized as an “unquestioning endorsement” of one’s country, “denying the value of critique and analysis and generally emphasizing allegiance and symbolic behaviors” (p. 118). A similar brand of patriotism is called “authoritarian patriotism” which is an orientation that demands people express “unquestioning loyalty to a cause determined by a centralized leader or leading group” (Westheimer, 2006b, pp. 173-174). A second type of patriotism is called “constructive patriotism.” This is a more balanced approach in which some actions of the state are viewed positively, while others are criticized in an “effort to promote positive change and consistency with the nation’s ideals” (Kahne and Middaugh, 2007, p. 119). Finally, “active patriotism” is one in which people are “actively engaged in civic and/or political life” (p. 119) with the purpose of helping to make some change. Active patriots can be blind, that is, active in promoting the values and decisions of the government without question. Active patriots can also be constructive in orientation as they engage in working to maintain that which they see as positive about their society and to improve those things they deem problematic.

Constructive patriotism with an active orientation seems to reflect democratic action. Paul Woodford (2005) explains that democracy implies the ability to note the differences and similarities as a way of coming to attain a level of understanding and respect for one another’s views. He claims that democracy in music education should lead to improvements of the human condition and building a community of respect among humans. Kahne and Middaugh (2007) suggest that educators “foster

understandings of patriotism that support democratic values and practices. Rather than ‘teaching’ students to love their country, teachers need to help student build an explicit connection between their ‘love of country’ and democratic ideals—ideals that include the role of informed analysis and, at time, critique; the importance of action; and the danger of blind loyalty to the state” (p. 125). Music teachers might use the national anthem of their respective countries or anthems from various countries to engage students in understanding how music relates to people’s national or group identities.

An Anthem in School

Experiences with the anthem in school that fail to go beyond the daily ritual of singing and/or hearing the anthem function as a way to reinforce blind patriotism. This was the case for me in school where we partook in the SSB experience without any thought, reflection, or discussion. We mindlessly sang along (or didn’t) to the recording, while complying with behavioral expectations. Do schools not have a responsibility to do more than that? Could they engage students in the anthem in ways more akin to a democratic action? Interestingly, a 1987 Roper Poll reported that young people in the United States considered singing SSB to be last in a list of many other ways one might express patriotic feelings (Gates, 1989). This may be because of the ways others typically engage with the SSB, both in school and in other facets of society. Feeling patriotism is an internal process that can be evoked in hearing or singing the SSB. This seems to be what schools aim for in requiring student to partake in the SSB experience.

National efforts to include the SSB continue to reinforce and encourage blind patriotism. For example, MENC—The National Association for Music Education (U.S.A.) has sought to promote the anthem through the “The National Anthem Project.” Launched in March of 2005, this campaign claimed to “restore America’s voice through music education.” The campaign, also serving as an advocacy tool for music education, included a traveling road show of carnival-like tents, where visitors could go to learn about or perform the anthem. The official webpage included: lesson plan ideas; an online bulletin board, where teachers can engage in dialogue about the SSB; anecdotal and historical information about the anthem; the Code for the SSB; and pictures documenting the road show.

After examining teachers' posts to the website's bulletin board, Bradley (2009) noted that only a small minority voiced dissenting views or questioned "the appropriateness of this particular song,...its appropriateness as music literature for public school children and...MENC's somewhat dogmatic focus on the anthem as a back-door advocacy argument for school music education" (p. 69). The lesson plans and other documents associated with the project propel absolutist views, where declared truths take a front seat to discovered or divergent understandings.

More than anything, the anthem seems to function at a symbolic level. And while symbols play an important role in any culture, they are of little substance on their own. School offers the social space wherein people can develop a more nuanced understanding of national symbols, such as an anthem, and where they can be unpacked in a meaningful way that encourages critical reflection and/or action. "The Star Spangled Banner" is a ubiquitous song, national symbol, and experience in the U.S. It also has an interesting history filled with well-documented discussions, controversies, and debates. Realistically, students who remain in the U.S. are going to sing and/or hear it many times in their lives. Given its position in U.S. society, it seems logical and appropriate to include it in a music curriculum such that students' understanding and knowledge is deepened. But how should we infuse it into the curriculum such that it is reflective of a democratic spirit?

