



Description, by Carol Lems-Dworkin,
of her Concert Arrangement of
The Star-Spangled Banner for Piano

In 1943, I composed and notated a concert arrangement for piano of *The Star-Spangled Banner*. I was preparing to perform it at the beginning of my scheduled full-length recital in Orchestra Hall, Chicago, on January 4th of the following year.

I had just won a competition to select the "Outstanding Young Pianist of the Midwest," the reward for which was an appearance on a series that included five world-famous concert pianists of the day. I suddenly found myself in incomparable company! My name then was Carol Silver and I was only 19 years old.

But these were World War II years, and it was customary at that time to begin programs with *The Star-Spangled Banner*, and so when January rolled around, I saw to it that I was well-prepared to play my own bravura version for the first (and only) time. As I struck the opening octaves, the entire audience up to the gallery rose *en masse*. They did not sing but listened in quiet reverence to the majestic music of the national anthem.

My arrangement was intended to be a "concert version" in the style of the unsurpassed brilliant pianist, Vladimir Horowitz, who had been my idol since early childhood. I saw this as an opportunity for the piano to make its own patriotic statement, and not be used only as an accompanying instrument.

The arrangement I chose to create is written in a brilliant style that makes use of thunderous chords in both hands, along with frequent octaves, hit first at the very bottom of the piano and suddenly

jumping up dramatically to join the right hand in solid roaring chords suggestive in some way of "the bombs bursting in air."

Throughout the piece there are some chords for the left hand that are so expanded that they can only be played as arpeggios. But the unique characteristic that separates this national anthem arrangement from all others is the unexpected chord in measure 31 that supports the long-suspended high note that always occurs in each stanza on the word *Free*.

At this point in traditional arrangements, there is a banal tonic chord, despite the fact that this same chord is about to be used for the final chord only a few beats away. In my opinion, this premature appearance of the tonic detracts considerably from what ought to be its triumphant emergence at the very end. And so, in my version, I have substituted what I believe is a far more suitable *mediant* chord, which serves both to delay and hold us captive for a few glorious moments in space and time, *until* the tonic can finally resolve everything and shine through in all its glory!

This concert arrangement of the national anthem was filed away for decades until I recently came upon it, and decided that perhaps the time had come for it to be heard again - exactly as it was written back in 1943. At that point I began the process of registering it with the Copyright Office of the Library of Congress.

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