

John Musto  
(b. 1954)

**Viva Sweet Love (11:05)**

- 1 I. **as is the sea marvelous** (2:42)
- 2 II. **Rome: In The Café** (2:12)
- 3 III. **You came as a thought** (1:09)
- 4 IV. **Crystal Palace Market** (2:23)
- 5 V. **sweet spring** (2:20)

Patrick Mason, baritone

John Musto, piano

**Quiet Songs (21:26)**

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Amy Burton, soprano

John Musto, piano

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Mssrs. Mason and Musto

Has there ever before been a place or time that offered such glorious opportunity as American song now enjoys? The widest possible field seems to be open to it. Not only do its practitioners feel free to use classical tonality in its many guises, but all of post-tonality and post-post-tonality are at their disposal as well.

Since at least Debussy and Vaughan Williams, our more cultivated composers, feel free even to try medieval modes anytime they desire such variegated colors and more muted harmonic functionality; and every Western and non-Western culture now offers itself as a quarry ready to be mined — with universals like the pentatonic scale on the one hand and the specialized colors of local idioms on the other. While all this certainly represents a rich gift to our composers, it also calls for an unprecedented discretion, demanding taste judgements that even a stylistic eclectic like Bach — whose music could speak Italian, French, or North German as his muse dictated — might have found challenging.

And it's not just a matter of compositional technique, either. *Style* enters into it just as conspicuously. For the same composer may introduce a sarabande at one moment and a blues at another. He may imitate bird calls or battle sounds as Jannequin did, employ vocal ornament as Bellini did, and accompany it all with riffs recalling Jimi Hendrix. Such freedom will give the incautious tyro license to embarrass himself and represent a sobering responsibility for the true artist.

The challenge is not only to the composer, of course, but to the performer as well. If the composer learns to write in this infinitely allusive polyglot of unprecedentedly wide-ranging reference, it follows that the singer and instrumentalist must learn to speak it.

If the process is to take the final step that the greatest art must take — communication — it will go yet further. For all these riches described above finally devolve upon the hearer whose own fund of cultural reference and repertory of emotional reaction may need to surpass what has been required by most of the concert-hall repertory up to now.

Such shared responsibility — divided among the one who conceives, the one who executes, and the one who resonates — will ideally constitute the community of expression and reverberation that has always been the joy of those who inhabit the commonwealth of *living music*.

Of living music *and poetry* that is. From at least the days of the 14<sup>th</sup> century *Ars Nova*, when musical form in secular vocal music was entirely determined by the *formes fixes*, to the habitually ecstatic utterances of Schubert and Schumann that were so intrinsically linked to their contemporaneous Romantic poets, to the wit of a Satie or Poulenc who matched the Gallic urbanity of their literary friends measure for measure, we have grown accustomed to musical magicians who can hold their heads up in the company of the gods of poetry. But along the way we have been led down many a populist byway from that more bounded, rarefied art. One imagines, for example, that the original songs in Shakespeare's plays may have had more in common with Stephen Foster than with Purcell. The brothel-nurtured genius of Eubie Blake may speak to Schubert's 21<sup>st</sup> century American heirs as eloquently as do the marvelously honeyed tones of Mendelssohn or Duparc. And all this before we even contemplate the fathomless ingenuity of a Gershwin, a Porter, or a Berlin, whom an alert American musician inhales with the very oxygen.

In such a dizzying scene of exalted possibility — all available to the modern artist of song who troubles to take out a passport for all the

music literature and recorded performances available to the musically and intellectually curious — the amazing variety of John Musto's songs, however admirable, does not seem as surprising as it otherwise might. For he, who may speak — as pianist and as composer — as many languages as any such proficient in history, would probably just describe himself as an avid and responsible citizen of this world of music. It is not to limit such universalism, however, to detect in him an essence that is as American as Mousorgy's is Russian, Monteverdi's is Italian, Shankar's is Indian, Nielsen's is Danish, or Piazzola's is Argentine. In each of those cases, it could be argued that their authentic specificity only aids their wider communicativeness.

