

RED SOX FOREVER AND EVER

Text, music, and annotations by

Patricia Van Ness

**A five movement classical work
commissioned by
Perry and Susan Neubauer**

**Dedicated to the Neubauers and to
A.Bartlett Giamatti (1938-1989)**

RED SOX FOREVER AND EVER

By Patricia Van Ness (copyright 2001, 2008, 2018)

I. Red Sox Forever and Ever¹

O Red Sox forever and ever,
forever and ever Red Sox, sweethearts of us all;
and Teddy Ballgame² is most beloved,
arguably,³
for he launched⁴ ten thousand⁵ homers,
yet also tapped the humble bunt.⁶
He is the anointed one,
but precious also are e.g. Red Bluhme⁷, Walt
Dropo⁸
and Pedro Martinez,⁹ our happiness and our joy!

II. But What of that Betrayer?¹⁰

But what of that betrayer,
who willingly donned pinstripes,¹¹
that glorious pitcher whose name I cannot say,
whose very number 21 is not speakable?¹²
We know redemption comes to all,
but 'til that day, for just a little while,
may his heart¹³ ache;
may tears fall from his eyes;
may his arm be dead,¹⁴ and sore weary.
and in his heart may memory turn his Ks¹⁵
to walks,¹⁶ to walks,
to walks, to walks.
may he writhe and burn in shame
for this terrible, terrible, crime.

III. Holy Emerald Grail^{17, 18}

Holy Emerald Grail, Fenway Park,¹⁹
home away from home,
where peace drops like a quiet cloak around my
shoulders.
I tread the upper walkway
from the right field stands²⁰
to the glorious left,
transistor²¹ to my ear,
Monster²² at my side,
hearing the crystalline calls of sweet Joe
Castiglione,²³
who loves the game with perhaps
the purest love of all.
*Rosea Soleae*²⁴ Grail, Fenway Park.

IV. Ah! An Error!²⁵

Ah! An Error!²⁶
A slip in the great dance!²⁷
Yet are we not human, after all?
In life, as in our game,
around our hot-stove fires,²⁸
we agonize our bloop, and chokes,
and tragic misplayed drops,
our called third strikes in the bottom of all
ninths --
with runners on,
until we've come to terms at last with
every errant bloop
and choke and drop,
and embracing them in loving-kindness,
we forgive them, every one.

V. Red Sox Forever and Ever

O Red Sox forever and ever,
forever and ever Red Sox,
beyond players,
beyond top brass,
beyond errors,
beyond betrayals,
beyond sorrows
beyond the *Rosea Soleae* Grail,
forever and ever Red Sox,
world without end forever,
O Red Sox forever and ever, amen.

ANNOTATIONS

1 The musical foundation for the first and last movements is an *ostinato*, a musical pattern repeated many times in succession. For many centuries classical music, such as the 13th century *Amor potest conqueri*, has been based on *ostinatos*. *Hit the Road, Jack*, by Ray Charles, is another good example; the 'cellist's line of *Red Sox Forever and Ever* descends as does Charles's song, thus bringing to mind the great pennant-deciding game between Boston and New York in the fall of 1904: ninth inning, Boston batting, tied game, two out, runner at third; New York pitching ace Jack Chesbro (41 wins in 1904) threw a wild pitch that soared over

the head of Yankee catcher Red Kleinow, and Boston scored. Boston forced Jack Chesbro to “Hit the Road, Jack,” and gloriously won the pennant.

2 Ted Williams, Red Sox and baseball great from 1939 to 1960, and the last batter to hit above .400 for a season average (.406 in 1941). “Despite the ‘Williams Shift’ used by opponents, Ted’s on base percentage was the highest in history: 48%.” (*Red Sox Yearbook*, May 2001).

3 His personality is perhaps more beloved now than during his playing days, when he was often cranky. However his actual playing ability was fervently loved then, as now.

4 “Launch Angle represents the vertical angle at which the ball leaves a player’s bat after being struck.” (MLB.com Glossary) During “home runs,” high launch angles are valued because they can result in soaring fly balls that leave the yard.

5 Ed. Correction: 521 home runs. In 1960 at the age of 42, Williams hit his 521st home run in his final career at-bat.

6 According to some sources (e.g. Matinale), Williams’s bunting percentage was a whopping .917. Controversial because it often produces an out, a bunt is “A batted ball that is intentionally met with a loosely held bat and tapped softly into the infield. The purpose of a bunt is to advance a base runner (sacrifice bunt) or get the batter to first base on the element of surprise” (Paul Dickson, *The Dickson Baseball Dictionary, Third Edition*, W.W. Norton & Company, New York & London, 2009)

7 Perhaps the record for a player’s shortest stint with the Red Sox belongs to Red Bluhm, whose first major league appearance was on our team vs. the Philadelphia Athletics, 3 July 1918, as a pinch-hitter. He made an out. Never again appearing in the major leagues, he died in Flint, Michigan at the age of 57.

