

Music worth Fighting For

**The Role of American Popular Music in the United States and the United
Kingdom during World War II**

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Abstract

This thesis examines the relationship between (primarily) American popular music, as defined within the thesis, and World War II society in the United Kingdom and the United States.

The hypothesis is that such music was affected by wartime society in both positive and negative ways, increasing its occurrence in day-to-day lives, but stifling its natural progression. Equally, such music influenced the conduct of the war by shaping the use of music within the military and how music was perceived and used by the two nations' populations during wartime.

While the main focus of the research is American popular music, it was necessary to include a discussion of parts of the popular music industry in the United Kingdom due to the large numbers of American troops stationed on British soil and the prevalence of American music in British civilian daily life. The thesis examines the music itself, developing a description of what constituted popular music, as well as providing examples of that music affecting, and being affected by, the war. An examination of the popular music industry in the United States provides details as to how that successful sector of industry reacted to the war, and how it attempted to find its role within the conduct of the war. The increasingly important role of popular music within the American armed forces is addressed pointing to the inclusion, for the first time, of popular music as an elemental part of the soldier's well-being. The British side of the interaction is addressed through a discussion of the pertinent parts of the music industry, the forces' use of music in the United Kingdom, and the provision of mass entertainment for troops, war workers and civilians for the first time during war.

Research for this thesis was drawn from archives, libraries, newspapers and first-person accounts from the United Kingdom and the United States.

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Introduction

“Music has, from time immemorial, played a very important role during war time.”—

Edward Podolsky, MD¹

“Men fight for their liberty with songs on their tongues as well as with guns, tanks and planes.”—Howard Taubman, *New York Times*²

World War II is synonymous with many famous and infamous acts, ideas and events. Blitzkrieg, Dunkirk, Pearl Harbor, Hitler, fascism, sacrifice, etc., are all words immediately familiar when considering the global conflict. Ask someone to list four or five words with which they associate World War II and few, if any, would list popular culture or popular music. Those same randomly selected people, might however, cite something more specific, “Glenn Miller,” perhaps, or “swing,” or “Don’t Sit Under the Apple Tree,” or “dancing” or some other impression of the music that has become a soundtrack for that war, the equal to any other conflict’s theme tune. Rather than condemning the fighting, and demanding that the troops return, music in World War II supported, coerced, provided hope, boosted morale, joined those separated, and most importantly, gave a reason to fight. Popular music in World War II, unlike during other wars, sought to entertain and help win the war, and has thus cemented its place in the collective memory of that war.

World War II’s soundtrack included the instantly recognisable “In the Mood,” “The White Cliffs of Dover,” and “White Christmas.” Less famous (now), yet, still hits in their own right, “Praise the Lord and Pass the Ammunition,” “Coming in on a

¹ Edward Podolsky, “Music in Military Strategy,” *L’Etude Music Magazine*, June 1942, 382.

² Howard Taubman, “‘Firing Line’ Songs Thrill Audience,” *New York Times*, June 27, 1942.

Wing and a Prayer,” “We’re Going to Hang out the Washing on the Siegfried Line” and “He Wears a Pair of Silver Wings,” are forever associated with the war’s soundtrack; a soundtrack that was, for the most part, American. American popular music dominated the airwaves across both the United States and Great Britain, bringing this soundtrack to all who listened.³

As war broke out, jazz, the most popular style of music in the 1920s and 1930s, had been surpassed in the mass market, by swing.⁴ World War II created an environment suitable to maintaining the musical status quo, and swing music was in position to take advantage of it.⁵ At the same time however, the war also produced environments conducive to daring and unusual experimentation amongst musicians. These environments developed partly as a result of the changes that society underwent throughout the war, including such things as mass movement of people (more than four million Americans moved to take advantages of employment in war-related work, and thirteen million Americans moved as a result of joining the armed forces), which created centralisation of talent in certain places.⁶ Pockets of musicians (African Americans in particular) were to be found in the armed forces but also in civilian garb, and these men, brought together with different ideas from home, quickly tried new

³ David Ewen, *All the Years of American Popular Music: A Comprehensive History* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1977), 427–446.

⁴ The existing literature on the subject of wartime music all attests to this basic point. Popular music had moved from the jazz era into one of big bands playing largely smoother, sweeter styles of jazz, which have been accepted as what has become known as swing. See, for example, Ewen, *All the Years of American Popular Music*, Scott Deveaux, *The Birth of Bebop: A Social and Musical History* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1997), and Kenneth J Bindas, *Swing, that Modern Sound* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2001).

⁵ A comparison of popular songs (and their styles) and the most successful bands and singers from the start of the war and the end of the war reveals striking similarities, hinting at the fact that swing had already cemented itself as the predominant style of music by the start of the war, and that the war did not change this in any significant fashion. Perhaps, the biggest difference was the amount of solo singers, or crooners, who had gained popularity by the end of the war. However, even then, the general style of the music for those singers could be termed “swing,” just as it was for the most successful big bands between 1939 and 1941. See the various hit charts for comparisons, and Roger D Kinkle, *The Complete Encyclopedia of Popular Music and Jazz, 1900–1950*, vol. 4 (New Rochelle, NY: Arlington House, 1974) for further confirmation of the continued popularity of swing music throughout the war.

⁶ John Morton Blum, *V Was for Victory: Politics and American Culture during World War II* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1976), 102.

techniques and sounds.⁷ They did not call it bebop at the time, but the war helped that sound (a sound that changed the face of jazz music) develop and eventually become popular, while other wartime changes led to the eventual demise of swing as rock and roll took its place after the war.⁸

But prior to the war, before circumstance initiated reluctance toward newness, change and development, not stagnation, filled the twenty years following World War I—particularly in the United States. These twenty years of relatively dramatic change occurred in the music world no less than any other field of human endeavour. Where society changed, so did the military; slowly, more reluctant to fully embrace cultural shifts and patterns. Yet, when war came, both the British and American military realised that the young men, who formed most of the military might, had also changed.

The two allies' armies and navies and the Royal Air Force adapted to those societal changes, providing entertainment and leisure activities for their men and women wherever they were stationed, in ways never dreamed of in World War I. The rather ad-hoc, voluntary nature of the provision of entertainment for troops that had been the case in World War I soon came to an end.⁹ Cinemas, roving music groups, radio, stand-up comedy, celebrities, and whole organisations dedicated to providing all this entertainment overseas, suddenly seemed necessary where previously a song book and a piano had been seen as sufficient. Supplying the troops prior to World War II had meant simply ensuring enough rations and equipment were on hand. In the modern society and war of the late-1930s and early-1940s, supplying the troops also meant recording, manufacturing and distributing millions of records, or outfitting expeditionary forces with entire entertainment-radio systems, from announcers to

⁷ Walter L Hixson, ed., *The American Experience in World War II: The American People at War: Minorities and Women in the Second World War*, vol. 10 (New York: Routledge, 2003), 120.

⁸ Deveaux, *The Birth of Bebop*.

⁹ William Howland Kenney, *Recorded Music in American Life: The Phonograph and Popular Music, 1890–1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 194.

receiving sets and everything in between. Circumstances had changed so much between the two World Wars that what had been sufficient in World War I no longer met the expectations of modern society.¹⁰

Whether at home training or overseas at the front line, troops in World War II required entertaining. Each branch of both countries' militaries had employed bandsmen in one capacity or another for many years, but with the advent of World War II, marching bands playing marching music no longer sufficed. Instead, bands of fifty-plus men capable of providing anything from barber shop quartets to full-ensemble classical concerts stood at the ready. Even that was not enough for the modern World War II fighting man. In order to cater to the soldier of the 1940s, the military of both countries provided dances with jazz bands and dance combinations to the troops. This level of troop entertainment had previously been unknown in British or American military bands.¹¹ Star civilian musicians joined up or were drafted, and formed military bands commanding talent the quality of which civilian band managers could never match.

The civilian music industry, stagnating at the time in terms of the sound or style of music, remained alert to change or to threats as a result of wartime life.¹² With so many men and women drafted, including the many involved in the provision of all the entertainment the military now required, the civilian music industries in both countries had to fight simply to ensure sufficient musicians, technicians, radio broadcasters, and other necessary personnel, were on hand to provide the civilian population with the entertainment it now required. The war created circumstances in

¹⁰ Lowell Matson, "Theatre for the Armed Forces in World War II," *Educational Theatre Journal*, vol. 6 (1954): 1-11.

¹¹ Otto H Helbig, *A History of Music in the U.S. Armed Forces During World War II* (Philadelphia, PA: M W Lads Publishing, 1966), 3.

¹² In the years between the two world wars, the most popular style of music went from jazz to swing. Essentially, in the twenty years in question, popular had become static with little in the way of obvious innovation. Western (later to be country and western) music had evolved and started to become more popular, but this style remained mostly regional at the start of World War II.

which the number of available, good-quality musicians and music technicians, and the demands placed on those men and women, fluctuated. Yet, those same circumstances led to opportunities for musicians that might not otherwise have materialised.

Chapters two, three and four, in particular, point to the changes and to the adaptations made by musicians that war forced and created.

Rationing, war-specific laws and conventions, an increase in money to spend for many people, as well as the amount of personal freedom available that had become more prevalent during the interwar years, also affected the music industry.¹³ The relative importance of each of these was specific to either the United States or the United Kingdom—rationing harsher in the latter, and less of an increase in money and individual freedom; money and freedom more obvious in the United States, while rationing and changes to civilian society proved less severe or obvious. Each variable affected how the music industry continued or suffered as a result of the war, and each variable affected how music participated in the wartime societies of both countries. Chapters two and five examine the music industries in each country, and effects of the war such as these and how they impacted the music industry form part of those chapters.

In the United Kingdom, home-grown popular music provided much of the soundtrack, yet American popular music found increasing favour throughout the war.¹⁴ The best British bands played American songs just as often as they played those from British songwriters, the BBC filled programmes with music from across the

¹³ Doris Kearns Goodwin, *No Ordinary Time: Franklin & Eleanor Roosevelt: The Home Front in World War II* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1994), 624–625.

¹⁴ As an example, *Melody Maker* magazine noted that within the first four weeks of the war, the BBC had played Chick Webb, Louis Armstrong, Benny Goodman, Joe Venuti, Stuff Smith, Tommy Dorsey, and Jimmie Lunceford. This line up indicates the extent to which American music found popularity in the United Kingdom at the time. "Wartime Radio to Date," *Melody Maker*, October 1939, 6. A further example of the appeal of American popular music in the United Kingdom is the *Melody Maker* magazine in general, which dedicated much of its print to news from the American music scene. An article in October 1940, for instance, was subtitled, "The Latest Dance Band News from the States." "How the U.S. Conscription Bill Will Affect Musicians: The Latest Dance Band News from the States," *Melody Maker*, October 26, 1940, 2.

Atlantic, and the trade newspapers covered the star American bands with more gusto than was reserved for their British compatriots. The British music industry enjoyed and suffered many of the same problems as its American counterpart, but the enormous changes the United Kingdom underwent as a result of the direct impact from the war led to people seemingly searching for something glamorous, different and exotic—American music, bands and bandleaders. Little discussion of the place of American music in the United Kingdom has been undertaken in previous scholarly works, and this thesis addresses the importance of American popular music in wartime Britain in both chapters five and six.

Shaped and formed by the forces of war, yet reflecting those same forces back upon the war, popular music filtered throughout society—both civilian and military. During World War II, industry insiders and military officers, aware of those forces, sought to use music to their advantage, but to the average man and woman on both sides of the Atlantic, music most likely seemed beyond the touch of the ravages of war—something safe, serene, daring if you wished it to be, but constant, not afflicted as so much else was.¹⁵ But, while those average men and women looked for such qualities, popular music also appeared to reflect the harsher nature of modern war.¹⁶ Relying on playing on emotions and affecting the senses, popular music tried to thrive

¹⁵ An editorial in *Melody Maker* in October 1939 stated the belief that World War II would not actually change society much, specifically citing music as an example of something that would remain the same as it had been prior to the war. This sentiment—the editorial provided a synopsis of such: “We won’t begin to lead a new life; we will return to what we have always considered a civilised way of living”—shone through contemporary culture and many truly believed (or hoped) that life would continue as it always had done. “Jazz and the War,” *Melody Maker*, October 1939, 5. David Ewen wrote of how music during wartime strummed the “strings of loneliness, separation and hopeful reunions,” all emotions that were increased because of the ravages of war, and that music could soothe. He also noted that music offered “relief from the agonizing pressures of the war years;” again, music offered safety. David Ewen, *All the Years of American Popular Music: A Comprehensive History* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1977), 431, 433.

¹⁶ In particular, early wartime music dealt harshly with the enemy, probably responding to the underlying feelings of the home front in each country. Given the manner in which society depicted the Japanese and Germans, the reflection in music is hardly surprising. See, for example, Robert A Devine, *Reluctant Belligerent: American Entry into World War II* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1967) and, Justus D Doenecke and John E. Wilz, *From Isolation to War: 1931–1941* 3rd ed. (Wheeling, IL: Harlan Davidson, Inc., 2003).

during the massive global conflict using the raw nature of conflict, while at the same time the war and those conducting it attempted to use music for their own purposes.

The small, seemingly insignificant ways in which war and popular music interacted quickly added up to a far more important and significant contribution to the war, and that interaction is an important part of what is new to this thesis. No matter who listened to this music, nor who played it or why, in the end all those factors combined to affect morale. The high levels of morale or spirit or the will to win required in order to succeed in total warfare such as that experienced in World War II need fuel. Music attempted to provide that fuel by affecting the morale of civilians and those in the military in both the United Kingdom and the United States. These ideas of cumulative significance and music's role in terms of morale form key aspects of this thesis. In large part, existing discussions of popular music in World War II have either glossed over these ideas or have treated them as less significant than the musicology of wartime music. However, Sian Nicholas, for example, argued that morale has taken on something of a mythical status in terms of the war, and in some ways such a status is complemented by the romantic, almost mythical nostalgia that World War II holds itself.¹⁷ When considering the role of popular music in affecting that morale, it is important to that idea of the myth of morale into account. Significantly, no matter the retrospective mythologising of morale, the attempts of music to boost morale were widely covered at the time. That coverage hints at the importance of music to morale during the war.