In experiencing a style that has digested diverse elements, rather than just pasting them on, it is sometimes difficult to decide if we are hearing quotations of pre-existing music or of the natural incorporation of a recognizable manner. Contrary to what might easily be the impression, the only quoted material among the songs of this recording seems to come when the obvious *Stabat Mater* fragment admits tragedy into a "Christmas Carol" and with the frank introduction of Rossini's evocation of *Veneziano* gondola-racing in "Palm Sunday." This is so despite the convincingly Andalusian air of "Flamenco" or the country-western feel of "Penelope's Song." In both latter cases, the authentic atmosphere is created by objective factors: the evocation of guitar tunings in the one and the characteristic swaying rhythms of the equestrian cowpoke in the other.

While such well-executed polyglotism will always have its charms, they will eventually pale if unbalanced by over-arching unities. A glance at the cycle of "Quiet Songs" reveals some of the ways such unities are achieved by Musto. Since he has told us that "Quiet Song" was the first

of the group to be composed, we can look to it for the key to the whole cycle. The relationships and meanings may not be hidden, but neither are they simplistic ones, as witnesses the fact that this song called "quiet" goes through *sempre crescendo* to *stringendo* on its way to *fortissimo strepitoso*. But, when it finally (and only briefly) returns to *piano dolcissimo e sostenuto*, both words and music tell us that quiet is to be found in two hearts that are in close communion: *cor ad cor loquitur*. This rubric gives full reign to all kinds of exploration of self by all kinds of people: Four little girls find their inmost selves in the sea. A woman proclaims a human relationship as the fundament of her existence. A habitual, self-deceiving sweetness of Christmas is overthrown with disturbing truth that brings reality home. An imaginative speaker mentally transports herself to a for-her-exotic Neapolitan procession that nevertheless spells peace and rootedness. And it all comes together in the final rest that is borne by a "Lullaby" that weaves together fragments from the music of the other songs in the cycle (as well as reminiscences of Musto's First Piano Concerto). Thus is the cyclic character of the song-grouping not so frankly dependent on a poetic unit, as in such monuments of the genre as *Winterreise* or *Dichterliebe*, but on purely musical — and hence, wordlessly affective — form.

Such reference to classics of Lieder is not amiss here, if only because the collaborative rôles of singer and pianist are as comparably vital and various in Musto's output as in those most venerable monuments of song culture — which were also the product of pianist-composers. Never is the piano part simply accompanimental, whether it is embodying the rolling waves in "as is the sea marvelous" as picturesquely as Schubert gave us his immortal spinning-wheel, or providing the typical music of a Roman *caffè* (which

grew out of one of Musto's HBO scores) behind the singer's narrative of love's patient wait. John Musto certainly is not the first master of the layered meanings that come when a rare O'Neill poem like "Triolet" is underlaid by a ragtime waltz, but he is unexcelled at it among our current practitioners. It is perhaps not the least of these songs' glories that the only time such devices call attention to themselves is when they do so intentionally. This is certainly not the case in such technical matters as the modified twelve-tone flavor mingled into "Intermezzo" or "Christmas Carol." Musto evidently incorporates such unexpected disparities as unselfconsciously as Bernstein at his best did. As in fine cuisine, it represents the difference between an outright, external garnish and a more subtle, mysterious alchemy.

Some listeners will be especially interested in such background, and some will crave more anecdotal information — such as the scene when C.K. Williams came down to breakfast at Bellagio and presented Musto with the text of "Flamenco" for him to set. It is probable that many more, however, will prefer first to bask, unassisted and unprompted, in these words and music *as they evoke each other*. Is that not the very ideal of song?

### as is the sea marvelous

as is the sea marvelous  
from god's  
hands which sent her forth  
to sleep upon the world

and the earth withers  
the moon crumbles  
one by one  
stars flutter into dust

but the sea  
does not change  
and she goes forth out of hands and  
she returns into hands

and is with sleep...

love,  
the breaking

of your  
soul  
upon

my lips

### Crystal Palace Market

Saw a girl in a food  
store who looked like

you gave me the shakes  
in my poor old heart

darling darling sings  
the voice on the radio

darling why did we  
ever drift apart big

giant food market full  
of things to eat every

thing to eat that a  
person can desire

but I guess that I'll go  
hungry hungry hungry

darling says the radio  
why did we ever part?