8 The son of Serbian immigrants, Walt “Moose” Dropo attended UConn and played football, baseball, and starred in basketball. Though given offers by the Chicago Bears and the BAA’s Providence Steamrollers, he chose to sign with the Red Sox in 1947. He arrived at the majors in 1950 and had a sensational rookie season, the best season of his career, with an OPS of .961, 144 RBI, 34 HR and a BA of .322. He was Rookie of the Year and an All Star.

9 Pedro Martinez, Red Sox ace pitcher from 1998-2004, was the first pitcher to receive the Cy Young award in both leagues. He had four superb pitches: fastball, change-up, curveball, and slider. Though Red Sox batters were at times notorious for their lack of run support for Martinez, during his tenure with Boston he was an amazing 117-37 for a W-L percentage of .760. “He played with fearlessness, panache, and joy. It was exciting every time he toed the rubber” (*Bill Chuck @BillyBall*).

10 Musically, the second and fourth movements are chant, characterized by a single line of melody, usually without regard to a strict meter (*Hit the Road, Jack* has strict meter). In these movements, the soprano is accompanied by a drone held by the lower instruments. Chant was chosen for these movements to convey the drama and angst of Betrayal, Life, Longing, Human Frailty, and Hope.

11 “A uniform decoration composed of rows of thin vertical stripes. In a baseball context, the term is almost always used to refer to the pinstriped home uniform of the New York Yankees” (Dickson, *Ibid.*).

12 One-time Red Sox pitcher Roger Clemens. After stating at length that “it’s not about the money” and that he would never move to New York, he eventually accepted an astronomical offer from the Yankees and pitched there for many years, competing against the Yankees’

fiercest rivals in the Eastern Division, the Red Sox.

13 The melodic interval on the word “heart” is an augmented fourth, known in medieval times as the “devil’s interval” due to its unpleasant sound. It is used here to indicate the severity of the behavior of this player.

14 A painful medical condition in which the player is unable to throw as hard as usual. It usually results in a stint on the disabled list.

15 A strikeout, defined as “An out recorded by a pitcher when the batter has been charged with three strikes (Dickson, *Ibid.*). Clemens recorded the third most strikeouts in baseball history, 4672, behind R.H. Nolan Ryan (5714) and L.H. Randy “The Big Unit” Johnson (4875).

16 “The taking of first base by a batter to whom four balls have been pitched (Dickson, *Ibid.*), sometimes known as a “walk in the park.”

17 The ‘cello’s opening notes are from the first phrase of *Take Me Out to the Ballgame* in augmented (stretched out) form, establishing a musical foundation over which the melody is heard (a metaphor for baseball providing the foundation for the melody of our lives). *Take Me Out to the Ballgame* was written by Jack Norworth (words) and Albert von Tilzer (music), published in 1908.

18 Those who seek, find; and true fans of the game know that the Holy Grail is baseball’s Fenway Park.

19 Red Sox’s home park. The Fenway Park architect was James McLaughlin. “It was built in 1912 and rebuilt in 1934, and offers, as do most Boston artifacts, a compromise between Man’s Euclidean determinations and Nature’s beguiling irregularities” (John Updike, “Hub Fans Bid Kid Adieu,” *The New Yorker*, 1960).

20 Before the dynasty-producing Henry ownership took control in 2002 and vast

improvements made, sitting in the right field stands made it impossible to remember one was at a ballpark due to the angles of the seats and poor sightlines.

21 Radio. “The sound of a ballgame on the radio is the background music of summer” (Susan Neubauer).

22 The high leftfield wall of Fenway Park, painted green, referred to as “The Green Monster.” It is constructed of tin, steel, and concrete.

23 Long-time play-by-play and Red Sox Hall of Fame radio announcer. The clarity and shrewdness of his calls have brought him much respect. “Sweet” refers to his fervent love of the game and kind nature, evident even when the Sox are down.

24 Literally translated, “Rosy Slippers,” this is the Latin for “Red Sox” (Edward J. Vodoklys, S.J.).

25 “A misplay on the part of the defensive team that helps the offensive team” (Dickson, *Ibid.*)

26 As Brian “The Belville Basher” Daubach once summarized, “He [Rick Down, then Red Sox batting coach] keeps our attitude positive, since so much of baseball is about failure.”

27 Baseball, or life itself.

28 Baseball’s off season, relating to fans sitting around a hot stove during winter’s cold months, thoroughly analyzing their teams.

Thanks to Perry Neubauer and Paul Van Ness for statistical assistance with the notes.

May our rosy dreams continue to come true.

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