This study focuses primarily on American music, or American-influenced/inspired music. While the United Kingdom had a thriving song writing,

¹⁷ Sian Nicholas, *The Echo of War: Home Front Propaganda and the Wartime BBC, 1939–45* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996), 3. She goes on to write that morale is, essentially, a purely positive set of emotions, linked to "a state of mind that encompasses a readiness to accept current conditions and future challenges, coupled with faith and determination that present and future difficulties will be overcome." Such a definition is what allowed music to be so influential in terms of morale; it played on that state of mind, encouraging the listener to accept the conditions and to try and make the best of the situation. *Ibid.*, 3–4.

recording and publishing industry during the war years, more and more American music crept into the day-to-day lives of Britons. British lists of the most popular songs of the week or month usually included at least a few (if not more) American songs in the top ten.¹⁸ British music, the British music industry and music in the United Kingdom has been discussed in the fifth chapter in order to indicate both the similarities and the differences between the two countries, but also to point to the interaction between American popular music and British society. Furthermore, the influx of American soldiers, sailors, and airmen into the United Kingdom during the war also helped spread the “American” sound, to the extent that the BBC played large amounts of American music on its popular music programmes—often to the dismay of BBC executives, but not, apparently, to the British public.¹⁹

British music is specifically considered through discussions of the BBC and government-provided soldier and civilian entertainment efforts in chapter six, which impacted wartime life enough to warrant examination. The British side of this thesis deals with many of the same themes as those found in the American chapters, as both countries found themselves dealing with similar problems and challenges.

For the purposes of this thesis, a war song refers to any song written and published during World War II that used the war as either the main theme or a background subject for its lyrics and meaning.²⁰ These themes primarily consisted of the war, duty or patriotism, love, the enemy and the home front. This list includes many songs that were not specifically written about the war, but because of when they

¹⁸ The top sheet music sellers in the United Kingdom in February 1942, for example, included “Rose O’Day,” “Yours,” “Starlight Serenade,” and “Green Eyes.” “Tops in Tunes,” *Melody Maker*, February 14, 1942, 6. The June 26, 1943 list of top sheet music included “Whispering Grass,” “When You Wore a tulip,” “As Time Goes By,” “Why Don’t You Fall in Love With Me,” “Harbour of Dream Boats,” “Run, Little Raindrop, Run,” “I Had the Craziest Dream,” and “Dearly Beloved,” in the top ten, representing more than 50% of the total. (There were twelve songs in the top ten that week.) “Sheet Music: The Week’s Best Sellers,” *Melody Maker*, June 26, 1943, 2.

¹⁹ Memorandum from Cecil Madden to Norman Collins, May, 8 1943, BBC WAC R30 849 3.

²⁰ The Library of Congress holds what is most likely the most complete archive of sheet music for songs published in World War II. This archive was consulted extensively in order to find and analyse song lyrics pertaining to war as well as to investigate other songs published at the time in order to ascertain their relation to the war.

were written and their context, shall be classified as war songs. There were many songs like this that would ordinarily be termed love songs, but the war altered their emphasis and thus they are love songs of war and so are included in this analysis. However, the hundreds of songs that had no link to the war other than they were written at the time do not merit inclusion in this discussion. It can of course be argued that their publication date made them war songs, but this places too much emphasis on timing and not enough on subject.²¹ Popular music in all its forms would have provided too large a musical genre to give full treatment to the role of each sub-genre in this study.²² Therefore, for the purposes here, popular music refers to jazz and swing and the basic variants of each. In general, the music referred to in this paper would now be considered “pop” music.

This thesis brings together all these elements of popular music in World War II in a manner that has not previously been considered. By assembling these elements in this manner, a more complete picture of popular music’s role in World War II has been compiled, demonstrating for the first time the true nature of that role and providing an analysis of the dramatic effects of war on this section of popular culture. With the exception of the work on ENSA, the American military’s recruitment of musicians, the story of African American musicians in the forces, the attention to the Great Lakes Naval Training Station, aspects of the BBC’s use of popular music during the war, music in war factories, the importance of dancing and the British military dance bands, the various parts of this thesis have been considered elsewhere, but always in isolation from the other aspects of the music industry and the military brought together here. The music itself has been studied, but generally in a musicological sense rather than in terms of what it meant to people, and although the

²¹ Where contention may exist regarding the actual meaning of a song, the author has evaluated it as best he could to determine its eligibility.

²² The existing literature dealing with music during the war years usually either covers all types of music (much of which is outside the purview of this thesis) or picks one particular genre, say, Big Bands and for instance. Typically, previous works devote more time and space to non-love songs.

songs of World War II have been discussed elsewhere, the endless search for a war song to match “Over There” still requires the additional analysis here because of the wealth of primary source material available on the subject. The industry in its various senses has been examined in parts, in both countries, but always with a specific purpose outside of the realm of this study or, as a much smaller part of a different study focused on aspects of popular culture not considered here; and the military’s use of music has been dealt with, although almost always in isolated fashion, not woven into the larger picture of popular music’s role in World War II as is the case here.²³ Overall, the various facets of the popular music world examined herein have always been separated; they have never before been brought together to examine the role of popular music during World War II. The underlying question for the thesis is how did popular music interact with wartime society in all its various forms, and what were the results of that interaction? These questions are at the root of each smaller discussion, providing the basis for indicating the effects that music had on war and wartime society, and how World War II affected the popular music industry.

Therefore, this thesis examines the style of music and types of songs, the changes wrought in both American and British societies in the build up to the war that influenced the music scene, the adaptation of the military to the new entertainment requirements of men and women in uniform, the problems that the music industry had to deal with as a result of the war, the power of popular music to have an influence on wartime society (specifically, morale), and the overall interaction between the war and the music industry, in general. All of these elements combine to indicate the importance of popular music to World War II, most specifically in the sense of maintaining high levels of morale in all facets of society. While it is still true that an army travels on its stomach, by the mid-twentieth century far more than that was

²³ See the Literature Review in this thesis for examples of other studies of popular music during the war and where they differ in relation to this study.

required to keep an extraordinarily complex and massive aggregation of people working smoothly towards the shared goals of the British and American war effort in order to achieve victory. One critical element was the maintenance of morale and one element supporting morale was music. And it is to a consideration of the role that popular music played in that effort that this thesis turns.

Much of this examination is, in some manner, tied to propaganda. However, World War II propaganda has been studied in great detail, and it would limit the consideration here to focus solely on popular music as propaganda. The interaction of music in World War II is better discussed as part of the overall communication between people, between civilians and the military and between the government and its subjects. This interaction, this communication, is, as one scholar has put it, “persuasion; attitude change; behaviour modification; socialisation through the transmission of information, influence or conditioning or, alternatively, as a case of individual choice over what to read or view,” or in this study’s case, to what to listen.²⁴ All of the elements of this study can be viewed in this light: how did music perform the functions listed above throughout the war? In other words, how did popular music interact with the various elements of society—civilians, the military, and the government—during the war? That is the central question toward which all else in this thesis moves. What about this music was worth fighting for?

This thesis is organised into six chapters. Chapter one provides a detailed look at the songs of World War II, with particular emphasis on the messages that they provided in terms of helping with the war effort. Furthermore, given the endless search by the government and military for a “war song,” the chapter addresses that search and the mistaken assumption that a song was not found or not written. Chapter two is concerned with the American music industry. By focusing on how war affected

²⁴ James W Carey, *Communication as Culture: Essays on Media and Society* (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1989), 42–43.

the industry, this thesis addresses new elements of wartime music, specifically the impact of the draft and wartime restrictions, as well as how the industry adapted to the necessities of wartime life. Chapters three and four deal with music in the American military. Specifically, chapter three examines the formation of dance bands in the American military and how they were used throughout the war. Furthermore, the chapter describes the importance of those bands and the fact that they were a new development for World War II, both of which are understudied aspects of wartime military entertainment. In chapter four, the recording and broadcasting duties of those military bands and the life of musicians in uniform are discussed, with the critical developments of V-Discs and the USO as key parts of the chapter. While V-Discs and the USO have been studied elsewhere, they are included here because they formed incredibly important aspects of the performing duties of musicians in uniform. By tying these elements together with detailed descriptions of wartime life for those men and women, this chapter provides new context in which to assess the role of popular music in World War II.

Chapters five and six move across the Atlantic to the United Kingdom. There is no separate discussion of British songs because this thesis deals more with the American style of music than the British idiom. However, the two chapters do consider many aspects of the British music scene that relate to those in the United States, allowing the reader to compare and contrast between the two countries. Chapter five details the British music scene, both from a civilian and a military perspective, while chapter six addresses similar aspects to chapter four, but from the British side. The work on dancing and live entertainment in the United Kingdom includes much new material, particularly in terms of primary sources, and indicates the massive increase in the value of popular music as a form of mass entertainment during the war years. The section on the dance bands of the British armed forces also

includes significant new material, and again, points to how seriously popular music was taken by the British military, and thus its effect on wartime life.

ENSA, perhaps the most important development for the use of and role of popular music in wartime Britain, as well as the BBC's *Music While You Work* programme, are the main elements of chapter six. ENSA has been almost completely ignored by historians, which given its massive impact of the entertainment of British troops, and thus its importance in terms of popular music, seems extremely surprising. This chapter goes a long way to redressing that deficit of scholarly study. *Music While You Work* has been considered elsewhere, but to ignore it here, especially given the wealth of primary source information on the subject, would have been remiss of this thesis.

Much of the primary source material used in this thesis comes from four music trade newspapers: *Variety*, *Billboard* and *Down Beat* in the United States, and *Melody Maker* in the United Kingdom. As the main contemporary sources of information about the music industry, these four newspapers are invaluable in the study of popular music during wartime. Each newspaper is available from a variety of institutions, but, in general these sources were accessed through the British Newspaper Library in London, from the National Archives and Library of Congress in the United States, and from the much-maligned, but extremely useful, Google Books online. By scouring these sources from the start of World War II through to the conflict's end, looking for any and all information pertinent to this study, it has been possible to pull together a comprehensive body of data (both empirical and narrative) that has been crucial to determining the place and role of popular music during the war. However, each of these newspapers comes with its own set of problems, most specifically that of bias. As the champions of the music industry, the articles and comments from within their pages are written from the perspective of the positive role of music as opposed to any

objectivity that would have allowed them to question music's role. Despite this issue, the four newspapers indicated the problems that popular music had to deal with and, usually, how the industry overcame those problems or adapted to them.

In addition to these sources, this thesis makes use of archives from the National Archives in the United States and the United Kingdom relating to the military's use of popular music during World War II, as well as archives in the Library of Congress, the British Library, the Imperial War Museum in London, the United States Army Historical Centre in Carlisle, Pennsylvania, the BBC Written Archives Centre and the Norfolk Records Office (for information on American Army Air Force bases in England). Furthermore, the author contacted and engaged in correspondence with a number of veterans of World War II asking for their recollections of music in wartime, and the BBC developed an online oral history archive for Britons to post their memories of the war, amongst which there are many references to music and dancing, which have been used extensively here as well. Articles written in scholarly journals during the war were also consulted for various aspects of this thesis. The Literature Review lists many of the secondary sources consulted, and the bibliography notes all those sources consulted.²⁵

²⁵ All footnotes in this thesis are according to the *Chicago Manual of Style*, 15th Edition, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003).

Literature Review

Although the music of World War II is still popular—there are seemingly endless reissues the most famous songs of the era, films feature the era’s music, and there is the mystique of the “Good War,”—the body of literature on the confluence of popular music and World War II is small. A simple count of the titles that combine the two subjects reveals what seems a significant amount but, many either focus more heavily on either music or the war, or pay specific attention to a particular aspect of the relationship. Others considered popular music within the larger framework of the home front during the war.

From 1940 to 1955 writers considered how music and war have interacted. After that period, they turned their attention elsewhere and, since 1995, the topic again gained consideration.¹ During those forty years or so, one major work was published by Otto Helbig: *A History of Music in the U.S. Armed Forces During World War II*.² His preface noted that “there is apparently nothing in print that provides by way of a complete coverage regarding music in the services during World War II.”³ Helbig served in World War II as a captain in the Music Branch of the army charged with directing the planning section of that branch. Helbig’s book provides short descriptions of each of the varied aspects of music in the military and numerous appendices that include many primary documents, but, unfortunately, no listener responses. The descriptions provide significant information on music in the armed

¹ To the best of my knowledge, and as far as I can determine from research, little, if anything, was written about popular music during the war during this time. I cannot claim a completely exhaustive count of every book published during that time, but from bibliographies pertinent to this study, it would appear that there was a distinct lack of new work on the subject during that time. It is possible that the 50th anniversary of the end of the war (1995) resulted in scholars again turning their attention in this direction.

² Otto H Helbig, *A History of Music in the U.S. Armed Forces During World War II* (Trenton, NJ: M W Lads Publishing Co, 1966),

³ Helbig, *A History of Music in the U.S. Armed Forces During World War II*, 1.

forces, but this is almost purely a reference book with no analysis of the importance of music in the armed forces or the role that music played in the passage of World War II.⁴

Since 2003 (after the research for this thesis had begun), five books have been published that deal specifically with popular music and/or popular culture during World War II. All five focus mainly on the American home front and three of them deal predominantly with the songs and songwriters. These five: Alan Anderson's *The Songwriter Goes to War* (2004), Gary Bloomfield's *Duty, Honor, Applause: America's Entertainers in World War II* (2004), Ace Collins' *Songs Sung, Red, White, and Blue: The Stories Behind America's Best-Loved Patriotic Songs* (2003), John Bush Jones' *The Songs that Fought the War: Popular Music and the Home Front, 1939–1945* (2006), and Kathleen Smith's *God Bless America: Tin Pan Alley Goes to War* (2003), are important to the course of this study.⁵

These books reflect current thinking on the subject of war and music, and suggest where gaps in current research exist that this thesis addresses. Of the five, Kathleen Smith's *God Bless America* covered the war and music's role within it in the most detail. Smith discussed government intervention in Tin Pan Alley, the reaction of soldiers to various songs, many of the war-related songs released, and why and how those songs were affected by the war. She concentrated on the songs and used the various topics covered by the songwriters as the framework for her discussion. Still, its focus on the songs held it within that framework and although she did examine some of the government or military entities that dealt with music and entertainment,

⁴ The book is approximately 170 pages long. Of that number the appendices make up 120 pages.