~ E. E. Cummings

## You Came as a Thought

When I was past such thinking  
You came as a song when I had

Finished singing you came when  
The sun had just begun its setting

you were my evening star.

## Rome: In the Café

She comes at eleven every morning  
To meet a man who makes her cry

They sit at a table in the back row  
Talking very earnestly and soon

She begins to cry he holds her  
Hand and reasons with her & she

Orders a brandy and gulps it  
Down then she makes her face

New and goes home yes I think  
That she knows that I come just

To watch her & wait for the day  
When he does not come at all.

~ James Laughlin

## sweet spring

“sweet spring is your  
time is my time is our  
time for springtime is lovetime  
and viva sweet love”

(all the merry little birds are  
flying in the floating in the  
very spirits singing in  
are winging in the blossoming)

lovers go and lovers come  
awandering awondering  
but any two are perfectly  
alone there's nobody else alive

(such a sky and such a sun  
I never knew and neither did you  
And everybody never breathed  
Quite so many kinds of yes)

Not a tree can count his leaves  
Each herself by opening  
But shining who by thousands mean  
Only one amazing thing

(secretly adoring shyly  
tiny winging darting floating  
merry in the blossoming  
always joyful selves are singing)

“sweet spring is your  
time is my time is our  
time for springtime is lovetime  
and viva sweet love”

~ E. E. Cummings

## Quiet Songs

maggie and milly and molly and may

maggie and milly and molly and may  
went down to the beach(to play one day)

and maggie discovered a shell that sang  
so sweetly she couldn't remember her  
troubles,and

milly befriended a stranded star  
whose rays five languid fingers were;

and molly was chased by a horrible thing  
which raced sideways while blowing  
bubbles;and

may came home with a smooth round stone  
as small as a world and as large as alone.

For whatever we lose (like a you or a me)  
it's always ourselves we find in the sea

~ E. E. Cummings

## Intermezzo

You are with me  
And I am with you  
I surely would die  
If that were not true.

~ Amy Elizabeth Burton

## Quiet Song

Here  
Is home.  
Is peace.  
Is quiet.

Here  
Is love  
That sits by the hearth  
And smiles into the fire,  
As into a memory of happiness,  
As into the eyes of quiet.

Here  
Is faith  
That can be silent.  
It is not afraid of silence.  
It knows happiness  
Is a deep pool  
Of quiet.

Here  
Sadness, too,  
Is quiet.  
Is the earth's sadness  
On autumn afternoons

When days grow short,  
And the year grows old,  
When frost is in the air;  
And suddenly one notices  
Time's hair  
Has grown whiter.

Here  
Where is here?

In my heart  
Within your heart  
Is home.  
Is peace.  
Is quiet.

~ Eugene O'Neill

### Christmas Carol (To Jesus On His Birthday)

For this your mother sweated in the cold,  
For this you bled upon the bitter tree:  
A yard of tinsel ribbon bought and sold;  
A paper wreath; a day at home for me.  
The merry bells ring out, the people kneel;  
Up goes the man of God before the crowd;  
With voice of honey and with eyes of steel  
He drones your humble gospel to the proud.  
Less than the wind that blows  
Are all you words to us you died to save.  
O Prince of Peace! O Sharon's dewy Rose!  
How mute you lie within your vaulted grave.  
The stone the angel rolled away with tears  
Is back upon your mouth these thousand years.

~ Edna St. Vincent Millay

### Palm Sunday: Naples

Because it is the day of Palms,  
Carry a palm for me,  
Carry a palm in Santa Chiara,  
And I will watch the sea.

I sit and watch the little sail  
Lean side-ways on the sea,  
The sea is blue from here to Sorrento  
And the sea-wind comes to me.  
I see the white clouds lift from Sorrento  
And the dark sail lean upon the sea.

I have grown tired of all these things.  
And what is left for me?

I have no place in Santa Chiara,  
There is no peace upon the sea;  
But carry a palm in Santa Chiara,  
Carry a palm for me.

~ Arthur Symons

### Lullaby

Hush, lullay,  
Your treasures all  
                                encrust with rust.  
Your trinket pleasures  
                                fall  
To dust.  
Beneath the sapphire arch  
Upon the grassy floor  
Is nothing more  
                                To hold.

