

Sidedoor Season 5, Episode 10: Take Who Out to the Ball Game?

Lizzie Peabody: This is Sidedoor, a podcast from the Smithsonian with support from PRX. I'm Lizzie Peabody.

[MUSIC]

Lizzie Peabody: On July 16, 2008, Dan Piazza got up from his desk at the Smithsonian's National Postal Museum, and left work early.

[MUSIC]

Lizzie Peabody: He hopped on the metro and set off across town, tucked in his bag, a personal invitation to an event at the White House.

[MUSIC]

Dan Piazza: Well, you had to be on a list and have an invitation. Anyone who had an invitation had to submit their social security number in advance, before coming on to the South Lawn of the White House.

[MUSIC]

Lizzie Peabody: There on the lawn, he joined the gathering crowd, and took a seat under the glaring summer sun.

[MUSIC]

Dan Piazza: It was hot. It was very hot. They gave out little fans because it was so hot.

[MUSIC]

Lizzie Peabody: And how many people, about how many people were there do you think?

[MUSIC]

Dan Piazza: I'm certain there were hundreds, there might have been thousands of people, on the South Lawn of the White House watching this... this T-ball tournament.

[MUSIC]

Lizzie Peabody: Hundreds, maybe thousands of people gathered in 90-degree heat to watch T-Ball.

[MUSIC]

Dan Piazza: It was kind of like watching the pint-sized World Series.

Lizzie Peabody: (Laughs).

Dan Piazza: I mean, these were really little kids.

Lizzie Peabody: (Laughs).

[MUSIC]

Lizzie Peabody: As delightful as it is to watch six-year-olds heave bats and try to hit dingers, that's not the reason Dan was there. At long last, during the 7th inning stretch, came the moment he'd been waiting for. President George W. Bush stood with the Post Master General. Between them, an easel, draped in a blue cloth bearing the U.S. Postal Service insignia. The Post Master said a few words...

Post Master General: I can't think of a better venue than right here on the White House, the most prestigious field, the South Lawn.

Dan Piazza: And then at the appointed time, all the dignitaries sort of tugged on the covering...

Lizzie Peabody: (Laughs).

Dan Piazza: ...and it came down and the design of the stamp was, was revealed for the first time.

Post Master General: We're going to unveil the stamp.

Lizzie Peabody: They unveiled the U.S. Postal Service's newest stamp! Did everyone, "Ohhhh" and, "Ahhhh" and applaud?

Dan Piazza: (Laughs). Yes!

Lizzie Peabody: (Laughs).

Dan Piazza: Oh yes.

[APPLAUSE]

Dan Piazza: It was quite a moment!

[CHEERING and APPLAUSE]

Lizzie Peabody: This is a local news report from that day.

Local News Report Audio: To celebrate the 100th anniversary of Baseball's anthem, the United States Postal Service issued the, "Take Me Out to the Ball Game" stamp.

[MUSIC]

Lizzie Peabody: The, "Take Me Out to the Ball Game" stamp showed an old-timey baseball player, front and center.

Dan Piazza: And then, behind him, you see the diamond. It says, "take me out to the ballgame." And there are a few bars of musical notes. I can't read music, so I assume it's the song, but then very patriotic, red, white and blue shields in the corners.

Lizzie Peabody: And I see in the bottom left corner, it says, "1908" and in the bottom right corner it says, "2008."

Dan Piazza: Right. Yeah, marking the centennial of the song itself.

[MUSIC]

Lizzie Peabody: And there on the White House lawn, all the T-Ball players and the spectators, and the President himself, sang together. Because wherever there's baseball, there's, "Take Me Out to the Ball Game." The song is ranked in the top three most recognizable tunes of the 20th century, next to the national anthem, and happy birthday. Baseball fan or not, you know this song. Or at least, you think you do. This time on Sidedoor, we're taking you out to the ballgame, through the history of baseball's unofficial anthem, which has less to do with baseball and more to do with, well, women! Coming up, after a quick break.

[MUSIC]

Lizzie Peabody: Okay gang. Hold onto your ball caps, because the song you think of as, "Take Me Out to the Ball Game" isn't the full song, anyway. It's just the chorus to the song. The full song tells the story of a woman named, Katie Casey.