⁵ Alan Anderson, *The Songwriter Goes to War* (Pompton Plains, NJ: Limelight Editions, 2004); Gary Bloomfield, Stacie L Shain, & Arlen C Davidson, *Duty, Honor, Applause: America's Entertainers in World War II*, (Guilford, CT: The Lyons Press, 2004); Ace Collins, *Songs Sung Red, White, and Blue: The Stories Behind America's Best-Loved Patriotic Songs*, (New York: Harper Resource, 2003); John Bush Jones, *The Songs that Fought the War: Popular Music and the Home Front, 1939–1945* (Waltham, MA: Brandeis University Press, 2006); Kathleen Smith, *God Bless America: Tin Pan Alley Goes to War* (Lexington, KY: The University Press of Kentucky, 2003).

she did not stray far from the music itself. Smith's underlying thesis was to show that war influenced the songwriters in their lyrics, and that each sub-genre of war songs enjoyed popularity as a result of wartime conditions. Of these five recent books, Smith's is by far the most comprehensive and widest in scope. Smith found, it would seem, the same issue that will be seen in this thesis, namely that there is little, if anything, available to researchers indicating the responses of men and women to popular music during wartime.⁶ Smith also relied on the music trade papers for primary sources, as has been done here, but she did not delve into them as deeply, and thus, it would seem that some aspects of the wartime music industry covered with great detail in this thesis are lacking from Smith's otherwise excellent work.

John Bush Jones' *The Songs that Fought the War*, which came out two years after Smith's book, spends much of its time attempting to refute Smith's research and conclusions, specifically in relation to the songs published. Jones' concern with Smith is intriguing. His disagreement with Smith over something such as the importance of music in World War II, for instance, seems to be wasted effort. He asserts that Smith's argument that music had "little or no consequence in the outcome of the war," is incorrect at best and something far less polite at worst.⁷ Yet, as is shown in this thesis, they are both correct to a degree. In terms of the actual fighting of the war, it is hard to argue that music made an outcome-changing difference, but in terms of the men and women doing that fighting popular music did have an important role to play.

Fortunately, however, the book is almost exclusively concerned with the songs themselves, and Jones spent little time discussing how the songs affected the civilian and military population, or how the war affected the songs (outside of the first chapter,

⁶ The major exception to the lack of audience reception information found for this thesis is a short series of reports entitled *What the Soldier Wants*, compiled by the Research Branch of the War Department.

⁷ Kathleen Smith, *God Bless America: Tin Pan Alley Goes to War* (Lexington, University Press of Kentucky, 2003), 6.

in which he outlined the status and situation the music industry found itself in during the war); content, instead, to show how few songs Smith had covered in her work, and to examine many of the hundreds of songs his research led him to determine as war songs. Jones surveyed an exhaustive list of published music and songs from the war (almost 1,700 by his criteria), and his research into songwriters, singers, and recording companies for each song was comprehensive and contains much of interest and value to other researchers. While this paper does not examine the sheer number of songs listed and commented upon by Jones, it does consider what the songs meant, and how they were received, whereas Jones spent more time detailing what was published, when, and by whom. His analysis of each song in terms of what it meant to the listener was limited, and as a scholarly treatment of the message within the songs it had little value. As a reference for wartime songs, however, Jones' book was invaluable.

Gary Bloomfield's thesis, in *Duty, Honor, and Applause*, covered a much wider area of the entertainment spectrum. All parts of the music industry feature within his work as part of the discussion about the much broader entertainment industry and its role in World War II. Bloomfield moved across entertainment divisions, and covered Hollywood and sports figures where appropriate. His thesis noted the nature of the entertainment industry in a society at war and attempted to show how valuable that industry was to the United States, and also to depict the roles the industry performed. While it is an excellent treatment of the entertainment world in general, he did not focus on the music industry solely and so there are further gaps in the topic's scholarship that this paper addresses. Bloomfield's work looks at musicians in the armed forces, the USO, and musicians in general, but he does not tell the story of what those musicians did while in the forces, what effect the USO and

other music tours had on the men and women in military camps, nor how the draft and its repercussions impacted musicians during the war.

Ace Collins' *Songs Sung, Red, White, and Blue*, addressed the various patriotic tunes and songs of each era in great detail, and his section on World War II provided the reader and researcher with less well-known or less oft-considered patriotic songs. The songs in question though, often do not pass the test of popularity in terms of sheer statistics, and of those that likely were popular, many were from before such data was recorded or kept. Collins' research proved that there are often gaps in the available data on this subject. However, his comprehensive consideration of patriotic and war songs covered an area of the music industry that other studies have not considered. Since his book was published in 2003, John Bush Jones' book post-dated it, and Jones has added to Collins' work considerably. The difference was that Collins looked at solely patriotic and war songs and so has given each a far more detailed account.

In *The Songwriter go to War*, Alan Anderson provided a detailed examination of Irving Berlin's show, "This is the Army." Its importance here relates to the multitude of well-known songs from the war that Berlin wrote. No discussion of World War II music would be complete without acknowledging Berlin's many songs. Anderson, however, chose to identify Berlin and tell the story of the famous musical as the central tenet to his book. For the purposes of this paper, Anderson's work has provided information about Berlin's struggles with military authorities, and details of the songs included in the performance. Equally important, given the cross-Atlantic nature of this study, was the fact that Berlin took his show to England to perform for the American troops stationed there. Irving Berlin's contribution to the American music industry has been studied by many scholars and there is little new information available outside of such works.

Of those books written between the 1950s and the end of the twenty-first century, many addressed popular culture and the war, usually under the guise of an examination of the home front in either the United States or the United Kingdom. Most noteworthy amongst them are Richard Lingeman's *Don't You Know There's A War On? The American Home Front, 1941–1945* (1970), John Morton Blum's *V Was for Victory: Politics and American Culture During World War II* (1977), Lewis Erenberg and Susan Hirsch's *The War in American Culture: Society and Consciousness during World War II* (1998), Robert Heide and John Gilman's *Home Front America: Popular Culture of the World War II Era* (1995), David Reynolds' *Rich Relations: The American Occupation of Britain, 1942–1945* (1995), and Jon Savage's *Teenage: The Creation of Youth Culture* (2007).⁸

Each of these books covered some of the same areas that this thesis does. However, each one also only allows the discussion of popular music a chapter at most, and often the chapter is more concerned with the general entertainment industry, and not specifically with popular music. Blum, Lingeman and Reynolds all addressed music more comprehensively than the other authors here. The benefits of books focused on the home front are that they discussed the non-music society and the factors concerning the general population; rationing, restrictions, and the like obviously played a significant role in day-to-day life and so texts on the home front must confront these issues. These books also corroborated arguments concerning the interaction of popular music in the larger wartime society offered in this thesis.

⁸ Richard R. Lingeman, *Don't You Know There's a War On?: The American Home Front, 1941-1945* (New York, 1970); Blum, John Morton, *V Was for Victory: Politics and American Culture During World War II* (New York, 1977); Erenberg, Lewis A. and Susan E. Hirsch, ed., *The War in American Culture: Society and Consciousness During World War II* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996); Heide, Robert and Gilman, John, *Home Front America: Popular Culture of the World War II Era*, (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 1995); Reynolds, David, *Rich Relations: The American Occupation of Britain 1942-1945* (London: HarperCollins Publishers, 1995); Savage, Jon, *Teenage: The Creation of Youth Culture* (New York: Viking, 2007).

Addressing each of these writers in more specific terms, Blum, for instance, noted the direct correlation between the dramatic rise of the American military-industrial complex, the switch of industry to wartime production, and the almost immediate reduction in availability of luxury goods—including musical instruments and replacement parts. He offered the idea that military discipline stifled creativity amongst American youth, and in part, his thesis carries through to popular music, which underwent a stagnant period during the war. However, as this paper also demonstrates, not all musical creativity and development suffered because of military doctrine, and in fact, in some places—the Great Lakes Navy Training Station for example—musical creativity was actively encouraged by military authorities.

Richard Lingeman addressed the stuttering attempts by Tin Pan Alley songwriters to recapture the glory and patriotism of World War I. He noted the problems they faced due to the changes in American society between the two wars. This thesis takes Lingeman's argument further, through the more detailed discussion of songs written specifically about the war, and why. Lingeman offered discussions on different types of songs during the war and why each type was relevant at the time, and of these three authors, he examined popular music the most thoroughly. Lingeman's analysis is, however, a less complete analysis of the music of World War II, as a result of his focus on the home front in general rather than the music industry specifically.

Despite that wide-ranging thesis, Lingeman addressed the music industry and the business of producing and selling popular music, at least in part. He pointed out that within the context of the home front, the music industry was important as it reinforced some of the broader patterns being seen during the war in the United States, such as rationing and the increase in expendable incomes. The author covered the industry in general, with discussions of the radio business, dances, nightclubs, and the

recording industry, and argued that each of these elements formed an integral part of American society during the war.

In *Rich Relations*, David Reynolds provided a general discussion of American troops stationed in the United Kingdom in the build-up to Operation Overlord and their interaction with British civilians and society. His excellent review of this subject included numerous references to the power of music, particularly American popular music in the United Kingdom. Much of Reynolds' discussion of American music related to the interaction of American troops and British women. Dances on and off base and furloughs to large cities often enabled this interaction, and if the meetings were at the discretion of the American soldier, American music would be involved. Reynolds' observations formed the basis for parts of the British music chapter, particularly those referring to the prevalence of American popular music in the United Kingdom.

Furthermore, Reynolds examined the efforts of the American military to furnish its men and women with the comforts of home whenever possible. These efforts included attempts (eventually successful) to provide troops in Britain and in continental Europe with an American radio service (the American Forces Radio Network). The larger point made by Reynolds in this sense, and one which is elaborated upon in this thesis, is that British music did not fit the tastes of the Americans stationed in the United Kingdom, but that American music appealed enormously to British civilians. Reynolds also drew attention to the friction between the British Broadcasting Corporation and the United States Army, which stimulated the continued exploration of that relationship in this paper.

For more on the social history of wartime Americans, Kenneth D Rose's *Myth and the Greatest Generation: A Social History of Americans in World War II* offers a

chapter on popular culture.⁹ Rose argued that popular culture and politics make “wretched bedfellows,” proposing that much of the patriotic sentiment to be found in popular culture meant little in the way of high-quality war-themed music.¹⁰ His analysis of popular songs with war themes focused on that idea, but as is shown in this thesis, simply implying that all popular music with an overt war theme was simplistic and of low musicological worth is to overlook the power of even those seemingly base values. Much of his chapter on popular culture centres on the film industry, but he does investigate music as well, suggesting, as is noted here as well, that “perhaps more than any other art form, music can evoke other times and places.”¹¹ Finally, Rose also spends a couple of pages on the USO. Of more general value, his description of the Home Front in the United States provides background information on the state of American society during the war years.

There is even less recent material focusing on British music and World War II. Sheila Tracy focused on the British big bands of the era in her *Talking Swing: The British Big Bands* (1997). Tracy noted the positive effects of the big bands in wartime Britain. Her book covered a much longer period than just the war years and as such her treatment of that specific time was limited. However, her central argument for each of the wartime bands was that they were important to civilian morale. Tracy did not address any draft concerns of those bands, but did look closely at the shift in popularity from Geraldo’s sweet-sounding big band to the more swing-oriented RAF Dance Orchestra, and concluded that this was, at least in some sense, as a result of the war.

Some popular studies of the popular songs of the era have been published, including *You Must Remember This: Songs at the Heart of the War* (1995), by Steven

⁹ Kenneth D Rose, *Myth and the Greatest Generation: A Social History of Americans in World War II* (New York: Routledge, 2008).

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 163.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 176.

Seidenberg, Maurice Sellar, and Lou Jones. Seidenberg, Sellar, and Jones tugged on heart-strings, developed nostalgia and focused primarily on the most popular songs, without examining less successful, but arguably equally important recordings. Significantly, even this book, with its focus on British music, introduces American songs as well; a further indication of the importance of American music in the United Kingdom. Sentimentality runs throughout *You Must Remember This*, but the authors still supplied useful commentary on the fact that British pop tunes used war themes far more predominantly than their American counterparts. Another non-academic text, from Olivia Bailey, entitled "*We'll Meet Again*": *Songs and Music That Inspired Courage During Wartime* (2002) also provided a description of many of the most famous British songs from the war years. Bailey did not analyse the lyrics in any meaningful manner, but did provide useful vignettes about the songs' position in wartime life and how people felt about them.

In *The Echo of War: Home Front Propaganda and the Wartime BBC, 1939–45*, Sian Nicholas has written a detailed account of the BBC during World War II. Her work has necessarily limited the amount of time spent in this thesis focusing specifically on the BBC. Nicholas provides an excellent definition of morale, and that definition (along with other considerations) helped form the definition used in this thesis. She analyses the BBC's *Music While You Work*, which also forms a good portion of chapter five in this thesis, but her focus in that account is on how the show was, more generally, a vehicle for British propaganda, as opposed to the specific nature of the show in relation to those who listened to it and used it to bolster the war effort in terms of productivity. The distinction here is subtle, but important, as what is presented in this thesis, while covering the same topic, builds upon her Nicholas'

foundation with more evidence and further analysis of this seminal programme through a different prism.¹²

Nicholas's book is the best example of a consideration of wartime radio in the United Kingdom. Outside of her work, though, and having noted the most important distinction between this work and hers, there is little else of a scholarly nature on popular music in the United Kingdom. Certainly, with the exception of Basil Dean's autobiography, there is extremely little written about Entertainments National Service Association (ENSA).¹³ This massive gap in the history of wartime entertainment has necessitated the inclusion of the lengthy and detailed discussion in this thesis.

Angus Calder did pay a small amount of attention to ENSA in his *The People's War: Britain—1939–1945*, but small is perhaps the best description.¹⁴ Calder's most valuable contribution to this study is in the examination of the British Home Front and the entertainment options, most notably radio, available to the average man and woman in the United Kingdom. His description of ENSA amounts to a few paragraphs indicating the range and scope of the programme and Dean's involvement in the project.¹⁵

Although they were written more than sixty years ago, a further set of titles also lend themselves to closer examination. Both during the war and in its immediate aftermath contemporary political scientists and sociologists considered society during

¹² It would appear that Nicholas relied on the BBC's Listener Research department for audience-reaction information, which would indicate that there is little else in the way of such data available to the researcher. Research for this thesis relied on the BBC's written archives and Mass Observation reports (also used by Nicholas), but other indicators of audience reception have proven hard to locate.

