

# American Patriotic Tunes for String Ensemble

This collection of fourteen familiar patriotic songs is designed for students of various ability levels to perform in formal school concerts or in other settings such as community events, ceremonies, banquets or festivals. They can be used by any combination of bowed stringed instruments, from duets, trios or quartets, all the way up to a large string orchestra.

The score includes all the parts for every instrument. The violin and viola each have the melody and two harmony parts. The cello and string bass each have the melody, a harmony line and a bass line.

With two exceptions, the arrangements are short and contain only the main themes of the songs, and therefore are designed to be repeated as many times as the director or performers desire, depending on the nature of the ensemble and the setting in which they are performing. In addition, all students can play the melody, harmony and/or bass-lines at some point during the performance. The two exceptions are "The Star Spangled Banner" and "Semper Fidelis", which are designed as complete arrangements to be performed once through.

Having students switch lines as they repeat the notated arrangement will allow the students to play all the parts and add variety to the performance. Below is one suggestion for how an ensemble could create its own arrangement, playing the tune four times.

Section	1st time	2nd time	3rd time	4th time
<b>Violin 1</b>	Melody	Harmony 2	Harmony 1	Melody
<b>Violin 2</b>	Harmony 1	Melody	Harmony 2	Harmony 1
<b>Viola</b>	Harmony 2	Harmony 1	Melody	Harmony 2
<b>Cello</b>	Bass line	Melody	Harmony	Melody
<b>String Bass</b>	Harmony	Bass line	Melody	Bass line

This sample sequence would create an arrangement of the piece that would be just under three minutes long, and would feature all of the sections of the string orchestra on the melody at some point. Other ways to add variety to your arrangements could include:

- only use two voices (e.g., just the melody and the harmony 1 lines) among all sections, or have everyone play the melody in unison, to add variety to the texture
- alternate when the players play arco or pizzicato (for example, play melodies arco and accompaniment lines pizzicato)
- feature a small number of students in a larger ensemble by having others tacet (similar to concertino and ripieno sections in a concerto grosso)
- add expressive elements such as dynamics and tempo changes
- play two or three pieces sequentially to create a medley
- have students (in the ensemble, or from other groups such as choirs) sing the lines with the lyrics, or invite the audience to sing along during specific repetitions

These are only a few of an infinite number of possibilities. Directors can involve the students in making decisions about the arrangements, and chamber groups could make such decisions themselves. It is my hope that this collection of patriotic songs will help string students and their teachers create inspiring performances for years to come.

Score

# America

(My Country, 'Tis of Thee)

Samuel Francis Smith  
Arranged by Robert Gardner

Andante (♩ = 92)

7

This musical score is for the piece "America (My Country, 'Tis of Thee)" by Samuel Francis Smith, arranged by Robert Gardner. It is in 3/4 time with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a tempo marking of "Andante" with a quarter note equal to 92 beats per minute. The score is divided into seven measures, with a box containing the number "7" above the final measure. The instrumentation includes Violin (melody and harmony 1 and 2), Viola (melody and harmony 1 and 2), Cello (melody, harmony, and bass line), and String Bass (melody, harmony, and bass line). Each part is written on a five-line staff with a treble or bass clef and a key signature of one sharp. The music features a mix of eighth and quarter notes, often beamed together, with some measures containing rests. The overall texture is a rich, layered string arrangement.