George Boziwick: (Singing a capella)
Katie Casey was baseball mad,
had the fever and had it bad,
just to root for the home town crew,
every sou', Katie blew...

Lizzie Peabody: This is George Boziwick, retired Chief of the Music Division for the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts. He also has a very nice singing voice. He says the gist of the song is this.

George Boziwick: It's about an independent woman, who wants to go to the ballgame.

[MUSIC]

Lizzie Peabody: Here's an early recording of the song, recorded by the Haydn quartet in 1908.

[MUSIC: 1908 Hydn Quartet, "Take Me Out To The Ball Game"]

Lizzie Peabody: George showed me some pictures that went along with the song, that sort of illustrate the story it tells. In the first picture...

George Boziwick: ...you've got Katie Casey's beau coming to her house and knocking on the door. And she's reading this newspaper that says in big letters, 'BASEBALL EXTRA!' And she's totally immersed in the sports pages!

Lizzie Peabody: (Laughs).

George Boziwick: And he comes to the door. And you can see that they're talking. And the words to the song say, on a Saturday, her young beau, called to see if she'd like to go, to see a show. But Miss Kate said, "No!"

[MUSIC: "Take Me Out To The Ball Game"]

George Boziwick: "I'll tell you what you can do. Take me out to the ballgame..."

[MUSIC: "Take Me Out To The Ball Game"]

George Boziwick: And then you see Katie Casey in the stands, you know, and then you see Katie Casey getting all riled up and putting her fist in the air and shouting!

[MUSIC: "Take Me Out To The Ball Game"]

George Boziwick: And she's surrounded by men.

Lizzie Peabody: (Laughs). Uh, huh.

George Boziwick: And they show scenes of the field and the players.

[MUSIC: "Take Me Out To The Ball Game"]

George Boziwick: "She made the gang sing this song." So, it's a gang! So, she's already in tight with the gang. You know what I mean?

Lizzie Peabody: Yeah!

George Boziwick: So, there it is! There it is. She's in with the crowd, but she's making them do what she wants.

[MUSIC: "Take Me Out To The Ball Game"]

Lizzie Peabody: Now today, the idea of a woman hollering at a baseball game isn't unusual. I've done it myself, but at the turn of the 20th Century, it was. Ballparks were rough-and-rowdy places. And George told me, many men objected to having women there at all.

Lizzie Peabody: So, why would some men have resented the idea of women at the baseball game?

George Boziwick: Well, because they're encroaching onto the grounds of their so-called exclusive men's club, you know? And that, to have a woman doing that in 1908 was not the usual thing.

[MUSIC]

Lizzie Peabody: Songwriter Jack Norworth wrote the lyrics to, "Take Me Out to the Ball Game" in 1908. It was the year the Model T Ford came out. Well-to-do ladies carried parasols, wore sweeping skirts and truly enormous hats, which probably didn't help their popularity at the ballpark. Women were also becoming more independent, gaining more access to education and

the workforce. George Boziwick believes, Jack Norworth's, "Katie Casey" had all the qualities of a, "modern woman." And the song itself carried a feminist message, but not everyone agrees.

Andy Strasberg: He was not a crusader. He was a man who understood that his livelihood was dependent on selling sheet music.

Lizzie Peabody: This is author Andy Strasberg. He literally wrote the book on this song, along with co-authors Tim Wiles and Robert Thompson. It's called, "Baseball's Greatest Hit: The Story of Take Me Out to the Ball Game."

Lizzie Peabody: Let's go back a bit. So, who was Jack Norworth?

Andy Strasberg: Jack Norworth was a composer. He was an entertainer. He was a singer. Jack wrote tens of thousands of songs.

Lizzie Peabody: And, "Take Me Out to the Ball Game" was just one of them. Norworth claimed he'd never even been to a baseball game when he wrote the song. He was just rumbling along on the New York City Subway one day, when he saw a poster advertising a baseball game. And all of a sudden, the idea hit him. And on the back on an envelope, he scribbled the lyrics, but the song was never intended for the ballpark.

