

JOHN (SINGING) O, say can you see, by the dawn's early light, what so proudly the twilight's last gleaming, whose
DECAUSEMAKER: broad stripes and bright stars, through the perilous--

CATHY WURZER: The National Anthem will be one of the first things Wild fans will hear later this week when the hockey team hosts Edmonton at the X. This is John deCausemaker, the person who's the Official National Anthem Singer for The Wild. He gets fans their feet even before the team hits the ice, and he's on the line right now. Hey, John. Welcome to the program.

JOHN Hi, Cathy. How are you?

DECAUSEMAKER:

CATHY WURZER: I'm great. Thanks for joining us. Say, I'm curious. How did the gig with The Wild come about?

JOHN Yeah. Well, it's not that interesting, but I've got a long version and a short version. The short version is I just

DECAUSEMAKER: applied. Between the-- go ahead.

CATHY WURZER: Well, you just applied. Did you always want to do something like this?

JOHN Yes, yes, yes. So like a longer version is that I've been singing the anthems for sporting events for a while--

DECAUSEMAKER: mainly the Twins since I moved to the Cities back in '07, '08 time frame. I sang for the Twins the last year at the Metrodome. So what was that? 2008, I think. And occasionally for them once a year, twice a year all those years.

And then and then when The Wild gig opened up-- I didn't know this at the time, but a lot of the folks that work for the Twins also work for The Wild, so they work year round that way. And when I applied, they'd already seen me sing in stadiums all those years.

And when I applied and just got a call and said, hey, can you handle this? And do you know "O Canada?" And I said yes to both these questions. And next thing you know, I'm the Official National Anthem Singer for the Minnesota Wild.

CATHY WURZER: And you're in. What are the acoustics like at the X?

JOHN Amazing. Amazing compared to other stadiums. TCF is almost impossible when I sang for the Vikings pre-

DECAUSEMAKER: season games there when they were at TCF. They required in-ear monitors there. The Twins offer them, but I never take them. It is kind of strange to sing with them in. But at the X, I don't need them at all. It's like singing in the shower for me.

CATHY WURZER: Obviously what you sing, "The Star-Spangled Banner," is notoriously hard to sing for your average non-vocalist, right? What makes it so difficult?

JOHN The range, for sure. It's an octave and a half. If you start on the wrong note, boy, you can get some trouble

DECAUSEMAKER: either at the very beginning by bottom out bottoming out too low or picking a note that's too high, and then you find you can't hit the high notes at the end. But yeah, a full octave and a half for "The Star-Spangled Banner," so it is kind of a tough thing. "O Canada," by contrast, is only one octave-- a little easier, I think, for most folks to handle.

CATHY WURZER: Yeah. And everybody has a take on the anthem. I mean, I would think about Whitney Houston at Super Bowl 25, Lady Gaga, Jimmy Hendrix on guitar, of course. Do you have a take? I mean, how do you present "The Star-Spangled Banner" to hockey fans?

JOHN It's a very traditional-- they appreciate tradition. Let's just say that. Hockey, I think, was the first sport to
DECAUSEMAKER: actually play the National Anthem, if I'm not mistaken, when I did my little bit of research about where all this started in the first place. I don't know if you've ever seen it presented in Chicago with Jim Cornelison, but the fans there don't stand and quietly take it in. They're screaming the entire time.

And I think that comes from back when it first started. They were honoring troops coming back home from the war, and they were cheering for the troops the whole time, even though the anthem was playing. So it's a very different presentation there.

At the X, it's the more traditional, solemn presentation. I'm always right next to what they call the Guardian of the Game who's a veteran or active duty, something of that nature, a retired veteran or something like that. And it's always great the way we honor them.

And I do stick to-- it's not a voice audition or American Idol audition. I stick to the notes that are on the page, and folks seem to like it that way. I'm technically leading the crowd in singing the song, so if I go too far off the rails with my own version or rendition, people can't follow along.

CATHY WURZER: Right. Do you remember the first time you sang at a Wild game?

JOHN Yeah. October 14, 2017. That was my first home game.

DECAUSEMAKER:

CATHY WURZER: And how did it go?

JOHN Opening day of 2017. When I first got out there, started singing and the microphone wasn't on. So the first few
DECAUSEMAKER: lines-- the first few words, I should say, of the first line didn't really go through the system. So I just kept going because I was like, I don't know what to do.

I'm just going to keep singing. And it's never happened ever since. I know the guy felt really bad for that. But I remember getting some feedback on Twitter. Missed the first few notes, but otherwise, pretty good.

CATHY WURZER: Typical hockey fans. Pretty good.

JOHN Yeah.

DECAUSEMAKER:

CATHY WURZER: By the way, do you get ready for a game much like players do? I mean, do you do voice warm ups? A lot of my friends who are professional singers do that.

JOHN Oh, yeah, for sure. Yeah, there's a big concourse out there on ice level, and I just kind of go and find a corner
DECAUSEMAKER: and make my funny noises and make sure I'm ready to go with the high notes. As a singer, when your body's your instrument, you're going to kind of feel different day to day.

For example, just this most recent case, I didn't feel so great because I was screaming at my own son's Hopkins hockey tournament over the weekend. All the hockey over the weekend-- lots of screaming parents in the stands, and that has an effect on your voice. I notice it. Hopefully, the crowd doesn't notice it.

CATHY WURZER: You sound great. You sound great. And I have to say, I do not believe in my long career I've ever talked to someone whose job it is to sing the National Anthem, so this is a first for me. So I appreciate it.

JOHN It's my pleasure.

DECAUSEMAKER:

CATHY WURZER: I'm glad you took the time. Thank you, John. We'll be listening to you-- I think, what? Thursday against Edmonton, right?

JOHN That's correct. Yep. There's two more games in this seven game homestand.

DECAUSEMAKER:

CATHY WURZER: All right.

JOHN Very busy time.

DECAUSEMAKER:

CATHY WURZER: We'll be there listening to it. Thank you, John.

JOHN Awesome. Thank you, Cathy. You have a great day.

DECAUSEMAKER:

CATHY WURZER: You too. John deCausemaker is the Official National Anthem Singer for the Minnesota Wild which will be hosting its Wild About Kids event tomorrow at the X. Now, that's the premiere fundraising event for the Minnesota Wild Foundation. You can find out more about this and other things Minnesota Wild at nhl.com/wild.