And play is over old.  
Your eyes  
                                In sleepy fever gleam,  
Your lids droop  
                                To their dream.  
You wander late alone,  
The flesh frets on the bone,  
Your love falls  
                                In your breast.  
Here is the pillow.  
                                Rest.

~ Léonie Adams

### Nude at the Piano

Here I sit,  
Nude at the piano,  
On this cold, cold stool.  
I got with me here  
A bottle of beer  
And I'm feeling like a fool.

And while I  
Brood at the piano  
You are somewhere faraway.  
So I sit and I freeze  
And I stare at the keys  
Wishing I knew how to play.

I would jump  
Off the Verrazano  
But I'm really just too blue...

So I sit,  
Nude at the piano,  
The piano  
I bought for you.

~ Mark Campbell

### Résumé

Razors pain you;  
Rivers are damp;  
Acids stain you;  
And drugs cause cramp.  
Guns aren't lawful;  
Nooses give;  
Gas smells awful;  
You might as well live.

~ Dorothy Parker

### Witness

no time ago  
or else a life  
walking in the dark  
i met christ  
jesus)my heart

flopped over  
and lay still  
while he passed(as  
close as i'm to you  
yes closer  
made of nothing  
except loneliness

~ E .E. Cummings

### Social Note

Lady, lady should you meet  
One whose ways are all discreet,  
One who murmurs that his wife  
Is the lodestar of his life,  
One who keeps assuring you  
That he never was untrue,  
Never loved another one . . .  
Lady, lady, better run!

~ Dorothy Parker

### Flamenco

I once met a flamenco guitarist,  
in Spain, in Granada,  
an American flamenco guitarist,  
and Jewish, of all things,  
who played like a fiend.

He called himself "Juan",  
then something with an "S,"  
not the "S" it had been,  
but Solares or Sastres:  
whatever; he played like a fiend.

He lived in a run-down hotel  
which was really a warehouse,  
he told me; though mostly  
what he told me were lies,  
he did play like a fiend.

That he was an addict  
he didn't say, but every few hours  
he went for a shot,  
because he was sick, he said:

but he played like a fiend,

Or perhaps I should say,  
"played like a fiend  
when he played,"  
because he was often "nodding,"  
and no one asleep plays like a fiend.

How had it happened?  
Who knows? It happened to him,  
it could happen to you,

or to me, and I for one  
never played like a fiend.

He lived in a warehouse  
and lied and played like a fiend.  
Should there be more?  
There's no more.  
Just that he played like a fiend.

~ C. K. Williams

### Penelope's Song\*

Don't hurry home, love  
Don't hurry home.  
I'm not finished  
Spinning and unspinning  
Wings of spun gold, love  
Stories never told, love  
Don't hurry home, love  
Don't hurry home.  
While you're away  
I invent and re-invent  
The world.

Don't hurry home, love  
Don't hurry home.  
I'm not finished  
Spinning and unspinning  
Steeds of pure light, love

Riding through the night, love  
Don't hurry home, love  
Don't hurry home.

Depart to alight  
And alight to depart  
I'm in love with beginnings.  
Landing and leaving  
Weaving unweaving  
This nomad's heart  
Needs to start  
Love's journey again.

Don't hurry home, love.  
Don't hurry home.  
While you're away  
I will travel the earth's  
Endless end.

~ Didi Balle

\* *Penelope's Song* is part of a seven-poem song-cycle written by Ms. Balle for composers entitled *Penelope*. The complete collection of 25 song-cycle poems is entitled *Wanderlust*.

### The Old Gray Couple (1)

They have only to look at each other to laugh -  
no one knows why, not even they:  
something back in the lives they've lived,  
something they both remember but no  
words can say.

They go off at an evening's end to talk  
but they don't, or to sleep but they lie awake -  
hardly a word, just a touch, just near,  
just listening but not to hear.

Everything they know they know together -  
everything, that is, but one:  
their lives they've learned like secrets from  
each other;  
their deaths they think of in the nights alone.

### The Old Gray Couple (2)

She: Love, says the poet, has no reasons.

He: Not even after fifty years?

She: Particularly after fifty years.

He: What was it, then, that lured us, that still  
teases?

She: You used to say my plaited hair!

He: And then you'd laugh.

She: Because it wasn't plaited.

