

The Un-American President

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By [Maureen Dowd](#)

Opinion Columnist, reporting from Washington.

I saw the charismatic Italian conductor Gianandrea Noseda lead the National Symphony Orchestra on Thursday, in a program called “Songs of Destiny & Fate.”

The Brahms, Bach and Vivaldi were a soothing tonic to President Trump’s soundtrack, which is akin to the stabbing, shrieking Bernard Herrmann [score](#) for Hitchcock’s “Psycho” shower scene.

Noseda began by conducting “The Star-Spangled Banner.” Even before Trump blasphemously interloped onto the Kennedy Center’s name, Horrible Trump Culture War Enforcer Ric Grenell had [dictated](#) that all National Symphony Orchestra concerts begin with the national anthem.

I’m always happy to put my hand on my heart and listen to the ode to our flag and this “heav’n rescued land.” My father always had an American flag flying and took it down at sundown as a sign of respect, which was the custom then. When I won a Pulitzer, New York’s very cool senator, Daniel Patrick Moynihan, sent me a flag that had flown over the Capitol, which I cherish.

But it felt tinny to be force-fed “The Star-Spangled Banner” by our solipsistic president and his creepy sycophants, who show nothing but disdain for the Constitution and American values. It was our country’s destiny to reflect ideals that made us an incandescent beacon for democracy. But Trump has pulverized those ideals. We are now seen as sinister, selfish, unruly and at everybody’s throats.

Jack Smith’s testimony before Congress on Thursday was a stinging reminder that Trump tried to overthrow the government and wickedly put lawmakers and his own vice president in harm’s way.

“Our investigation revealed that Donald Trump is the person who caused Jan. 6, that it was foreseeable to him and that he sought to exploit the violence,” Smith said.

It is heartbreaking that on the cusp of our 250th anniversary, we have a president who is perverting all the values our country was founded on — looking out for one another, respecting one another’s rights.

America is not supposed to be a place where an angel-faced 5-year-old named Liam, with a floppy-eared hat and a Spider-Man backpack, gets seized and [taken to a detention center](#) by men in masks.

The American leader is meant to be a unifier, a strong and soothing presence in the world. Trump is an anarchic toddler, constantly causing upheaval across the globe, transgressing and

remaking everything in his helter-skelter image. He has no interest in fireside chats; he wants to set fires.

He's more about *droit du seigneur* than *noblesse oblige*. He feels entitled to whatever he wants, from Greenland to Canada to the Kennedy Center to a Nobel Prize he didn't win. Unlike previous presidents, he isn't countering Russia; he's catering to it. He disparaged the NATO troops who died for us in Afghanistan and belittled our nicest neighbor, claiming that "Canada lives because of the United States."

Demanding Greenland, [which he kept calling Iceland](#), he whinged to global leaders at Davos: "All I want is a piece of ice."

The depth of his shallowness is infinite.

One Canadian columnist [asked](#): "How would Trump behave differently if he was legitimately losing his mind?"

I understand the importance of legal immigration. My Irish father fought in the infantry in World War I to earn his citizenship. Nobody wants illegal criminals here. President Joe Biden let the border run amok.

But in the new New York Times/Siena University poll, a [sizable majority](#) said ICE had gone too far. Trump responded by saying he would expand his lawsuit against The Times to include the poll, because his rampaging vanity cannot accept falling numbers; the poll [indicated](#) that 42 percent of voters said he was ramping up to be one of the worst presidents in American history.

We have watched in horror as Minneapolis has morphed into an eerie war zone: ICE [claiming](#) that its officers are allowed to barge into people's homes without judicial warrants; an ICE agent shooting an unarmed mom with stuffed animals in her glove compartment [three times](#) until she was dead; ICE dragging a Minnesota man — a Hmong immigrant and naturalized U.S. citizen with no criminal record — out of his house into the snow, wearing only underwear and Crocs; ICE detaining four children, including little Liam, from one school district. (An F.B.I. agent who wanted to investigate the ICE agent who shot the mom resigned after bureau officials told her to stop her inquiry.)

"Why detain a 5-year-old?" a flustered Zena Stenvik, the town's superintendent, keened at a press conference.

It is clear the Trump crowd sees no difference between a criminal who crossed into the country illegally and a family that has applied for asylum and is doing everything the right way to stay here.

My parents inculcated us with patriotism and gratitude for this country. I grew up surrounded by men in uniform. My mother carried around a pocket-size Constitution in her purse, along with miniature bottles of Tabasco. She did not want to see us on July 4 if we were not in red, white and blue. I know what America is meant to stand for.

Trump has made America un-American.