

Folk & Traditional Song Lyrics

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La Marseillaise

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Ye sons of France, awake to glory!
Hark! Hark! the people bid you rise!
Your children, wives, and grandsires hoary
Behold their tears and hear their cries!
Behold their tears and hear their cries!
Shall hateful tyrants, mischief breeding,
With hireling hosts a ruffian band
Affright and desolate the land
While peace and liberty lie bleeding?
To arms, to arms, ye brave!
Th'avenging sword unsheathe!
March on, march on, all hearts resolved
On liberty or death.

Oh liberty can man resign thee,
Once having felt thy gen'rous flame?
Can dungeons, bolts, and bar confine the?
Or whips thy noble spirit tame?
Or whips thy noble spirit tame?
Too long the world has wept bewailing
That falsehood's dagger tyrants wield;
But freedom is our sword and shield
And all their arts are unavailing.
To arms, to arms, ye brave!
Th'avenging sword unsheathe!
March on, march on, all hearts resolved
On liberty or death.

Written by Rouget de Lisle, a young officer in the French army stationed in Strasbourg in 1792. It was played at a patriotic banquet at Marseilles, and printed copies were given to the revolutionary forces then marching on Paris. They entered Paris singing this song, and to it they marched to the Tuileries on August 10th. Ironically, Rouget de Lisle was himself a royalist and refused to take the oath of allegiance to the new constitution. He was imprisoned and barely escaped the guillotine.

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