Love had no reason so you made one up  
to laugh at. Look! The old, gray couple!

He: No, to prove the addage true:

Love has no reasons but old lovers do.

She: And they can't tell.

He: I can and so can you.

Fifty years ago we drew each other,  
magnetized needle toward the longing north.  
It was your naked presence that so moved me.  
It was your absolute presence that was love.

She: Ah, was!

He: And now, years older, we begin to see  
absence, not presence: what the world would be  
without your footstep in the world - the  
garden empty of the radiance where you are.

She: And that's your reason? - that old lovers see  
their love because they know now what its  
loss will be?

He: Because, like Cleopatra in the play,

they know there's nothing left once  
love's  
away

She: Nothing remarkable beneath the  
visiting  
moon . . .

He: Ours is the late, last wisdom of the  
afternoon.

We know that love, like light, grows  
dearer toward the dark.

~ Archibald MacLeish

### Triolet

Sleep on her breast;  
Rose of my heart!  
Flower so blest,  
Sleep on her breast;  
I crave thy rest,  
Alone, apart!  
Sleep on her breast,  
Rose of my heart.

~ Eugene O'Neill



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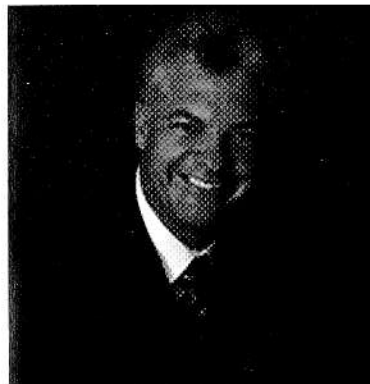
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*Quiet Song* and *Triolet* by Eugene O'Neill

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**Michael Barrett** is co-founder and associate artistic director of the critically acclaimed New York Festival of Song (NYFOS). He is also the CEO of Caramoor Center for Music and the Arts, and General Director of the Caramoor International Music Festival. In 1992 Mr. Barrett and his wife Leslie Tomkins founded The Moab Music Festival in Utah, for which he serves as music director. He has distinguished himself as a conductor with major orchestras here and abroad in the symphonic, oper-

atic, and dance repertoire. A protege (with accents!!) of Leonard Bernstein, he began his long association with the renowned conductor and composer as a student in 1982, and served as Maestro Bernstein's assistant conductor from 1985-1990. Mr. Barrett has recorded for Koch, TER, CRI, and Deutsche Grammophon. The DG recording of *The Joys of Bernstein* features Mr. Barrett playing solo piano with Maestro Bernstein conducting. Other discs include recordings of *Kerner Lieder; Mignon Lieder, duets by Robert Schumann* (with Lorraine Hunt and Kurt Ollmann); *Casino Paradise* by William Bolcom; *Aaron Kernis: 100 Greatest Dance Hits*; and Ned Rorem's *Evidence of Things Not Seen*. Born in Guam and raised in California, Mr. Barrett attended the University of California at Berkeley and is a graduate of the San Francisco Conservatory of Music, where he studied piano with Paul Hersh. He earned master's degrees in conducting and piano performance.



Baritone **Patrick Mason** has appeared in London's Wigmore Hall, the Cairo Opera House, at festivals in Luxembourg, Holland and in the United States. He has premiered operas by Tod Machover, John Duffy and Randall Shinn in Tokyo, New York, Los Angeles, Boston, Philadelphia and New Mexico. Mr. Mason has worked in recording and performance with composers Leonard Bernstein, Stephen Sondheim, Elliott Carter, George Crumb, John Musto, Ellen Zwillich and Barbara Kolb, and has sung with Speculum Musicae, the Rochester Philharmonic, the Syracuse Symphony,

the Colorado Springs Philharmonic, the West Virginia Symphony and the Greeley Philharmonic. Mr. Mason has taught masterclasses at the Hochschule für Musik in Berlin, the American University in Cairo and throughout the United States. He is currently Associate Professor of Voice at the University of Colorado at Boulder. His recording of Songs of Amy Beach (BRIDGE 9182) has been nominated for a 2007 Grammy in the "Best Solo Vocal" category. Mr. Mason has recorded Schubert's *Winterreise* and French Melodies by Ravel, Dutilleux, Fauré and Poulenc for Bridge, and has also recorded for Sony, l'Oiseaux Lyre, Erato, Nonesuch, Naxos and CRI. American Orchestral Songs (BRIDGE 9254) has received "Best Vocal Recording of The Year" from a number of critics.