Andy Strasberg: Most everyone is going to think that, 'Well, "Take Me Out to the Ball Game," it's sung at a baseball game! Well, that's not how it began. It began in vaudeville.

[MUSIC: "Take Me Out To The Ball Game"]

Lizzie Peabody: Vaudeville shows were a mainstay of American entertainment in the early 20th century. They were like variety shows, featuring theatrical acts, comedy, musical performances, and dancing. Andy says, to make his song a hit, Jack Norworth wanted to get his music into as many vaudeville acts as possible.

[MUSIC: "Take Me Out To The Ball Game"]

Lizzie Peabody: And he was good at that.

Andy Strasberg: I think he was a marketing genius. And maybe the best example that I can give of that is that on the sheet music of, "Take Me Out to the Ballgame," there is a space on the cover of that sheet music that a photograph representing a popular vaudevillian would be seen.

Lizzie Peabody: So, he printed sheet music showing photos of over 30 different vaudeville performers.

Andy Strasberg: He worked out a deal with these different vaudevillians. 'I'll promote you, if you promote my song.'

Lizzie Peabody: These vaudevillians would incorporate the song into their acts. And those acts toured the country.

[SOUND OF AN OLD FILM REEL]

Lizzie Peabody: Meanwhile, you could also hear, "Take Me Out to the Ball Game" in silent movie houses, during intermission. While the projectionist changed the film reels, the pianist

would play the song, and slides projected on the film screen showed the lyrics, so everyone could sing along to the chorus.

[MUSIC: "Take Me Out To The Ball Game"]

Andy Strasberg: The spotlight was now on the people who were in the audience. And that, I think, was a good part of why it became so popular and just covered the United States!

[MUSIC: "Take Me Out To The Ball Game"]

Lizzie Peabody: The song went viral! Within months of its publication, three different recordings of it broke the top ten in the music charts. It spread across the country.

[MUSIC: "Take Me Out To The Ball Game"]

Lizzie Peabody: So, in 1908 there's no Spotify. There's no internet. There's no vinyl records. Commercial radio isn't a thing yet. How did a song go viral in those days?

Andy Strasberg: First of all, you have to understand the business of music. A music store had sheet music that surrounded an upright piano in the middle of a store.

Lizzie Peabody: In those days, if you wanted to listen to music at home, you pretty much had to play it yourself on the piano. So, if you heard a song that you liked, say at a show, or at a movie theater, you'd go to a music store and look for it amid the shelves of colorful sheet music.

Andy Strasberg: ...which was designed in order to capture people's attention.

Lizzie Peabody: Like wine labels!

Andy Strasberg: Exactly. So, people would go in and pick out some of the sheet music. And they'd walk to the middle of the store, and hand it over to somebody who was playing the piano, and then they would listen to it.

[MUSIC]

Lizzie Peabody: And if they liked the song, they'd pay 10 cents and take it home with them. And a lot of people went home with, "Take Me Out to the Ball Game."

[MUSIC: "Take Me Out To The Ball Game"]

Lizzie Peabody: Over six million, to be exact.

[MUSIC: "Take Me Out To The Ball Game"]

Lizzie Peabody: Now, it's entirely possible that Jack Norworth wrote a song he thought would be a hit, with no feminist message at all. But George Boziwick, who sang for us earlier, says, there's one more piece of the puzzle called, "Trixie Friganza." In 1907, the year before he wrote, "Take Me Out to the Ball Game..."

[MUSIC: "Take Me Out To The Ball Game"]

George Boziwick: Norworth runs into Trixie Friganza, who was a very well-known vaudeville star. Besides being a vaudeville star, Trixie Friganza was a huge activist, feminist in the suffrage movement.

Lizzie Peabody: Remember, this was the early 1900s. The women's suffrage movement was gaining momentum in New York City. And Trixie was part of it.

George Boziwick: She was attending rallies at City Hall. She was giving speeches. And they began a heated affair.

[MUSIC: "Take Me Out To The Ball Game"]

Lizzie Peabody: Norworth may not have been a known women's rights activist, but he was definitely, "keeping amorous congress" with a woman who was. At the time that he wrote, "Take Me Out to the Ball Game" and the independent, vocal, politically-minded Trixie Friganza, like Katie Casey, would probably have felt pretty comfortable at a ballgame.