¹³ Basil Dean, *Mind's Eye: An Autobiography 1927–1972*, (London: Hutchinson & Co., 1973).

¹⁴ Angus Calder, *The People's War: Britain—1939–1945* (New York: Pantheon House, 1969).

¹⁵ Further examples of more general works considered in order to provide background information for this thesis are: Doris Kearns Goodwin, *No Ordinary Time: Franklin & Eleanor: The Home Front in World War II* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1994); Geoffrey C Ward and Ken Burns, *The War: An Intimate History, 1941–1945* (New York: Alfred A Knopf, 2007); Jordan Braverman, *To Hasten the Homecoming: How Americans Fought World War II Through the Media* (Lanham NY: Madison Books, 1996); John Costello, *Love, Sex and War: Changing Values, 1939–1945* (London: Collins, 1985); Simon Garfield, ed., *We Are At War: The Diaries of Ordinary People in Extraordinary Times* (London: Ebury Press, 2006); John W Jeffries, *Wartime America: The World War II Home Front* (Chicago: Ivan R Dee, 1996). There are numerous other books considered in this light in this thesis. All of these sources indicate the life of those not in combat and serve as generally well-written narratives of wartime life.

war. The authors of these, generally scholarly, studies addressed American and British civilian and military society under the duress of war. Often their studies encompassed the role that music played within those parameters, or within more specific guidelines, yet. Five titles in particular considered music and/or radio at the time. Of these five studies, two—"Music in War Plants (1943)," by Wheeler Beckett, and an address given by Arthur C. Nielsen (1946)—were papers presented in a journal in the case of Beckett, and orally in that of Nielsen. Despite their comparative brevity, both articles contained valuable information pertinent to this study.

Wheeler Beckett's essay is one of the few to have examined the use of popular music in American munitions factories. At the behest of the War Production Board, Beckett undertook a study in 1943 to assist the labour-management committees in achieving the highest level of efficiency. Beckett examined the situation and compiled a survey, to which he received responses from seventy-six factories across the United States. His analysis of the responses provided detailed description of the necessity of music to production and has proven valuable in the writing of this paper particularly when addressing the central issue of music and morale. In terms of music's role in the war, Beckett's research indicated a distinct and accountable value to music in terms of increasing production rates in munitions factories, and as such, provided one of the few overtly quantifiable statistical reports for the importance of music in World War II.

The remainder of the secondary sources considered for this paper include studies of almost every conceivable aspect of music in wartime. Furthermore, various memoirs, biographies, and autobiographies have provided valuable information from the protagonist's perspective. Many of these, often written some years after the war, paint those figures in a good light, although there is contradictory evidence. One of the most important men in the British entertainment world during World War II, Basil

Dean, wrote two memoirs concerning the war years, and his own accounts differ considerably with the evidence provided by his peers during the war.¹⁶

Numerous histories of jazz or swing have been used as background in order to provide a better understanding of the music itself. This is not a musicology study and thus some of the more subtle nuances in changes in music styles or playing techniques are not included here. However, the music histories consulted allowed for a better understanding of what those changes might have meant to the musicians and listeners. Music histories come in many forms and some of the more relevant and useful have been those not concerned specifically with musicology aspects. Kenneth Bindas wrote two of these books: *Swing: That Modern Sound* (2001) and *America's Musical Pulse: Popular Music in Twentieth-Century Society* (1992). In the two books, Bindas covered the lengthy history of swing music from start to finish, and his discussions of the war years looked at the effects of the music when applicable. He argued that swing was the true American music and thus acted as a glue for society at war. However, his theory did not examine differences between the war experience of white Americans and that of black Americans. Peter Townsend's *Jazz in American Culture* (2000) included a look at technological advances between the two wars that helped the spread of popular music and made it all the more important during World War II. Townsend argued that without the changes in technology the music would not have affected as many people because each smaller community would have listened to its own broadcasts (with less syndication) and therefore the larger trends would not have emerged and songs and bands would have remained regional rather than national or international.

David Ewen's *All the Years of American Popular Music: A Comprehensive History*, written in 1977 covers all popular music from 1620 to 1960, with a chapter

¹⁶ Basil Dean, *The Theatre at War*, (London: George G. Harrap & Co., 1956).

on World War II.¹⁷ The war years chapter discusses the music industry's move to a wartime footing and the various types of songs written with war as their theme. He provides an excellent narrative on Frank Loesser, a successful songwriter who spent some of the war years in the military, as well as sections on the music of Hollywood musicals and Broadway shows. He does not, however, examine the non-war popular songs in any great detail, and this is perhaps where his work suffers most in comparison to this thesis.

Histories of the various major big bands proved invaluable in determining how the war affected such bands, or what role they may have played.¹⁸ Many jazz reference guides omit a large number of the more successful wartime bands on the basis that they did not play "true" jazz.¹⁹ Unfortunately, this omission created gaps in the histories of some bands. Internet sites dedicated to the preservation of the

¹⁷ David Ewen, *All the Years of American Popular Music: A Comprehensive History* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1977).

¹⁸ Examples of books that discuss the big bands of the war era are: Maxine Andrews and Bill Bilbert, *Over Here, Over There: The Andrews Sisters and the USO Stars in World War II* (New York: Zebra Books, 1993); Geoffrey Butcher, *Next to a Letter from Home: Major Glenn Miller's Wartime Band* (Edinburgh: Mainstream Publishing Co. Ltd., 1986); Sid Colin, *And the Bands Played On* (London: Elm Tree Books, 1977); Bruce Crowther and Mike Pinfold, *The Big Band Years*, (New York: Facts on File Publications, 1988) and *The World of Swing* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1974); Lewis Erenberg, *Swingin' the Dream: Big Band Jazz and the Rebirth of American Culture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998); Albert McCarthy, *Big Band Jazz* (London: Barrie and Jenkins, 1974); Gunther Schuller, *The Swing Era: The Development of Jazz, 1930–1945*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989); George T Simon, *The Big Bands* (New York: Macmillan, 1967) and *Simon Says: The Sights and Sounds of the Swing Era* (New Rochelle, NY: Arlington House, 1955); Sigmund G Spaeth, *A History of Popular Music in America*, (New York: Random House, 1948); David W Stowe, *Swing Changes: Big Band Jazz in New Deal America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994); Sheila Tracy, *Talking Swing: The British Swing Bands* (Edinburgh: Mainstream Publishing Company, Ltd., 1997); Barry Ulanov, *A History of Jazz in America* (London: Hutchinson, 1959); Leo Walker, *The Wonderful Era of the Great Dance Bands* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1972); Geoffrey C Ward and Ken Burns, *Jazz: A History of America's Music* (London: Pimlico, 2001); Chris Way, *Glenn Miller in Britain Then and Now* (London, 1996); Ian Whitcomb, *After the Ball: Pop Music from Rag to Rock* (New York: Limelight, 1986).

¹⁹ Examples of jazz reference books include: Mark W Booth, *American Popular Music: A Reference Guide*, (Westwood, CT: Greenwood Press, 1983); Richard Cook, *Richard Cook's Jazz Encyclopedia* (New York: Penguin Books (USA), 2005); Richard Cook and Brian Morton, *The Penguin Guide to Jazz Recordings, Eighth Edition* (New York, Penguin Books (USA), 2006); Leonard Feather and Ira Gitler, *The Biographical Encyclopedia of Jazz*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999); David A Jasen, *Tin Pan Alley: An Encyclopaedia of the Golden Age of American Song*, (New York: Routledge, 2003); Barry Kernfeld, ed., *The New Grove Dictionary of Jazz* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1994); David Meeker, *Jazz in the Movies: A Guide to Jazz Musicians 1917–1977* (London: Talisman, 1977).

nostalgic aspect of music from the 1930s and 1940s offer some guidance here, but these sites are often of limited scholarly value.²⁰

General histories of broadcasting and radio have also proved helpful.²¹ Some such histories opt to bypass the war years, with only a cursory nod to the fact that radio did continue throughout the war. The conclusion here is that in a general history of radio broadcasting, attempting to discuss the war years in any detail would have made an already large book, far too large. Those that did consider the war years tend to provide simplistic analyses that indicate the basic nature of civilian broadcasting and little about military broadcasting. The exception in this category was Patrick Morley's "*This is the American Forces' Network*": *The Anglo-American Battle of the Airwaves in World War II* (2001). Morley's in-depth history of the introduction of the American forces' radio programming in the United Kingdom discussed the involvement of that project, the difficulties it encountered from the BBC in particular, and the high regard in which the British public held the network. Morley concluded that the network was necessary to avoid American troops being forced to listen to the

²⁰ Examples of such websites include: http://www.j31.co.uk/jons_ramblings.htm;
<http://www.jazzprofessional.com/Francis/As%20I%20heard%20it%20Part%201.htm>;
<http://www.wartimememories.co.uk/women.html>; <http://www.artieshaw.com/bio.html>;
<http://www.bigband-era.com/forum/messages/8716.html>;
<http://www.ibiblio.org/hyperwar/USGM/War.html> ;
http://www.parabrisas.com/d_mccoyc.php; <http://www.singers.com/jazz/vintage/millsbrothers.html>;
<http://www.wyastone.co.uk/nrl/pvoce/7838c.html>

²¹ Examples of general histories of radio and broadcasting include: Erick Barnouw, *A History of Broadcasting in the United States*, vol. II, *The Golden Web, 1933 to 1953* (New York, 1968); Asa Briggs, *The History of Broadcasting in the United Kingdom*, Volume IV: *Sound and Vision* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979); Gilbert Chase, ed., *Music in Radio Broadcasting* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1946); John Dunning, *Tune in Yesterday: The Ultimate Encyclopaedia of Old-Time Radio, 1925–1976* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ, 1976); Sterling Fisher and Russell Potter, eds., *NBC-Columbia University Broadcasting Series: Music in Radio Broadcasting* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1946); Diane Carothers Foxhill, *Radio Broadcasting from 1920 to 1990* (New York: Garland Publishing Inc, 1991); Robert J Landry, *This Fascinating Radio Business* (New York: Bobbs-Merrill Co., 1946); Lawrence W Lichty and Malachi C Topping, *American Broadcasting: A Source Book on the History of Radio and Television* (New York: Hastings House, 1976); J Fred MacDonald, *Don't Touch That Dial! Radio Programming in American Life, 1920–1960* (Chicago, 1979); Russell Sanjek, *American Popular Music and Its Business: The First Four Hundred Years* vol. 3, *1900–1984* (New York, 1988); Russell Sanjek and David Sanjek, *American Popular Music Business in the 20th Century*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991); E P J Shurick, *The First Quarter-Century of American Broadcasting* (Kansas City: Midland Publishing Co., 1946); Charles Siepmann, *America in a World at War*, No. 26: *Radio in Wartime* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1942).

BBC's limited American radio programming, and to help the troops in their difficult transition to wartime Britain and then across to the front lines. Without the AFN, Morley suggested, American troops in the United Kingdom would have had much lower morale as a result of not understanding or appreciating the BBC's programming.

Three excellent oral histories of jazzmen included accounts of being stationed at military dance and jazz bands during the war years. Clora C Bryant's *Central Avenue Sounds: Jazz in Los Angeles* (1998) is an excellent example of such works. Bryant's interviews with some of the best known musicians of the West Coast during World War II provides detailed accounts of time spent in military bands. Ira Gitler's *Swing to Bop* (1985), covers more than just the war years. Through his interviews of many of the musicians involved in the early bebop movement, Gitler suggests that the war helped the progression to bebop. Many of the interviewees note that because of the war they were either able to practice while being paid by the military. Equally, those who avoided being drafted were able to convene in hot spots such as New York City and practice and develop their music there. At the same time Gitler's interviews bring out the idea that those musicians who were drafted, effectively existed in a musical vacuum in many cases.

One further oral history deserves mention here. Stanley Dance's *The World of Swing: An Oral History of Big Band Jazz* (1974) provides information on some of the bigger names of the big band era, including Benny Goodman, Lionel Hampton, Billy Holiday, Coleman Hawkins and Sy Oliver. Dance's conversations also touched on the war and how it affected each of his subjects, and their recollections of their wartime activities provided a window into the lives of musicians during the war. These accounts bridged the gap between primary accounts of the activities of famous musicians and general music histories, neither of which always included full lists of

musicians involved military projects. Despite the deficiencies of oral histories, in that they are first hand accounts and are not always easy to corroborate, some of those used here did, at least, lead research in new directions, and provided another source for evidence.

The main primary sources considered were trade magazines (in particular *Variety*, *Down Beat* and *Billboard* on the American side, and *Melody Maker* in the United Kingdom), mainstream newspapers, personal accounts such as diaries and letters, and published studies carried out during the war.²² These sources provided details of how the communities in question used music or dealt with the problems music faced throughout the war. Other primary sources included government and military records from both countries, and the BBC Written Archives. The Library of Congress houses both published and unpublished song sheets of music, which proved invaluable for lyrics, and also as an indication of the work rate of American song writers during the war years.

With the exception of the sources discussed in more detail in this literature essay, the vast majority of secondary sources that covered the war years and popular music in any manner at all tended to reduce or condense their own treatment of the subject to a few pages at most. The lack of a complete review of World War II and popular music suggested a gap in the scholarly study of the subject. Each of these authors believed popular music and World War II to warrant some discussion but their treatments were at best shallow and often perfunctory. Simple analyses in each source led to the conclusion that popular music merely provided the soundtrack to the war and little else.

²² Trade magazines, newspapers and personal accounts used in this thesis include (but are not limited to): *Downbeat*, *Melody Maker*, *Variety*, *Newsweek*; *The Times* (of London), *The New York Times*; interviews with Stephen Williams, broadcasting director of ENSA; Sir John Forster's Report on the Man and Woman Power in the Entertainment Industry, December 17, 1943, and the memoirs of Captain Fred Foster.