**Amy Burton** enjoys a busy and diverse career of opera, concert, and recital appearances throughout the United States and Europe. Ms. Burton regularly appears on the stages of leading opera houses, including The Metropolitan Opera, Dallas Opera, San Diego Opera, Boston Lyric Opera, Florida Grand Opera, and Atlanta Opera, as well as international houses including L'Opéra de Nice, Théâtre des Champs-Élysées, and Opernhaus Zürich. She has also performed with some of the world's finest conductors, including Marin Alsop, James Conlon, Christoph Eschenbach, John Mauceri, Gerard Schwartz and Robert Spano.

Ms. Burton was recently heard in Barcelona at the Gran Teatre del Liceu in the one-woman show *Yvonne Printemps: A French Diva Unveiled*, a production dedicated to the music written for French diva Yvonne Printemps. This season she will perform John Corigliano's *Mr. Tambourine Man: Seven Poems of Bob Dylan* and William Bolcom's *Let Evening Come* with Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center.

A leading soprano with New York City Opera, Ms. Burton has been heard as Mozart's Pamina, Donna Elvira, and Countess Almaviva in *Le nozze di Figaro* and in their Handel series as Angelica in *Orlando*, Romilda in *Xerxes*, and Ginevra in *Ariodante*. Other notable appearances at the State Theater

include *L'amour/La Folie* in Mark Morris' production of *Plateé*, Concepcion in *L'Heure Espagnole*, Micaëla in *Carmen*, Alice in *Falstaff*, and The Governess in *The Turn of the Screw*.

Ms. Burton is especially well known for her interpretation of French repertoire, having recently triumphed as Elle in Poulenc's *La Voix Humaine*. The Wall Street Journal praised her "subtle realism and beauty of sound that was infinitely wrenching and vulnerable." As a concert artist Ms. Burton regularly performs with leading orchestras, including the National Symphony, San Francisco Symphony, Seattle Symphony, Houston Symphony, Cleveland Orchestra, Boston Baroque, and Scottish Chamber Orchestra.

Ms. Burton is a graduate of Northwestern University and was one of three winners in the 1995 Marian Anderson International Vocal Arts Competition. Her other honors include the George London Award, and the 1998 Kolosvar Award and 2000 Christopher Keene Award from New York City Opera. Her recordings include *Souvenir de Printemps* with pianists Yves Abel and John Musto for Harbinger Records, Richard Wilson's *Persuasions*, a cantata for soprano and chamber ensemble, released by Albany Records; *Blue Monday*, an early Gershwin opera, on the world premiere recording for Angel/EMI; and a collection of songs of Ernest Bacon entitled *Fond Affection* on CRI.

Producer: David Starobin

Engineer: Silas Brown

Editor: Charlie Post

Mastering Engineer: Adam Abeshouse

Piano: Steinway D

Piano technician: Edward Court

Recorded in the Recital Hall of the Performing Arts Center, SUNY College at

Purchase, August 21-23, 2007

Annotator: Roger Evans

Design: Douglas H. Holly • Typography: Alexis Napolliello

Cover Photograph of John Musto: Christian Steiner

Photograph of Amy Burton: Christian Steiner

Photograph of Michael Barrett: by Tess Steinkolk

John Musto's music is published by Songs of Peer (ASCAP) and,

Southern Music Publishing Co. Inc. (ASCAP)

Executive Producer: Becky Starobin

This recording was made possible with assistance from The Aaron Copland Fund for Recorded Music, and the Alice M. Ditson Fund of Columbia University, The Argosy Foundation and the University of Colorado, Boulder, College of Music



Special thanks to Todd Vunderink, Dan Sher, Dean, University of Colorado, Boulder, College of Music; Gina Houck, Assistant to the Dean.

For Bridge Records: Barbara Bersito, Douglas Holly, Paige Hoover, Michael Marerro, Brad Napolliello, Charlie Post, Doron Schachter, Alexis & Robert Starobin, Sandra Woodruff.

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