[MUSIC: "Take Me Out To The Ball Game"]

Lizzie Peabody: They say, "imitation is the highest form of flattery." And if that's true, Jack Norworth must have felt pretty flattered because, "Take Me Out to the Ball Game" spurred the publication of 22 new baseball songs the year after it was published. And a lot of those songs seized on the theme of, "ladies at the ballpark."

George Boziwick: It unleashed a flood of baseball songs about taking your girl to the game.

[MUSIC]

Lizzie Peabody: George rattled just a few examples off the top of his head.

[MUSIC]

George Boziwick: You have, "Take Your Girl to the Ballgame" in 1908, "The Baseball Game of Love" in 1909. Then you have two songs called, "I Want to go to the Ball Game."

Lizzie Peabody: Haha!

George Boziwick: Another song, "Back to the Bleachers for Mine." Then in 1911, "I'm Baseball Crazy Too" and, "You've Made a Home Run with Me," "I've Been Making a Grandstand Play For You."

[MUSIC: "I've Been Making a Grandstand Play For You"]

Lizzie Peabody: But these copycat songs all feature romance at the ballpark. The women aren't there because they love baseball. They're there for a man.

[MUSIC: "I've Been Making a Grandstand Play For You"]

George Boziwick: And they're all about, 'I want to go to the ballgame with you, my boyfriend, because I love what you love.' You know? "And you look so great when you're at the ball game. I want to be in the ballpark with you.'

Lizzie Peabody: Hmm. They basically wrote love songs set at a baseball game...

George Boziwick: Yeah.

Lizzie Peabody: ...but it's still about getting the girl or getting the guy as opposed to a woman in a position of leadership.

George Boziwick: Yep. Yep. Absolutely.

Lizzie Peabody: Maybe the best example of this is a song by George M. Cohan, which came out just days after, "Take Me Out to the Ball Game." It's called, "Take Your Girl to the Ball Game."

[MUSIC: "Take Your Girl to the Ball Game"]

George Boziwick: She's got a score card in her hands and a pencil. He's going to teach her to keep score.

"Take your girl to the ball game, any old afternoon. That's the spot..."

George Boziwick: And the later verses say that he wants 10 kids and he wants nine of them boys.

Lizzie Peabody: What?

George Boziwick: So, he can have a baseball team!

Lizzie Peabody: (Laughs).

George Boziwick: And by the time his wife, Mame, is 80 years old, she's still going to be grateful for that day at the ballpark, when she was taught the rules of the game.

Lizzie Peabody: Wow!

George Boziwick: It's a crazy song, you know?!

Lizzie Peabody: (Laughs).

[MUSIC: "Take Your Girl to the Ball Game"]

Lizzie Peabody: George says, of all the other songs about women at the ballpark...

George Boziwick: There was not another song that was written with the same message of, "Take Me Out to the Ball Game." It gave empowerment in a song, for a woman to attend the game, not only as an equal participant, but in leading the crowd, rooting for the home team. It's a very powerful message.

Lizzie Peabody: Whether it was savvy marketing, its feminist message, or the catchy sing-along chorus, "Take Me Out to the Ball Game" struck a chord with Americans.

George Boziwick: (Singing acapella)

Just to cheer up all the boys she knew,
She made the gang sing this song,

[MUSIC: "Take Me Out To The Ball Game"]
George Boziwick: (Singing acapella)
Take me out to the ball game,
Take me out to the crowd

[MUSIC: "Take Me Out To The Ball Game"]

Lizzie Peabody: George says, "the baseball-mad" Katie Casey was the first person ever to sing the song at the ballpark. She did it in the song, but it would take a few more decades for everyone else to catch up. Coming up after a quick break, how this song went from vaudeville hit, to the stadium classic we know today.

[MUSIC: "Take Me Out To The Ball Game"]

Lizzie Peabody: If you've ever gone to a major league baseball game, you'll know there's a pause in the game during the seventh inning. Its called the, "seventh inning stretch." The entire stadium stands and sings together, "Take Me Out to the Ball Game." But Andy Strasberg says, that wasn't always the case.

Lizzie Peabody: When did the song first make it into a baseball stadium?