The most apparent gaps in the existing literature on music during World War II pertain to its interaction with both the war and civilian society at war. Rather than providing analyses of what music provided during wartime and how that was achieved, previous scholars have used music as an example of other aspects of wartime culture, fit the discussion of music into a larger theme or taken a more musicological approach. These tendencies have created a gap that requires filling, and chapters one, two, five, and six, use this underlying premise as part of the justification for their inclusion here. With the exception of Otto Helbig's 1966 study of music in the United States armed forces, little work has been carried out on the mechanics and use of popular music in the military during the war. Helbig's work provided a lot of information, but included nothing on what musicians did in the military, how they did it, and what effects they had on the military. Furthermore, neither Helbig nor any others have adequately addressed the development of popular music as an essential aspect of fighting a war during this time, either. Chapters three and four seek to redress that balance and examine how popular music was used in the American military during World War II. On the British side of the subject, the most glaring hole in previous research is ENSA, hence the long description in chapter six. Equally, though, little of a scholarly nature has been written about popular music's place in wartime society outside of the BBC, and chapter five deals with these issues specifically.

By addressing these gaps in the existing literature, and expanding upon what has been written on better-covered aspects of World War II and its interaction with popular music, this thesis hopes to offer complementing discourse to the excellent work already done in the field.

Chapter 1

American Popular Songs during World War II

Songwriters go to war

World War II affected the American song writing industry as strongly as it hit all other industries. The music industry managed to survive intact and at times even thrive during the war years, as opposed to many other industries that experienced government takeover, severe restrictions on producing their pre-war goods, or (extremely rarely) failure as a direct result of the war.¹ The song writers and the supplementing businesses (publishers and distributors) dealt with the dramatic changes enforced by war, in many cases embracing the difficulties introduced, as well as finding thematic influence within the events engulfing the world. The war provided songwriters with endless lyric opportunities based on war events, government propaganda and wartime society. Popular songs' lyrics dealt with all aspects of daily wartime life, while referring to both the positive and negative in both civilian and military society. Some attempted to suggest plausible ways of dealing with those scenarios, while others provided people with information, comfort and stimulation. At the same time these songs created pure entertainment opportunities for people to enjoy. Perhaps most importantly, in the context of World War II popular music, many songs provided a means of remembering the good times. "Music," wrote music historian William Howland Kenney "also stimulates strong emotions attached to related past experiences and thereby makes those past experiences more accessible to

¹ Nelson Lichtenstein, *Labor's War at Home: the CIO in World War II* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2003), 82. Lichtenstein pointed to government agencies such as the National War Labor Board, the Office of Production Management and the War Production Board as evidence of the level of involvement that the United States government took upon itself during the war. Even Ford Motor Company flirted with bankruptcy during the war years, although Henry Ford was able to avoid such a problem in the end. William McDonough and Michael Braungart, *Cradle to Cradle: Remaking the Way We Make Things* (New York: North Point Press, 2002), 160.

the listener's consciousness. We feel, and therefore remember, past experience through, among other things, music repetition."² In other words, the popular music of World War II provided a means by which the listener could remain in touch with the safety of pre-war existence. That search for a way to retain the past—the pre-war state of society that seemed so safe and unthreatening—engaged much of society throughout the war years and, in music, Americans searched for that link as the music industry sought to provide it.

This chapter addresses the nature and subjects of American popular music from 1941 to 1945, and discusses how the lyrics of these songs addressed the war and participated in the conflict, primarily from the viewpoint of the home front, but also in relation to the effect on the soldiers, sailors, and airmen of the American forces. The subjects of the lyrics have been grouped so as to allow discussion of these songs within thematic sections as opposed to following a strictly chronological system. Forcing the various themes into a purely time-oriented discussion would have created an unwieldy back and forth in subject matter. The various subjects, determined as being most significant through examination of the general message contained within the songs, are: neutrality and the impending war; the start of American involvement in the conflict and the draft; the war itself—the fighting, battles within the war, and the exploits of those conducting the war; depiction of the enemy; love, romance, sex, and separation caused by the war; the home front; and duty songs, which can best be described as songs referring to the American Dream, patriotism, and responsibility.

By addressing the songs and their lyrics within these themes, it is possible to ascertain their place in American civilian and military society during World War II. The fact that the songs depicted the aforementioned themes within their lyrics indicates their importance to that wartime society. Even in the United States,

² William Howland Kenney, *Recorded Music in American Life: The Phonograph and Popular Memory, 1890–1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), xvii.

withdrawn as it was from the direct impact of war on a day-to-day basis, war dominated life. Thus, the songs of that country provide a window into the culture and society at the time. As the *New York Times* pointed out in November 1942, songs about the war were everywhere: “There is no dearth of new war songs. Tin Pan Alley in New York grinds them out wholesale and so does celluloid row in Hollywood. Torchers, crooners and radio trios, quartets and fives chant more or less melodic predictions of evil things in store for Hitler and Hirohito. ‘Special numbers’ are dedicated to almost every branch of our armed forces from bombing squadrons to decontamination units.”³ The sheer number of songs reflecting the war and the amount of time spent by songwriters, the music industry, the government, and the media on trying to find war songs, speaks to the role that those songs had to play during World War II and to their importance to a country at war.

American Popular Songs Prior to American Involvement with the War

This idea of the importance of popular songs to American wartime society began to take hold before the United States officially joined World War II, but the main body of song writing to address the war in any sense started once the United States entered the war in December 1941. At that stage, songwriters all across the country heeded their own call to arms—a voluntary draft of sorts—and wrote, recorded and published hundreds of songs for the duration of the war, producing a huge body of work covering many topics and areas of life in wartime, both military and civilian. Despite the outbreak of writing and the enthusiasm of the song writers, nationally prominent bands ignored much of this work, often choosing (especially during the early stages of the war) not to record songs about the war. Many of these

³ Samuel T Williamson, “A Singing Army? Not Yet; But,” *New York Times*, November 15, 1942, SM12. The Tin Pan Alley the article wrote of was the nickname given to the area surrounding Broadway and Forty-ninth Street in New York City where the majority of the professional song writing business could be found.

war songs instead entered the public domain as sheet music or recorded only by less well-recognised bands, and many of the songs enjoyed commercial success through sheet music alone. Other World War II songs, though, found acceptance from the bands of the day, and were played and heard throughout the country on multiple media.

American songwriters spent the years before American involvement in World War II avoiding the subject of war completely or advocating neutrality.⁴ Neutrality and patriotism figured prevalently and prior to the declaration of war, songs with a pro-war theme were extremely rare. In terms of the most popular songs,—those that made the *Lucky Strike Hit Parade* or the best sellers lists in the music industry magazines—the charts were devoid of war-themed lyrics until late 1941.⁵ The only song that could be considered a war song that became popular before American entry into the war was “A Nightingale Sang in Berkeley Square,” and this was almost certainly only because it had become synonymous with the war in England prior to being released in the United States.⁶

Songwriters and publishers avoiding the topic of war echoed the sentiments and decisions of society in general and federal authorities in particular. American neutrality allowed the entertainment world to follow along with the “America First” ideals. It was a sensible route to follow, because in order for songs to be considered

⁴ Joseph Murrells, *Million Selling Records from the 1900s to the 1980s: An Illustrated Directory* (New York: Arco Publishing, Inc., 1984); Joel Whitburn, *Joel Whitburn Presents A Century of Pop Music: Year-by-Year Top 40 Rankings of the Songs & Artists that Shaped a Century* (Compiled from America's Popular Music Charts, Surveys, and Record Listings 1900–1939, and *Billboard's* Pop Singles Charts, 1940–1999) (Menomonee Falls, WI: Record Research, Inc., 1999); Joel Whitburn, *Pop Hits 1940–1954* (Menomonee Falls, WI: Record Research, Inc., 1994); David Ewen, *All the Years of American Popular Music: A Comprehensive History* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1977). For listings of hit songs of the war years, see, <http://ntl.matrix.com/br> and [http://nfo.net/hits/1941\[1942\]\[1943\]\[1944\]\[1945\].html](http://nfo.net/hits/1941[1942][1943][1944][1945].html). See also note 5.

⁵ Joseph Murrells described *Your Lucky Strike Hit Parade* as the “grand-daddy of Top 40 radio.” The show started on April 20, 1935 and finally ended more than twenty-four years later on April 29, 1959 as a television show. Murrells, *Million Selling Records*, 11.

⁶ “A Nightingale Sang in Berkeley Square,” words by Eric Maschwitz, music by Manning Sherwin and Jack Strachey, 1940 for the show *New Faces*. The song was first performed by Judy Campbell, and was later recorded by Ray Noble, Vera Lynn and Glenn Miller during the war. <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/1463961/Judy-Campbell.html>, as accessed January 25, 2010.

successful they required an audience or market that would listen to the songs and purchase them. The audience remained neutral in the face of the ongoing war in Europe, thus songs tended to reflect that neutrality.

A perusal of the *Lucky Strike Hit Parade*, *Variety* and *Billboard* lists of popular songs during the two years when the United States was not involved demonstrates that war songs did not achieve commercial success. For example, *The Hit Parade* contained only one song that could be described as a true war song in those first two years: “‘Til Reveille.”⁷ Gene Buck, the president of American Society of Composers and Publishers (ASCAP) offered a suggested reason for the lack of war songs prior to American involvement in the war a couple of weeks after the attack on Pearl Harbor. Looking back, Buck noted that, “We had a divided country. People felt intensely one way or the other [about involvement in the war]. A one hundred percent war song wouldn’t have reached first base. A peace song would have gone the same way.”⁸

Despite the fact that war-themed songs remained off the publishers’ lists, the “America First” environment did create conditions suitable for an anti-war song. “Blitzkrieg Baby (You Can’t Bomb Me),” by Una Mae Carlisle and Lester Young, was released in March 1941. As a vanguard member of the bebop movement and an African American, Lester Young’s song contained strains of protest against the war rather than empathy with the situation.⁹ The conditions of American neutrality and thus the societal conditions within the country allowed this song to be published. Once the Japanese had attacked Pearl Harbor, the change in the nation’s mentality mitigated against such a song being published later.

⁷ “‘Til Reveille,” words and music by Stanley Cowan and Bobby Worth, 1941.

⁸ “Tin Pan Alley Heeds America’s Call to Arms,” *Galveston (Texas) Daily News*, December 25, 1941, 13.

⁹ Scott DeVeaux, *The Birth of Bebop: A Social and Musical History* (London: Picador, 1999), 246. DeVeaux narrates the position of black bebop musicians in relation to the war. He states that young black musicians (particularly those in the early bebop movement) had an extreme aversion to fighting in the war. Among those musicians was Lester Young.

Less commercially successful (in terms of sales and, although harder to track, in terms of number of people who listened) than recorded music, writers across the country published many “war” songs in sheet music format prior to the attack on Pearl Harbor. Many of these were anti-war offerings, warning about the war, or proclaiming neutrality for the United States. However, the lower sales figures and the likelihood that the number of people listening was far lower than the amount who heard a song published by one of the larger publishing houses means that these sheet music songs had far less direct impact on the American public. Despite the smaller numbers of people who heard sheet-music-only publications, and considering that sheet music songs often sold in the multiple hundreds of thousands that number was hardly tiny, these songs warrant consideration here due to the fact that they represent the vast majority of all anti-war songs from the World War II era.

“Go Back Where You Belong,” published in 1940 and “Be Glad You’re An American,” published in early 1941 were prime examples of the mini-genre of songs expounding on the merits of being American and avoiding the conflict engulfing the rest of the world.¹⁰ “Go Back Where You Belong” robustly commanded people to be more American and warned those who might protest at some American ideologies and ways of life. Joe Weber’s lyrics told anyone who did not like the United States to go and live somewhere else. The front cover of the song sheet carried a further message. The pledge of allegiance followed a line stating that the song was “Dedicated to one hundred percent Americans who reverently say. . . . Be Glad You’re An American.” With its historic images of Americana on the cover it lauded the benefits of being American and reminded people to be thankful for that fact. Its lyrics included:

Do you ever think how fortunate are we
To be here today
In the USA

¹⁰ “Go Back Where You Belong,” words and music by Joe F. Weber, published by Joe F. Weber, 1940. “Be Glad You’re an American,” words by Catherine Allison Christie, music by Ellen Jane Lorenz, published by Lorenz Publishing Co., 1941.

When the people of the lands across the seas
Are distressed and oppressed?
So be glad you're an American
You're an American, proudly free!¹¹

The song noted that freedom around the world was being reduced. The general emphasis of the lyrics was that people should be proud of the United States and proud of being Americans. The effect of such a message in early 1941 can not be assertively classified, but it can be imagined that with much of the media and the authorities advocating "America First," the ideals of such songs would only affirm that policy in the minds of the American public.

"Thank Your Lucky Stars and Stripes" and "Look Homeward America" suggested that neutrality should be asserted and that what Americans already had was significantly better than those already involved in the fighting could point to.¹² "Thank Your Lucky Stars and Stripes" prevailed upon listeners to believe in the American way and to be thankful for the freedoms and powers that Americans enjoyed. The basic sentiment underlying the lyrics of both songs was of isolationism and that Americans needed to realise and appreciate that by not being involved in the war, they were far better off than those who were. This slightly convoluted assertion of neutrality was not confined to "Thank Your Lucky Stars and Stripes"; "My Heart's in America" and "This is Our Side of the Ocean" both alluded to the same ideas as well.

Songs written in the pre-American involvement period of the war that did discuss the conflict in a direct form were usually concerned with the situation in Britain and Europe. President Franklin Delano Roosevelt had given the impetus for such support in February 1940 when he wrote, "What the British need today is a good

¹¹ "Be Glad You're An American," words by Catherine Allison Christie, music by Ellen Jane Lorenz, published by Lorenz Publishing Co., 1941.