Teachers would need to think about teaching in such a way that students learn about and learn within. Music teachers usually teach the song or the instrumental arrangement for students to perform but they may need to take that further. Bennett Reimer (2003) asserts that understanding music necessitates taking into account both the qualities of the music itself and the "situated aspects of music, which characterize it as a culturally grounded construction" (p. 169). In other words, teachers can move beyond performing the music to examine various historic performances of the anthem through listening. They can also examine the historical, cultural, and anthropological context of the song, which can provide students with a more nuanced understanding.

Taking that further, teachers could engage students with their anthem in such a way that students are able to discuss it from their unique vantage points or even compare it to other anthems around the world. In her book, *Releasing the Imagination*, Maxine Greene (1995) describes the importance of presenting works that are "open" to multiple

interpretations and perspectives that can be jointly examined between teacher and students (p. 115). She uses an example from her own work with students to illustrate the potential of transformation, describing it as:

...a shock...a rupture of some of the containers in which I had lived and thought I wanted to live. And when student began pouring in their own inclinations and prejudices and memories...I found something like a common text emerging among us, one that—in our diversity—we began to read and reread and even rewrite. (p. 117)

Learners construct understanding through the lenses with which they approach a phenomenon, object, artifact, or experience, yet through dialogue, learners can transform that experience. While Greene uses the example of a poem, the same is likely the case with a piece of music. Estelle Jorgensen (2003) writes, “A dialectical view of musical images challenges the notion that there is only one right way of coming to know, thinking about, and doing music and that there is only one right way of being in music” (p. 108). In teaching a national anthem, or any other piece of music, teachers might open spaces for students so that understanding is deepened and its importance is couched within a shared cultural experience, as well as through the diverse perspectives represented in our society. An intellectually honest and culturally valid way of engaging with the SSB in the classroom might be to represent it, resituate it, reinvent it, and/or reconstitute it to reflect contemporary times or personal realities.

I would suggest imaging a music classroom where an educator joins students in uncovering the song’s (or any other song’s) history and myriad interpretations, by building on each other’s strengths, and relating understandings to students’ personal identities (i.e., student’s self), such that connections can be made on symbolic, emotional, personal, and cultural levels. Teachers can help students discover the ways the SSB experience is reflective of the various brands of patriotism, and consider ways that it can be aligned with democratic action.

Facilitating students’ understanding of a song’s functions and historical roots might help them discover *how*—and even *if*—the song reflects democracy. It can also help them uncover the explicit and implicit values it serves to propagate. Engaging with one “official” version of the song does little to stimulate students or provide them with multiple perspectives with which to relate or understand. Presenting or performing only one version of the song potentially conceals the song’s history and limits opportunities

around which to think critically and understand what it means to live in a democratic society. In fact, absolutist views of the SSB—or any other significant song reflective of a cultural group—squench the essence of the song and its ability to communicate with people of various races, creeds, ethnicities, linguistic backgrounds, sexual orientations, disabilities, and genders—the very people who comprise our society.

The SSB functions in many ways in our society, and that understanding can inform the process by which the song is presented in classrooms. Teachers might ask students to consider if the SSB stands for anything beyond the musical sounds; or if and how the song's symbolic representation changes over time. They can also facilitate discussions surrounding the ephemeral nature of the song's meaning throughout history. Helping students understand how the song communicates to newly arrived immigrants or third generation citizens might help them better understand music's capacity to communicate to those who do not even speak English. By discussing the ways music helps connect a group of people, students might consider how the SSB functions in the integration of members of U.S. society. These functions also serve to illustrate the complex role that anthems play in a given society—role that transcends the musical notes (Gilboa & Bodner, 2009). The classroom can be used as a place where teachers and learners come to discover themselves, as well as respect, learn from, and tolerate the views of others.

Music education should move toward providing students with multiple views of the world in which they exist and giving them the tools to construct their own meanings. Musical works in the curriculum are not singular truths; they exist in a complex milieu where their meaning is ascribed at the social and individual levels. As such, musical learning experiences should provide students with the opportunity to ask question and discover the unknown through as many perspectives and experiences as possible. Important songs of a given country deserve “open spaces” for inquiry, dialogue, and mutual understanding in the music curriculum.

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