

SALUTE THROUGH SONG

ENGLEWOOD'S LARRY GELB LIFTS HIS VOICE



Englewood's Larry Gelb, at the piano, leads a community chorus of students, firefighters, teachers, nurses and people from every walk of life as they salute the American spirit.

BY ALISON ASHLEY FORMENTO

Composer and lyricist Larry Gelb has written more than 800 songs in his musical career, including film scores, musicals, jingles and jazz compositions – even one entitled “Song for Pickles,” after his beloved Jack Russell terrier. In his newest song, “America is Free,” Gelb expresses thanks to our troops in a powerful group melody sung by professional singers, local students and community workers, including an Englewood mailman.

A mailman sings in your song, “America is Free?”

Yes, Samuel Williams, and his voice is amazing. He sings along with 40 others – nurses, a UPS deliveryman, even Capt. John McLoughlin of the Englewood Fire Department. We recorded the entire song at Bennett Studios in Englewood, just four blocks from my house.

What makes this song special?

A good song resonates and lives in you. I’ve always felt that if a song is right, it’s part of you. That deep, tribal feeling comes through. “America is Free” is an anthem – a song that should be heard everywhere. We’re offering free downloads of the song and the sheet music. It’s a love song for the U.S.A. highlighting the meaning of “indivisible” in our Pledge of Allegiance and honoring the sacrifices made by our troops.

Do you find songwriting challenging?

It’s always come easy. I’ve been writing three songs a day, even as a child. When I was ten, my brother and I wrote shows for the local community center. We were known as the Woody Allen and Mel Brooks of Scranton.

How long have you lived in Englewood?

My wife, Betsy, and I have lived here

12 years and we love it – especially Baumgart’s and being able to walk into town. Visiting Maine is a favorite summer spot – I even wrote a song about a lobster village there – but Englewood is our home for life.

What makes your dog, Pickles, unique?

On walks, cars stop to look at Pickles and the neighborhood dogs love her, too. She arrived on a Puppy Bus, from “Barkansas” where the local human society lists dogs on a Web site. Pickles is my muse now, along with Betsy, who has perfect pitch and is the CEO of our music company. I’m insanely in love with both of them. I’d happily sit and work at the piano for 24 hours straight, but I’ll stop for Betsy’s great cooking and to walk Pickles. ♦

To download “America Is Free” and for information on Larry Gelb’s upcoming musical, *Love So Dear*, visit www.imaginmusic.com.