Andy Strasberg: Well, we weren't able to find out the exact date, but it was played live at certain ballgames in the 1930s. And then, it started to pick up popularity through the '40s.

Lizzie Peabody: The ballpark organ made its debut at the Chicago Cubs' Wrigley Field in 1941.

[MUSIC: "Take Me Out To The Ball Game"]

Lizzie Peabody: And through the following decades, organ music took off in ballparks around the country. "Take Me Out to the Ball Game" would have been one of many songs fans heard at the park, but it was the pop culture appearances outside the stadium that turned it from, "popular hit," to, "American classic."

Andy Strasberg: "Take Me Out to the Ball Game" became a, "classic" in the late '40s, when Frank Sinatra starred in a movie, coincidentally called, "Take Me Out to the Ball Game!"

Lizzie Peabody: (Laughs).

Andy Strasberg: And opens up the movie singing, "Take Me Out to the Ball Game."

[MUSIC: Frank Sinatra singing, "Take Me Out To The Ball Game"]

Andy Strasberg: Now, keep in mind, Sinatra was the number one singer in this country.

Lizzie Peabody: Andy says throughout the '50s and '60s, every time the song's popularity waned, something would happen to bring it back. Like in 1955, *I Love Lucy* featured a cameo by one of the Marx Brothers.

Andy Strasberg: Harpo Marx played a serenade of, "Take Me Out to the Ball Game," beautifully done, on his harp.

Lizzie Peabody: Wow!

[MUSIC: Harpo Marx playing, "Take Me Out To The Ball Game" On His Harp]

Lizzie Peabody: And in 1965...

[MUSIC: Jerry Lee Lewis playing, "Take Me Out To The Ball Game"]

Andy Strasberg: Jerry Lee Lewis played, "Take Me Out to the Ball Game" in a rockin' way that is still, to this day, so incredibly hip.

[MUSIC: Jerry Lee Lewis playing, "Take Me Out To The Ball Game" with Neil Sadaka]

Andy Strasberg: And when the camera pulls out, you can see Neil Sadaka playing, "Take Me Out to the Ball Game" on a piano that's on top of Jerry Lee Lewis's piano.

[MUSIC: Jerry Lee Lewis playing, "Take Me Out To The Ball Game" with Neil Sadaka]

Lizzie Peabody: (Laughs).

[MUSIC: Jerry Lee Lewis playing, "Take Me Out To The Ball Game" with Neil Sadaka]

Andy Strasberg: It doesn't get any better than that!

[MUSIC: Jerry Lee Lewis playing, "Take Me Out To The Ball Game" with Neil Sadaka]

Lizzie Peabody: (Laughs).

[MUSIC: Jerry Lee Lewis playing, "Take Me Out To The Ball Game" with Neil Sadaka]

Lizzie Peabody: But it wasn't until 1977 that, "Take Me Out to the Ball Game" transformed from American classic to ballpark ritual, with the help of a woman named Nancy.

[Harry Caray: "Okay, Nancy!"]

Lizzie Peabody: Nancy Faust was 23 years old when she started playing organ for the Chicago White Sox. And you've actually been hearing her play all throughout this episode! And she says she feels a bit of kinship with the fictional Katie Casey.

Nancy Faust: I can relate a little bit because when I got my job in 1970, there was a petition circulated that this is not the place for a woman, or the role that a woman should have.

Lizzie Peabody: Really?

Nancy Faust: Yes! "What would a woman know about baseball?" And they were kind of right!

Lizzie Peabody: (Laughs).

Nancy Faust: I mean, I did learn though. (Laughs).

Lizzie Peabody: (Laughs).

Lizzie Peabody: Nancy is a legend among ballpark organists, and has been called the greatest of the last half-century. But when she first got the job, she didn't know a whole lot about baseball. What she did know, is how to play just about any song she'd ever heard by ear. And this talent, along with her sense of fun, was a big part of what made her so good at her job.

Nancy Faust: It became a game to associate players' names with songs.

Lizzie Peabody: Like, what's an example?