¹² "Thank Your Lucky Stars and Stripes," words by Johnny Burke, music by Jimmy Van Heusen, published by Southern Music Publishing Co., 1941. This song was featured in the motion picture, "Playmates" by Kay Kyser and his band; "Look Homeward America," words and music by Richard Malaby, published by G Schirmer, Inc., 1940.

stiff grog, inducing not only the desire to save civilization but the continued belief that they can do it. In such an event they will have a lot more support from their American cousins.”¹³ With such strong ties already existing with Britain, it is not surprising that some of the focus of songwriters was to be found there. Victory songs from even before the United States had entered the war were one example. These included “The V Song,” which was self-styled as the “Official Song” of the Bundles for Britain campaign.¹⁴ The Bundles for Britain programme, with its support in civilian circles in the United States may have seemed a logical vehicle for support from a popular song, but in reality this particular song was only that in name and not in its content. Two other songs in support of Britain were far more direct and relevant to the British cause. “Brave Britain” and “The King is Still in London” both showed support for the British fighting cause.¹⁵

The last of the major thematic areas for songwriters in the years before the American entry to the war, was that exact impending moment. The belief that the United States would soon have no choice but to enter the conflict gave rise to many songs on the subject of the draft and volunteering to fight. These songs followed the example of the other non-committal war songs, in that even though they most certainly concerned themselves with potential fighting, they did not advocate it. Instead, these songs noted that if such a situation did arise, then American men and women would be ready to do their duty. Conversely, the songs warned that those who might shirk their responsibility should not consider themselves “true-blue” Americans.

¹³ David Reynolds, *From Munich to Pearl Harbor: Roosevelt's America and the Origins of the Second World War* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2001), 44.

¹⁴ “The V Song,” words and music by Saxie Dowell and Bill Livingston, published by Dash, Connelly, Inc., 1941. “Bundles for Britain” began in 1940 as the brainchild of Mrs. Walls Latham, a society lady in New York City. *Look*, December 1940. The point of the campaign was to collect things that might be of use to the civilian population of the United Kingdom and ship them across the Atlantic, thus showing the British people that Americans supported them, even if only indirectly at that time.

¹⁵ “Brave Britain,” words by Anita Gray Little, music by Keith Crosby Brown, published by R D Row Music Co., 1941. “The King is Still in London,” words and music by Roma Campbell Hunter and Hugh Charles, published by Dash, Connelly, inc., 1941. “The King is Still in London” was actually written by an Englishman, Hughie Charles, of “There’ll Always be an England” fame, but because it was released in the United States, it warrants being mentioned here.

A selection of songs from this sub-genre included “Let’s Go USA,” “Goodbye Dear, I’ll Be Back in a Year,” “Defend Your Country,” “I’m in the Army Now,” “I Feel a Draft Coming On,” “Boys of the USA” and “Uncle Sammy, Here I Am.”¹⁶ All of these shared common attributes of predicting war soon (without actually stating that fact) and demonstrating that American men would be ready for any fight the enemy could offer them.

In fact, as soon as the United States began drafting men for service, draft songs started to gain popularity. In 1940, Horace Heidt and his Musical Knights featured “Goodbye Dear, I’ll Be Back in a Year.”¹⁷ This song focused on the impending separation of couples and families as a result of the draft. However, the rather hopeful title demonstrated a conviction that the separation would not last long. In fact, “Goodbye Dear” looked more to a glorious future, rather than the distinct possibility of war. “Uncle Sammy, Here I Am” and “I’m In The Army Now,” while slightly “tongue-in-cheek,” at least considered the plausible outcome of a draft and the need to defend the country.¹⁸ These composers believed that war would come, although their lyrics did not take the threat particularly seriously.

As the inevitability of war drew ever closer, song writers began to pen more songs encouraging men to join the armed forces, describing the life in the forces that awaited them and attempting to stimulate the sense of pride and duty that would be required when they were in the military. Songs such as “Bless ‘em All”—an ode to

¹⁶ “Let’s Go USA,” words by Catherine Nagle and George Febbo, music by Clarence Lauer and Will Hays, published by Miracle Music, 1941. “Goodbye Dear, I’ll be Back In a Year,” words and music by Mack May, published by Coast to Coast Music Corp, 1940. “Defend Your Country,” words by John W Bratton, music by Leo Edwards, published by Paull-Pioneer Music Corp. “I’m In the Army Now,” words and music by Frank Luther, published by Broadcast Music Inc., 1941. “I Feel a Draft Coming On,” words by Clarence Kulseth, music by Fred Coots, published by Santly-Joy-Select, Inc., 1941. “Boys of the USA,” words and music by F E Miller, James P Johnson and Clarence Williams, published by Clarence Williams Music Publishing Co., 1941.

¹⁷ “Goodbye Dear, I’ll Be Back in a Year,” words and music by Mack Kay, published by Coast to Coast Music Corp., 1940.

¹⁸ “Uncle Sammy, Here I Am,” words by F E Miller and Clarence Williams, published by Clarence Williams Music Publishing Co., 1941; “I’m In The Army Now,” words and music by Frank Luther, published by Broadcast Music Inc., 1941.

the life in uniform—or “Boys of the USA”—a song that depicted heroism and military life—were published with ever more urgency as the war in Europe continued, but the United States remained outside of it.¹⁹

“Bless ‘em All” employed a subtle humour to draw a rosy picture of life in the forces. Choruses were devoted to stereotypical figures in military life and to typical duties that must be performed. A touch of sarcasm lightened the impression:

Bless ‘em all, Bless ‘em all,
The long and the short and the tall,
Bless the kind Sergeant who tucks you in bed,
Then brings the ice water to cool off your head.
That’s a new one, on me, after all,
It must be a dream I recall.
No ice-cream and cookies for flat footed rookies
So, cheer up, my lads, Bless ‘em all.²⁰

Such lyrics contained information for men who were about to join up and they painted a positive picture of the armed forces. These lyrics thus adopted a tone of public service announcement, with a quasi-cartoon portrayal of a very serious subject.²¹ Song lyrics such as those in the “draft” songs were, in essence, a form of societal rumour surmising on the life of men in uniform, adding to the urban myths and nervous chatter that accompanied the unknown, but also providing information for Americans on what might be expected in the services.

Each style of pre-war song dealing (in some small way) with the impending (or possible) war at least broached the subject of that war, as opposed to the far larger number of songs that did not even consider it. The vast majority of truly popular songs were among those that chose to avoid anything alluding to the war across the Atlantic Ocean. The country was not officially at war yet and

¹⁹ “Bless ‘em All,” words and music by Jimmy Hughes, Frank Lake and Al Stillman, published by Sam Fox Publishing Co., 1941; “Boys of the USA,” words and music by Harold Webster Cate, published by H N Homeyer & Co., 1940.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ “Boys of the USA” contained similar ideas and used a similar humorous undertone to convey its message. “Boys of the USA,” words and music by Harold Webster Cate, published by H N Homeyer & Co., 1940.

it would not have benefited the music industry to address the negativity of warfare in its popular genres. Regardless, in spite of higher levels of commercial success for the popular, non-war songs, those discussed above retained their relevance.

The songwriters, who penned songs addressing the war prior to war being declared in late 1941, did so because they were prepared to address the issue of the United States entering that conflict. At the same time, the songwriters avoided becoming too politically involved, or offering explicit advice, other than to “do one’s duty,” should the need arise. The climate of American society from 1939 into 1941 forced such a stance from songwriters. Although President Roosevelt agitated more and more strongly for help for Great Britain and popular opinion gradually moved toward supporting the beleaguered nation in some form or other (without sending troops or declaring war), a great deal of public rhetoric and sentiment remained in favour of staying out of the war if possible.²² In fact, it took until November 1940 until a majority of Americans favoured overtly helping the United Kingdom in its fight against Germany.²³ These songs addressed issues that concerned many, but which much of popular culture ignored until it was no longer possible to do so. Thus, at least for a while, these pre-war war songs filled a small gap in popular culture’s involvement in current events, providing a mirror for the national debate over how, if at all, to get involved in the war, and doing so through the seemingly apolitical venue of popular music.

Although publishing companies released these songs (primarily as sheet music), a further, perhaps far more significant, factor led to few war songs becoming

²² Robert A. Divine, *Reluctant Belligerent: American Entry into World War II* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1967), p.84. See also, Reynolds, *From Munich to Pearl Harbor*.

²³ Reynolds, *From Munich to Pearl Harbor*, 98.

nationally renowned before the United States declared war on the Axis powers.²⁴ The major broadcasting networks—CBS, NBC Blue, and Mutual—had issued a ban on broadcasting any “militant songs,” choosing to remain in agreement with the official government position.²⁵ Writers, who therefore wished to disseminate their work over the air waves of network broadcasters, could not afford to directly address the war in any manner whatsoever. Network reticence and no truly successful war song prior to Pearl Harbor most likely led to writers not discussing the subject of war. To do so would have been unprofitable at best. Thus, songs advocating American involvement or showing overt support for the war in Europe only really arrived after December 7, 1941.

Songwriters Join the War

Once the United States declared war on the Axis powers, those same songwriters who had written anti-war or pro-isolation or impending-war songs wrote and published songs in support of the war. These songs were published at an incredible rate—with the first pro-war song (“Remember Pearl Harbor”) recorded just ten days after Pearl Harbor was bombed.²⁶ The rush to pen songs depicting American involvement in the fighting was akin to a stampede as music publishers sought to change their stance completely. Rather than railing against the war, American songwriters opted to support it without restraint.

At the same time, the previously reticent radio networks abandoned their stance on songs connected to the war. At the end of November 1941, the

²⁴ “Flood in Tin Pan Alley: Jap Bombs Burst a Dam of Songs Against the Axis Powers,” *Newsweek*, December 22, 1941, 65.

²⁵ J. Fred MacDonald, *Don't Touch That Dial! Radio Programming in American Life from 1920 to 1960* (Chicago: Nelson-Hall, 1979), 106. The ban on war-related songs stemmed largely from the United States's position as a neutral country until the declaration of war in December 1941. The networks did not wish to put themselves in opposition to the official stance of the federal government.

²⁶ “Remember Pearl harbor,” words by Don Reid, music by Don Reid and Sammy Kaye, published by Republic Music Co., 1941.

networks of NBC, CBS and Mutual were promoting only one song related to the war—"The White Cliffs of Dover."²⁷ A month later (within two weeks of the attack on Pearl Harbor), those same three networks had begun to promote (and play) "This is no Laughing Matter" and "He's A-1 in the Army and He's 1-A in my Heart."²⁸ By mid-January 1942, "We Did It Before and We Can Do It Again" had been added to the list of heavily promoted war songs on those networks and two weeks later "Somebody Else is Taking My Place" had also become popular on the broadcasts of NBC, CBS and Mutual.²⁹ By February 4, 1942, the radio networks had increased the number of war songs even further so that "Anchors Aweigh" and "Goodbye Mama, I'm Off to Yokohama" joined the others.³⁰ Thus, at the end of March 1942, there were no less than nine war songs in the list of heavily promoted (and consequently heavily played as well) records on the major radio networks.³¹

The change provided evidence of the shift in the concerns and attitude of the national audience. Polls taken just before the attack on Pearl Harbor indicated a majority of the American population favoured American involvement in the war in some fashion, with eighty-one percent stating that the Neutrality Act should be

²⁷ NBC, CBS, Mutual Plugs, *Variety*, November 26, 1941, 48. As the leading entertainment world publication at the time, *Variety* features in this thesis extensively as a primary source. The weekly magazine provided a more-detailed analysis than all other publications with, perhaps, the exception of *Down Beat* (and that publication focused more specifically on the music industry). Thus, as a source of material relating to the entertainment and music world in regards to the war, *Variety* is the best resource available from the time for this thesis. "The White Cliffs of Dover," words by Nat Burton, music by Walter Kent, 1941.

²⁸ NBC, CBS, Mutual Plugs, *Variety*, December 24, 1941, 40.

²⁹ "We Did It Before and We Can Do It Again," words and music by Cliff Friend and Charlie Tobias, published by M. Witmark & Sons, 1941; "Somebody Else is Taking My Place," words and music by Russ Morgan, Dick Howard, and Bob Ellsworth, 1937. The 1942 version was performed by Benny Goodman for Okeh Records as well as Bunny Berigan for Elite Records. NBC, CBS, Mutual Plugs, *Variety*, January 14, 1942, 42 and January 28, 1942, 40.

³⁰ NBC, CBS, Mutual Plugs, *Variety*, February 4, 1942, 40; "Anchors Aweigh," performed by Paul Tremaine orchestra for Columbia Records. Tremaine also served in the armed forces during the war. "Goodbye Mama, I'm Off to Yokohama," performed by J. Fred Coots.

³¹ NBC, CBS, Blue, Mutual Plugs, *Variety*, March 25, 1942, 44.

amended to allow American merchant ships to be armed.³² Music publishers and writers quickly seized the opportunity to take advantage of that shift and the radio networks obliged. In this, they had no real alternative. If the networks were to remain popular themselves (in terms of music provision) then they had to respond to changes within their audience and play the most popular songs, especially as popular music programmes ran second in popularity to news programmes throughout the war.³³

With the country in support of the war and major radio networks accepting war songs once neutrality had been abandoned, the status quo from before American involvement was almost immediately reversed—the American song writing and publishing industry joined the war wholeheartedly. The December 31, 1941 list of the fifteen best-selling sheet music pieces included two war-related songs: “White Cliffs of Dover” and “No Laughing Matter.”³⁴ Just two weeks later the list added “We Did It Before, And We’ll Do It Again” and “Remember Pearl Harbor.”³⁵

Despite this swift change and the quick appearance of war songs in the charts, at the start of 1942, the music-industry magazine *Down Beat* called for war songs to be written. The magazine led those calls with an article quoting Gene Buck, the president of the ASCAP. Buck issued a call to the song writers in his organisation to start writing war songs so that the men and women of the armed forces would have something to which to march. He stated that “the writer members of ASCAP have the genius to create such songs for America today.”³⁶ With the call issued, *Down Beat*

³² Gallup Poll Survey #251-K, Question 4, November 5, 1941 in George Gallup, *The Gallup Poll: Public Opinion, 1939–1971*, Vol. 1, 1935–1948 (New York: Random House, 1972), 304.

³³ Cantril, Hadley and Midred Strunk, eds., *Public Opinion, 1935–1946* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1951), 719.

³⁴ 15 Best Sheet Music Sellers, *Variety*, December 31, 1941, 42.

³⁵ 15 Best Sheet Music Sellers, *Variety*, January 14, 1942, 41.

³⁶ “New Batch of Patriotic Music Set to Flow Soon,” *Down Beat*, January 1, 1942.

expected that there would be a “flood” of war songs within the first month of 1942.³⁷ The editors were, if nothing else, extremely prescient.³⁸ *Down Beat*’s call was, as it turned out, the vanguard of the quest for a war song in World War II.

