

# michael *W.* smith

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## G L O R Y

### Song-by-Song

**“Glory Overture”** – This is in many ways a tribute to the work of my favorite soundtrack composer John Williams (*Star Wars*, *Raiders of the Lost Ark*). It’s a fun, big piece of music that takes some adventurous left turns and then goes back to the main melodic theme. It’s the right way to set the stage for this album, and the orchestra sounds fabulous. The room in London where we recorded is the same one often used by another great composer, Hans Zimmer (*Gladiator*, *Inception*). The building is actually an old church.

**“The Patriot”** – That one feels very patriotic, very Americana to me. I wrote it as a tribute to the Armed Services of our country and can picture it being played at a military ceremony. I’ve already starting playing this one at concerts with my band; we have to retool it, of course, without the London Session Orchestra, which adds so much to this version on *Glory*.

**“Heroes”** – While “The Patriot” is an upbeat rendering of the American spirit, “Heroes” is a more somber counterpart. There’s a hint of sadness to the melody that feels as though someone has lost their life to defend our lives.

**“Forever”** – I’ve had this song for quite some time; my friend Wes King has even written an additional melody for it, but it stands here as an instrumental. It seems to be everybody’s favorite song in my world right now, especially for my two daughters who still live at home. I had a hard time naming this one but decided to call it “Forever” with my wife, Debbie, in mind. It’s for her.

**“The Blessing”** – I helped write a book that came out earlier this year called *A Simple Blessing*. This song is sort of a musical expression of that; people have said it reminds them of personal blessings they have experienced and evokes a feeling of thanksgiving. This to me feels like music that just washes over you in a majestic, spiritual sort of way. I hope it’s a blessing to you.

**“Whitaker’s Wonder”** – There’s a *Nutcracker* influence to this one, and it was especially fun to record—it really took off and got a big sound once the orchestra joined us in London, a sort of *Harry Potter* meets *Hook* thing. There’s a childlike feel to the music which inspired me to name it after my grandson, who is named after me. The name Whitaker goes way back in my family.

**“Joy Follows Suffering”** – The next four songs are important in terms of sequence; they go together and have an intentional spiritual thread running through them. There’s an air of sadness to “Joy Follows Sorrow”—it’s a reflection on the life of Jesus and Him knowing what He would go through on earth.

**“Glory Battle”** – There’s an intense feel to this piece that is meant to represent spiritual warfare—there’s a fight happening between good and evil, and so the arrangement here becomes pretty massive. I tend to think of soundtracks when writing this type of music, so stylistically, I was imagining *Gladiator* meets *Braveheart*.

**“Atonement”** – This piece is representative of the death of Christ. It goes to a minor key to reflect His sacrifice, and then the music brightens to signify a breakthrough, that death has been conquered. The technique of having two distinct sections of music in the same song to convey the spectrum of emotion was suggested by my producer David Hamilton—a trick he learned from studying classical pianist Frederic Chopin.

**“Redemption”** – I wanted this to feel big and celebratory, the victorious conclusion to the four-song cycle. You can hear some of John Williams’ influence in here again, but ultimately we arranged it to sound more like the work of composer Aaron Copland (*Appalachian Spring*, *Billy the Kid*), bringing in elements of Americana and the Old West.

**“The Romance”** – I wrote this for my wife Debbie, an amazing and inspiring woman. We have been married thirty years. Enough said, really.

**“Tribute / Agnus Dei”** – “Tribute” was written and dedicated to President George H.W. Bush and his wife Barbara on their sixtieth wedding anniversary. I will never forget that moment playing it for them at the White House. When it came to concluding *Glory*, the piece blended nicely into our symphonic arrangement of “Agnus Dei.” This features every member of the 75-piece ensemble to full effect. It was so fun and so emotional. I really had to concentrate to get this last one done right and not just break down and cry there in that orchestra room. It was truly an amazing experience.

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