Nancy Faust: Well, let's say if a player's name was, "Ducey." I could play the theme from, 'I Love Lucy.' Or, say a player dated Madonna. So, I'd play a Madonna song. Streaker ran out in the field, I'd play, "Is That All There Is?"

Lizzie Peabody: (Laughs).

Nancy Faust: Cat runs out on the field, I play, "Cat Scratch Fever." So, it was just something in a lyric. I pick out a word in a lyric that was associated with whatever was happening.

Lizzie Peabody: Nancy was playful, and she used the organ to add her own musical commentary to the games. A year after Nancy started playing ballpark organ, the White Sox hired legendary baseball commentator, Harry Caray.

Nancy Faust: I knew how popular he was. So, I was out centerfield bleachers and I brought a small radio, so I could listen to his broadcast during the game and maybe gain some insight. You know, just the terminology.

Lizzie Peabody: And you were still learning about the game at that point too, right?

Nancy Faust: Exactly, exactly, but I remember hearing him on the radio say, "Oh my gosh! This game is going so slowly. They're going to have to carry me out of here," he said. And when I heard that, it was just a knee jerk reaction.

[MUSIC: "Carry Me Back to Old Virginie"]

Nancy Faust: I played, "Carry Me Back to Old Virginie."

[MUSIC: "Carry Me Back to Old Virginie"]

Nancy Faust: And when he heard that, he said, "Oh, listen to the organist! Like, even the organist wants to get out of here!" Well, he didn't even know who I was at the time.

[MUSIC: "Carry Me Back to Old Virginie"]

Lizzie Peabody: Nancy got Harry Caray's attention that day and he told management to move her from way out in centerfield, to directly behind home plate.

Nancy Faust: That's when he said, "Why don't we bring her behind where she can be enjoyed and seen more?"

Lizzie Peabody: From her new vantage point, Nancy could see into Harry Caray's booth and the two could play off each other. The owner of the White Sox, Bill Veeck, noticed that whenever Nancy played, "Take Me Out to the Ballgame," Harry Caray sang along to himself.

Andy Strasberg: That's how it started. Harry would sing along with Nancy Faust.

Lizzie Peabody: But owner Bill Veeck knew announcer, Harry Caray, wouldn't agree to sing in front of the whole stadium. So, he got sneaky.

Andy Strasberg: Bill Veeck snuck a microphone in there. And the next thing Harry Caray knew is when he started singing, it was going out over the P.A., and the fans joined in!

[Harry Caray singing, "Take Me Out To The Ball Game," with fans singing along with him]

Andy Strasberg: And as soon as Harry Caray heard himself, he couldn't stop. And everyone was looking at him.

[Harry Caray singing, "Take Me Out To The Ball Game," with fans singing along with him]

Lizzie Peabody: That sounds like a new version of my worst nightmare.

Andy Strasberg: (Laughs).

[Harry Caray singing, "Take Me Out To The Ball Game," with fans singing along with him]

Nancy Faust: They heard this thing that wasn't intimidating. It wasn't that good, but he conveyed this party-like atmosphere and convinced everybody they're having a good time.

[Harry Caray singing, "Take Me Out To The Ball Game," with fans singing along with him]

Nancy Faust: And that whole atmosphere changed. It was very electric.

[Harry Caray singing, "Take Me Out To The Ball Game," with fans singing along with him]

Andy Strasberg: That's what made it such a tradition.

[Harry Caray singing, "Take Me Out To The Ball Game," with fans singing along with him]

Nancy Faust: Pretty soon people are saying, well, I can't leave even though we're losing 12 to one. I have to wait to sing with Harry, then I'll go home.

[MUSIC: "Take Me Out To The Ball Game"]

Lizzie Peabody: It became an institution. The stadium-wide sing-along fans could expect every game.

[MUSIC: "Take Me Out To The Ball Game"]

Andy Strasberg: When Harry left the White Sox and went cross town and started doing the games for the Chicago Cubs, that was broadcast nationally. They would not go away for commercial.

[MUSIC: "Take Me Out To The Ball Game"]

Nancy Faust: The whole country could hear him sing.

Lizzie Peabody: Hmm.

Nancy Faust: And I think that just was contagious.

Dan Piazza: It's a song that belongs, in a sense, to the entire game, not to a particular league or a particular team or even a particular player.