Although song writers quickly took up the call to write war songs, the popular big bands did not record the vast majority of them at the same rate. As a result, the vast majority of the music-listening public were unaware of the shift to war songs by American songwriters. This left the demand for war songs unsatisfied. Writing in February 1942 for *Down Beat*, music journalist Eddie Beaumont noted that while there had indeed been many songs written about the war in the immediate aftermath of the attack on Pearl Harbor, success had not followed those songs.³⁹ It was his contention that the big name bands disliked these songs and believed them to be inferior in quality when compared to conventional non-war songs.

Ben Bodec, in *Variety*, had noted the distaste for war songs from the big bands only two weeks prior to Beaumont’s article. Bodec wrote that “It is [the] publishers’ contention that the average dance band has no interest whatever in lending its services to the exploitation of war songs, and it is far more concerned with maintaining its old stylistic groove and keeping hep to the tastes of the more fanatical jump addicts.”⁴⁰

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ An example of this quick change in nature of songs is in the work of Frank Loesser. Loesser was a successful songwriter who took his talents into the Army when war was declared and continued to pen new songs while in uniform.³⁸ Once in the army he began to write war songs. Loesser wrote and had published “Praise the Lord and Pass the Ammunition” in 1942. This was easily his most successful song about the war and indeed, one of the most successful of all war songs, selling more than 170,000 copies in the first few weeks of its release, “Praise the Lord” went on to become one of the best selling records of the entire war. The *New York Times* called it a “good war song, but not a great one,” despite the fact that “Boys whistled it on the streets; theatre audiences thumped out the rhythm; it made the CBS Hit Parade and swelled sheet music and record sales proportions.” “Praise The Lord’s Great Press,” *Variety*, November 4, 1942, 41. Frank Loesser’s best pre-war hit was “The Lady’s in Love with You” from the film *Some Like it Hot* (not to be confused with the more famous film of the same name of 1959). Neither this effort nor “Say It (Over and Over Again)” for the soundtrack for *Buck Benny Rides Again* had any link to the war. However, after he had been in the army for a while, his experiences and influences had, naturally, been altered, and the topics for his songs written between 1942 and 1945 all centred on the war in one fashion or another.

³⁹ Eddie Beaumont, “Sure We Want Victory but the War Songs Still Smell,” *Down Beat*, February 15, 1942, 11.

⁴⁰ Ben Bodec, “‘Advanced’ Dancemen Call War Songs Too Corny, But the Public Buys Them,” *Variety*, February 4, 1942, 1, 13.

He continued by agreeing with the publishers' opinion that the failure to provoke band leaders into being interested in war songs "has discouraged wider acceptance and publication by [publishers] of war songs."⁴¹ So not only were the band leaders not impressed by war songs, their opinion carried enough weight to stagnate the recording of war songs from sheet music. In fact the situation was so critical because dance bands believed that "such tunes are corny and [that] if they play them their followers will drift away from them."⁴²

The writers of the music press had reason to suggest that the bandleaders made these decisions and, in some cases they did, but more often than not, the publishers gave music to the bands to record. Not that such a practice changed the fact that the big bands did not record these war songs. Given that by the war most songs recorded came through the big publishers with their Hollywood studio ties, the lack of big-name bands recording war songs should not be surprising. At the start of the war, those big publishers had not yet embraced the war as a profit-making theme for songs.⁴³ Publishers, of course, sought to make money. In order for a song to be successful it needed to adhere to what the public expected from its popular music. At the same time, in order for a new piece of music to stand out from the crowd and become a best-seller that piece of music only needed to sound slightly different from the others.⁴⁴ Just as importantly, songwriters tended to stick to the tried and true because they knew that they would be able to sell such fare to the publishers for the bands to record. An editorial article in *Billboard* in August 1942 neatly summed this problem up. "A songsmith is not too interested," wrote the article's author, "in bucking the tide of payolas, the boy-meets-girl formulas, and the 100-and-1 other

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ MacDougald, *The Popular Music Industry*, 74–77, as quoted in Susan J. Douglas, *Listening In: Radio and the American Imagination, from Amos 'n' Andy and Edward R. Murrow to Wolfman Jack and Howard Stern* (New York: Times Books, 1999), 152.

⁴⁴ Kenney, *Recorded Music in American Life*, xvi.

unwritten laws in Tin Pan Alley, just in order to try and write THE war song of the period. He's got to make a living he wails, and if he doesn't follow the 'tried-and-true' path to the top of the 'Sheet,' he'll soon be rated a has-been."⁴⁵ Of course, everyone blamed everyone else, and on the very same page of that issue of *Billboard*, an article sang the argument of the publishers that they were trying hard to meet the expectations of the Office of War Information, and everyone else, but the songwriters and the band leaders just were not prepared to either write or record such songs.⁴⁶ This set of circumstances did not promote risk-taking with new music, particularly at a time when it appeared apparent that the public was not interested in songs that addressed the war directly.

As a result of this lack of interest from the big name bands (and their publishers) the immediate crop of war songs could not sell. Because of the lack of immediate success, headlines in leading national magazines and newspapers decried the lack of suitable (and successful) war songs. The journal *Business Week* captured the situation with a headline noting "No Singing War: Failure of Hit Songs to Materialise," while in December 1941, *Newsweek* and then ten months later, *Time*, both also offered their opinion on the subject.⁴⁷ Both the magazines argued that it had taken far too long to reach the point when people realised the lack of war songs. Yet even though the popular press and many social commentators bemoaned the lack of war songs, one did not actually need to look hard to find them. During the course of the American involvement in World War II, publishers released approximately six hundred songs addressing the war as their major theme.⁴⁸

⁴⁵ "There's a Reason Mr. Lewis," *Billboard*, August 8, 1942, 19.

⁴⁶ "Pubs Sore About Being Blamed on Weak War Songs," *Billboard*, August 8, 1942, 19.

⁴⁷ "No Singing War: Failure of Hit Songs to Materialise," *Business Week*, July 25, 1942, 74-76. "Flood in Tin Pan Alley: Jap Bombs Burst a Dam of Songs Against the Axis Powers," *Newsweek*, December 22, 1941, 65. "War Songs," *Time*, October 26, 1942, 50. John O'Hara, "You're Like a Sweetheart of Mine," *Newsweek*, January 26, 1942, 64. "Praise Be, a War Song," *Newsweek*, October 5, 1942, 77.

⁴⁸ The Sibley Library of Music in Rochester University, New York holds sheet music for the war songs published during WWII. The archive there lists six hundred and twenty-four songs, but forty-seven of

The Quest for a War Song

The quest for a war song (of which there had been so many successful examples in World War I, such as “Mademoiselle from Armetieres” and “Tipperary,” for example) grew quickly once World War II began. The impact, importance and success in World War I of “Over There,” in particular, remained fresh in the minds of many, and led to demands to replicate it.⁴⁹ Many disparate groups, social commentators, the popular press and the government believed that it would be necessary to have at least one song in World War II with a similar impact to “Over There.”⁵⁰ The groups included such music organisations as ASCAP and the American Theatre Wing’s Music War Committee.⁵¹ As a result of such a song not immediately materialising, the desire amongst government groups and national spokespeople for a war song developed and the cries became more urgent. Journalists wrote articles describing the changes in the nature of the two wars, the changes in society between the two wars and the changes in music tastes to accompany those societal changes.⁵² These articles attempted to find reasons and proffered suggestions for the lack of good, popular and successful war songs this time around.

One of the main reasons put forward for the apparent lack of war songs centred on the change in society away from a singing community. Journalists and

them were written prior to the United States becoming involved in the conflict. It must be noted that the figures from various sources differ widely. Where one source might list those six hundred songs noted above, another, might point to that number, but published within six months of the American entry into the war. This would leave a long time for many more songs to be written, but this was what the *Albuquerque Journal* decided was the case in October 1942, when it declared that five hundred war songs had already been written. For the purposes of this study, the first number of roughly six hundred published war songs seems far more realistic.

⁴⁹ “Over There,” words and music by George M. Cohan, 1917.

⁵⁰ In an attempt to recapture the success of “Over There,” Bob Crosby rerecorded and released it in 1942 with Decca Records.

⁵¹ “Drive to Find War Songs,” *New York Times*, July 28, 1943, 19.

⁵² Two examples such articles were those from Isham Jones in *Variety*, June 10, 1942 and an editorial piece in the *New York Times* in September 1943. “Isham Jones on Why War Songs Flop,” *Variety*, June 10 1942, 43; “ASCAP Defends Current War Songs, Calling ‘Over There’ Comparison Unfair,” *New York Times*, September 15, 1943, 29.

commentators consistently took the line that those in *Variety* did in April 1942 that without the public being willing to sing about this war there would be few successful songs this time around.⁵³ It seems the journalists had a point. By April 1943, approximately sixteen months into the war, only four songs (three of which were war related), had sold more than 500,000 copies of sheet music. "White Cliffs of Dover," "The Air Corps Song," and "Praise the Lord and Pass the Ammunition" made up that list. A fourth war-related song, "When the Lights Go On Again," had sold 475,000 copies to that point. *Variety* decried the lack of successful songs as "paltry" when compared to the same period from World War I.⁵⁴ But, the sheet music industry was hardly helped in turning out successful pieces of music when six months later, another problem beset sheet music: the War Production Board decreed that sheet music publishers must cut paper usage five percent.⁵⁵

Those same journalists and commentators also pointed out that the army no longer marched as it had, so troops did not have the time or inclination to sing either. The argument had merit. The development of radio as a dominant cultural force had occurred in the years between the two wars, meaning that people listened to music more than they played or sang it.⁵⁶ At the same time, however, the argument about troops not having enough time to sing merely ignored that the time required occurred in different ways to that in which it had during World War I. Although troops no longer marched in the same way, they did have time in camp or during time spent at the rear when in theatre. Still, the changes in both civilian society and military tactics did lead towards a drop in group singing.

⁵³ "Not Singing about this War," *Variety*, April 15, 1942, 1. For further discussions of this phenomena, see Glenn Miller's statement further below in this chapter.

⁵⁴ "This War's Songs Way Behind '17-18," *Variety*, April 21, 1943, 1.

⁵⁵ "Music Pubs Must Cut Paper Use 5%," *Variety*, November 3, 1943, 35.

⁵⁶ Christopher H. Sterling and John M. Kittross, *Stay Tuned: A Concise History of American Broadcasting*, 2nd Ed. (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing Co., 1990), 239.

Invariably, critics and commentators harkened back to past conflicts, in particular World War I, stating that there had always been war songs and that those songs had always been popular. These same writers and speakers used this “fact” to bemoan the lack of war songs for World War II. In many cases, their memories picked up on songs that had since come to define that particular war. For example, “Yankee Doodle,” “The Battle Hymn of the Republic” and “Dixie” were all cited as good examples from early American battles. The Spanish-American War was noted for “There’ll Be A Hot Time In the Old Town Tonight,” and for World War I, songs such as “Over There” and “Mademoiselles from Armentieres” often receive mention. What is noticeable about each of these is that, as one writer in the *New York Times* commented, they all became popular because of their association with the war, and they all employed nonsense or sentiment within their lyrics. In other words, none of the songs in that list would have been classified as a true war song in the sense that writers in World War II concluded there needed to be once the United States had joined that war.⁵⁷

Just three days after Pearl Harbor, *Variety* writer Bodec, discussed the issue of war songs. He opined that music publishers were unsure as to whether the American public had the desire for true war songs.⁵⁸ Bodec argued that there would not be many of these songs until Americans were bloodthirsty enough to demand such fare. However, his pronouncement proved premature. Indeed, as noted above, Bodec argued a couple of months later that much of the blame for the lack of war songs lay with the popular bands and big publisher. Had he delayed his earlier article for just another week, he may have been satisfied to note the publication of the first true war song: “Remember Pearl Harbor.” That song directly addressed a war situation and the American public received it favourably, with both the vinyl version and the sheet

⁵⁷ “Songs for a Soldier,” *New York Times*, January 20, 1942.

⁵⁸ Ben Bodec, “Not Sure on War Songs,” *Variety*, December 10, 1941, 3.

music selling well. This song warrants further individual consideration and shall be further discussed below.

Following the initial success of “Remember Pearl Harbor,” composed and recorded by Sammy Kaye, the seal broke and songwriters across the country came forward to offer their own patriotic and war songs to the nation.⁵⁹ “Pearl Harbor Blues” and “At Pearl Harbor,” were both specifically inspired by “Remember’s” success and, according to *Billboard* magazine one publisher received four hundred songs about the attack within the first week after the bombing, but the events of December 7, 1941 were not the only topic of discussion for songwriters in the first six months of the war.⁶⁰ The whole range of themes for war songs elicited attention with songs such as “Let’s Dance to Victory,” “We’ll Win,” “Wings of Freedom,” “Give Me a Kiss and A Smile,” “Fun to Be Free,” “I’ll Be Waiting, Sweetheart Darling,” “When The Lights Go On Again,” “I’ll Be Beside You,” “There’s Somebody Waiting For Me,” and “The Knitting Serenade.”⁶¹ Of these early-war songs, only “When the Lights Go On Again” made it into the top ten on the Lucky Strike Hit Parade. However, “I’ll Be Beside You” and “There’s Somebody Waiting For Me” featured in *Variety*’s best selling lists and were often played on the major network radio stations. These songs indicated the music industry’s attempt to adopt the war as a means to monetary success within the first six months of war.

⁵⁹ “Remember Pearl Harbor,” words and music by Sammy Kaye and Don Reid, 1942.

⁶⁰ “Japs to Jeeps, Doughboy’s Rose to Der Fuehrer’s Face—There’s Nary an ‘Over There’ in the Lot,” *Billboard*, January 9, 1943, 25.