Lizzie Peabody: Smithsonian's National Postal Museum Chief Curator, Dan Piazza, again.

Lizzie Peabody: Do you know of many other postage stamps that feature songs?

Dan Piazza: I can't really think of any. No. No, this is probably the only U.S. Postage stamp that honors a specific song.

[MUSIC: "Take Me Out To The Ball Game"]

Lizzie Peabody: From its earliest days, "Take Me Out to the Ball Game" was a song meant for many voices. And Andy Strasberg thinks, that's a big part of why it has lasted so long.

[MUSIC: "Take Me Out To The Ball Game"]

Andy Strasberg: Whether it be a ballgame, or a movie, now the audience gets to be the star. And so, the spotlight is shined on them.

[MUSIC: "Take Me Out To The Ball Game"]

Lizzie Peabody: And just like that, strangers become an ensemble.

[MUSIC: "Take Me Out To The Ball Game"]

Nancy Faust: So, that was the great thing about the song is that no matter what our differences were, this is something we could all agree on. It just unified everybody. It was very positive.

[MUSIC: "Take Me Out To The Ball Game"]

Lizzie Peabody: Of all the baseball songs, and we know now, there were many, this is the one that has endured, from the vaudeville stage to the White House lawn. George Boziwick says the original verses to the song may have faded away, but it still carries a message.

[MUSIC: "Take Me Out To The Ball Game"]

George Boziwick: It has this democracy built into it. It's an invitation for everyone to be part of the game.

[MUSIC: "Take Me Out To The Ball Game"]

Lizzie Peabody: Take us home, Nancy!

[MUSIC]

Lizzie Peabody: You've been listening to Sidedoor, a podcast from the Smithsonian with support from PRX.

[MUSIC]

Lizzie Peabody: The Smithsonian's National Postal Museum is developing a new exhibition called, "Baseball: America's Home Run" that will feature the, "Take Me Out to the Ball Game" stamp, among plenty of other unique objects that tell the story of American baseball through the lens of the postal service. You can find more info about that in our Newsletter.

[MUSIC]

Lizzie Peabody: Also, in the Newsletter, pictures of Katie Casey at the ballpark, or at least, the actress playing her. We'll include some of the images that accompanied the original song when it played in theaters. Subscribe at si.edu/Sidedoor.

[MUSIC]

Lizzie Peabody: Extra-special thanks to the magnificent Nancy Faust, who scored today's episode with her organ playing. We gave her prompt words and she riffed off them and it was so much fun. You can follow her on Twitter @played41. My favorite song on there is this one.

[MUSIC]

Lizzie Peabody: Special thanks to Boston Red Sox Organist, Josh Kantor, who guided us in the assembly of this episode, and who has been giving daily Facebook live concerts to raise funds for Covid relief. Thanks to Tim Wiles for being so generous with his time and expertise. Tim Wiles and Robert Thompson co-authored the book, "Baseball's Greatest Hit," along with Andy Strasberg.

[MUSIC]

Lizzie Peabody: Thank you to the Red Skies Music Ensemble, Co-Founded by Trudy Williams and George Boziwick, for sharing their recordings of those early baseball songs you heard. The Red Skies Music Ensemble brings archives to life through performance. The recordings you heard were made in 2016 at the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts.

[MUSIC]

Lizzie Peabody: Our podcast team is Justin O'Neill, Nathalie Boyd, Ann Conanan, Caitlin Shaffer, Jess Sadeq, Lara Koch, Sharon Bryant and Tami O'Neill. Episode artwork is by Greg Fisk. Extra support comes from John, Jason and Genevieve at PRX. Our show is mixed by Tarek Fouda. Our theme song is by Breakmaster Cylinder.

[MUSIC]

Lizzie Peabody: If you want to sponsor our show, please email sponsorship@prx.org.

[MUSIC]

Lizzie Peabody: I'm your host, Lizzie Peabody. Thanks for listening.

[MUSIC]

Andy Strasberg: The doorbell to my home plays, "Take Me Out To The Ball Game." Does it? Wait a minute. Are you...? Doesn't everybody's doorbell play, "Take Me Out To The Ball Game?"