⁶¹ “Let’s Dance To Victory,” published by Baer, Rines and Adams, 1942; “We’ll Win,” written by Mickey Adams, 1942; “Wings Of Freedom,” written and composed by Louis L Griffin and Myron G Albin, 1942; “Give Me A Kiss And A Smile,” written and composed by Alice W Allan, 1942; “Fun To Be Free,” written and composed by Edward Heyman and Louis Alter, 1942; “I’ll Be Waiting, Sweetheart Darling,” written and composed by Eva L Bacon, 1942; “When The Lights Go On Again (All Over The World),” Eddie Seiler, Sol Marcus & Bennie Benjemen, Campbell, Loft & Porgie, Inc., 1942; “I’ll Be Beside You,” written and composed by Dr Clarence A Berge, published by Carl Sobie Music Publishers, 1942; “There’s Somebody Waiting For Me,” written and composed by Carrie Jacobs-Bond, published by The Boston Music Co., 1942; “The Knitting Serenade,” written and composed by Faith Jenkins and Mort Braus, published by Pro-Musical Publishing Co., 1942.

Although “Remember Pearl Harbor” and “When the Lights Go On Again” prospered and the number of war songs increased dramatically, the articles and statements in the press decrying the lack of war songs continued. Within eight months (August 1942), the United States government also became involved in the debate on war songs. William B Lewis, Chief of Radio in the Office of War Information (OWI), declared that the government would aid and encourage songwriters to write war songs.⁶² The OWI wished to use war songs to encourage public support for the war effort and to help sustain national morale. Lewis wanted Tin Pan Alley to “whip up public enthusiasm by reviving the old 1917–1918 idea that a nation that sings can never be beaten.”⁶³ Lewis argued that popular songs up until that point had been full of “regretfulness, whines of homesickness, yearnings for escape, etc.,” and that such themes would not help an army march and were not “the kind of morale wanted by our government now.” Lewis stated that the OWI wanted “Songs that show the purpose for fighting this war.”⁶⁴ Within another month, Federal Communications Commission chairman James L Fly told the press that he believed that Tin Pan Alley had taken up that challenge. The Tin Pan Alley “folks are doing a very splendid job,” Fly commented; implying that Lewis’s challenge had stirred song writers into immediate action.⁶⁵

However, Olin Downes, the respected music critic and music editor of the *New York Times*, took a slightly different angle and argued that in order for war songs to be written for, and then desired by, the public (and men in uniform), there had to be a

⁶² Executive Order 9182, issued by President Roosevelt June 13, 1942, established the Office of War Information. The order gave the OWI “explicit powers to oversee the news and information output of all civilian government departments and agencies. The agency also had the power to devise programmes through the use of the press, radio, motion pictures, and other communication media to bring about the development of an informed and intelligent understanding of the war effort and of war policies and activities, and aims of the government.” Jordan Braverman, *To Hasten the Homecoming: How Americans Fought World War II Through the Media* (Lanham, NY: Madison Books, 1996), 15.

⁶³ “Government Help for War Songs,” *Variety*, August 26, 1942, 3.

⁶⁴ “There’s a Reason Mr. Lewis,” *Billboard*, August 8, 1942, 19.

⁶⁵ “OWI Organizing Campaign to Spur Bigger Output of Fighting Songs,” *Variety*, September 23, 1942, 41.

change of attitude in those involved in the fighting. Downes argued that there was no longer any pride in fighting for one's country when compared to World War I. He wanted to see more faith in the nation, which he believed would remedy the lack of war songs. His argument centred on the belief that the men fighting would inspire or create the songs through their efforts.⁶⁶ He also believed that the fighting men and women would actually write such songs. In some cases this turned out to be true, Frank Loesser being a notable case, but very few were recorded or published, and instead they tended to follow an oral tradition which passed the songs from unit to unit.⁶⁷

Downes did acknowledge that the temper and mindset of the public had changed dramatically since World War I and thus some of the lack of patriotism should be accounted for by these differences.⁶⁸ What he did not make a note of was that the evidence from World War I indicated that the men in the forces in that war had never truly desired patriotic, inspiring music either. In fact, according to reports from at the time, soldiers and sailors pined for rag music and were quite content to play popular songs over and over again because they preferred them to the patriotic fare of the day. In effect, the desires of the troops had not really changed but the music had.⁶⁹ Still, Downes wrote a long article spanning the greater part of three whole columns in the *New York Times*, pointing out all the problem areas associated with modern music and the search for war songs. Downes used the opinions of E C Mills, former administrative chairman of the ASCAP, as the main basis for his argument. Between the two of them, the article indicated that a lack of emotional

⁶⁶ Olin Downes, *The New York Times*, August 23, 1942.

⁶⁷ Martin Page, in his book *Kiss Me Goodnight Sergeant Major: The Songs and Ballads of World War II*, (London: Hart-Davis, MacGibbon, 1973), listed many of these songs. They form a ribald and truthful account of the songs that were sung by men in uniform, but prove quite categorically that most were not fit to be published.

⁶⁸ "War Songs," *Variety*, August 26, 1942, 44.

⁶⁹ William Howland Kenney, *Recorded Music in American Life: The Phonograph and Popular Memory, 1890-1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 194-195. Kenney quoted *Talking Machine World*, April 15, 1918 for his comments about the kind of music preferred by soldiers in World War I.

connection to the war (at that early stage), the “unsuitable-for-dancing-nature” of traditional war songs and, in Downes’s opinion, the more sober nature of World War II in comparison to World War I, all contributed directly to the lack of good (and popular) war songs.⁷⁰

Five months later famed bandleader Glenn Miller joined the debate. Miller had by this time disbanded his civilian band and joined the Army Air Corps. However, he was still able to put his beliefs on the subject into the public domain. Miller argued that this war would not produce the conditions necessary for a song like “Over There.” In January 1943, he observed:

Few war songs will be written during this conflict. There are two reasons why this is so. The first is that the American people are still too angry over Pearl Harbor. They don’t want to sing, they want to fight and gain vengeance. The second reason is that since radio has become so popular this has become a ‘listening nation.’ The man in the street doesn’t sing as he used to. He prefers to listen to someone else. He still likes music, but he wants it sung or played to him. He doesn’t participate in it as he once did.⁷¹

Miller’s statement held many similarities to other statements from the “great and the good” of the entertainment and music world from this period of the war. At this stage, without sustained experience of the military and the likes and dislikes of the men in uniform, he confined his comments to the civilian arena. His appraisal of how music tastes had altered since the previous war accurately reflected the changes in American society.⁷²

Other *Variety* staff writers weighed in on the issue of the lack of a suitable popular war songs for World War II as well. Following the announcement from the

⁷⁰ Olin Downes, “The Need of Great War Songs,” *The New York Times*, August 23, 1942.

⁷¹ “This War Won’t Produce an ‘Over There’—Miller,” *Down Beat*, February 1, 1943, 13.

⁷² Another music industry luminary, Irving Berlin, noticed much the same thing. He did not reprise his “Yip Yip Yaphank” show from World War I for the second worldwide conflict. He still believed in the necessity of a show for the men, by the men (and indeed it was extremely successful), but he wrote an almost entirely new show (“This Is the Army”) for the new generation as he realized the old show would not suit the modern audience. Upon entering Camp Upton at Fort Yaphank, where he had written his World War I show, soon after the start of World War II, Berlin observed that soldiers seemed different to those he had used as inspiration in 1917. As a result, he determined that his new show must also be different to that earlier one. Michael Freedland, *Irving Berlin* (New York: Stein and Day, 1974), 149–150.

OWI on war songs, Abel Green, a writer for *Variety*, derided the government's actions. Green noted that although the OWI had demanded war songs, until that point only "Praise the Lord" and "This is Worth Fighting For" had met the criteria. He argued that in spite of the success of these particular songs ("Praise the Lord" had managed to remain in the best sellers lists for twelve weeks in 1942, which was about as good as a hit could expect in the 1940s) this style had generally not appealed to the public.⁷³ Green wrote, "While in early 1942 the patriotic tunesmiths and publishers were trying to whip up martial enthusiasm, the nostalgic, romantic and yearning mamas and sweethearts back home decided that "Miss You" was more in their idiom."⁷⁴ In spite of Green's assertion, "Miss You" only managed to reach number three in the *Hit Parade* for one week in May 1942, as it bounced up and down the top ten for two months, in stark contrast to "Praise the Lord" and "This is Worth Fighting For."

William Lewis countered this accusation with a statement concluding that, "If we expose the American people to enough worthy war songs, it's a certainty some of them should take, just as they've already cottoned to the drivel about "Slap the Jap," "Goodbye Mama, I'm Off to Yokohama," "Remember Pearl Harbor" and the like."⁷⁵ Lewis and his peers believed that demand could be created by simply producing more songs, in spite of the traditional methods of the music industry.⁷⁶ In order for the public to make one of these songs the "Over There" of the Second World War, they had to desire that particular song, not be inundated with hundreds of songs of that type. Even though the majority of the music press disagreed with the OWI scheme, *Billboard* magazine largely supported the OWI drive for war songs, agreeing with

⁷³ Susan J. Douglas, *Listening In*, 153.

⁷⁴ Abel Green, "Music Biz Still Hunting That Boff War Song," *Variety*, January 6, 1943, 187.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

⁷⁶ Susan J. Douglas, *Listening In*, 152.

Lewis and the OWI that the general idea behind the desire to produce a good war song was itself a good thing.

The lack of war songs in the *Lucky Strike Hit Parade* and other lists vexed the minds of the writers in *Variety* at the start of 1943.⁷⁷ *Variety* writer Mark Warnow could not understand how there were so few war songs making it into the lists of best sellers. He asserted that it was just a case of waiting for the right war song to come along. He acknowledged that "Praise the Lord and Pass the Ammunition" had recently become very successful, but also noted that of the songs that could be considered war songs, few had remained in the best sellers list for more than a couple of weeks at a time. Looking for a reason, Warnow declared that the lack of true war songs could be blamed on the defensive fighting that the United States had engaged in up to that point. He wrote, "We are an aggressive people. Now that we have switched to the offensive, the psychology of our new songs will change and as we march to victory a marching song will arrive that will capture public fancy and achieve real popularity."⁷⁸ But Warnow did not consider that these war songs followed much the same pattern as most popular songs at the time in entering the best sellers charts for only short periods of time.

Another year passed before Oscar Hammerstein, one of the biggest names of the music industry, became involved in the discussion. Hammerstein attempted to sum up the quest for a war song in an interview in *Variety* in January 1944:

Shortly after the war started, writers were haphazardly bombarding their publishers with all kinds of well-intentioned but misdirected patriotic sentiments. Many of these contained a much higher proportion of bathetic schmaltz than anything else and when they were played by dance bands they were not welcomed by their audiences. Not many months passed before the bands had contracted a definite allergy to all songs that contained any war elements. They decided that the public just didn't want them. It didn't take long for this allergy to pass on to the publishers.

⁷⁷ War songs did feature in the sheet music best seller lists though. See *Variety* for examples from throughout the war years.

⁷⁸ "What Makes the Hit Parade," *Variety*, January 6, 1943, 186.

He continued to discuss the issue by pointing out that there was “no virtue in [a song’s] high purpose or patriotic intent. To justify itself it must stand on its feet as a really good song. A fairly good war song is of no more use to the war effort than a fairly good egg to breakfast.”⁷⁹ Hammerstein’s basic argument cut to the heart of the matter: manufacturing a song to a precise set of standards would not automatically produce a great song. This was especially the case here, where the government demanded the production of a good war song, seeming to forget that the music industry (and the purchasing public) might have a say in whatever became a hit.

The *Variety* writer Abel Green, who had previously lamented the dearth of real war songs, had also started to re-evaluate the war song situation by the start of 1944. Green admitted that he had perhaps (along with many others) sought a song that was never to be written in World War II. Assessing songs such as “Praise the Lord and Pass the Ammunition,” “This is Worth Fighting For” and “Comin’ In on a Wing and a Prayer,” he suggested that the “Over There” of the Second World War may already have been written, but that no-one had realised it.⁸⁰ Additionally, he concluded that many of the pop songs that had war themes could be argued to be the true war song of this war because they had sold so many copies. Such success indicated popularity in spite of what music critics viewed as the poor musical qualities of popular songs.⁸¹

The debate raged and the quest strove on for most of World War II with some people believing that a good war song must be found and others stating that it did not really matter. No resolution was ever found amongst those who argued, but the public continued to buy music in large quantities, indicating that whether or not an official war song was found, popular music had a definite role in American wartime life.

⁷⁹ Oscar Hammerstein, “The War Song of World War II Taking Care of Itself—War Songs, by Oscar Hammerstein,” *Variety*, January 5, 1944, 187.

⁸⁰ “Over There,” words and music by George M Cohan, 1917.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

While Green, Warnow and the rest were pointing out the lack of war songs at the very top of the best sellers list, they failed to note—aside from Green’s begrudging article—the numerous war song successes that did occur between 1942 and 1945. Between the start of the war in Europe and the attack on Pearl Harbor, only two war songs appeared in the top three of the *Lucky Strike Hit Parade*. These were “White Cliffs of Dover” and “‘Til Reveille.” After Pearl Harbor (and the switch to wartime music production) the *Lucky Strike* weekly poll contained at least twenty-three war songs that made it into the top three. These included hits such as “He Wears a Pair of Silver Wings,” “Don’t Sit Under the Apple Tree,” “Somebody Else is Taking My Place,” “Mister Five by Five,” “When the Lights Go On Again,” “Johnny Doughboy Found a Rose in Ireland,” “Comin’ In On A Wing and A Prayer,” “Paper Doll,” and “Bell Bottom Trousers.”⁸² Much of the reticence to acknowledge such popular hits as war songs resided in the sheer fact that they were popular. Men such as Hammerstein and Green disparaged such fare, considering them to be musically less worthy, but the American public apparently disagreed with the experts as they purchased and played such songs in great numbers.⁸³

The government concurred with these “expert” opinions. The songs listed above did not fit the government’s appraisal of what a war song should be and the OWI voiced that opinion consistently. Instead of war songs, the OWI considered these songs to be “boy-girl” and romance-based war songs—which, in truth, they

⁸² “He Wears a Pair of Silver Wings,” words by Eric Maschwitz, music by Michael Carr, 1942. So popular was this song that Capitol Records, Columbia Records (twice, Kay Kyser and Kate Smith) and Bluebird Records all recorded their own versions. “Don’t Sit Under the Apple Tree,” words by Lew Brown and Charles Tobias, music by Sam H. Stept, 1942, published by Decca (performed by the Andrews Sisters) and Columbia Records (performed by Kay Kyser). “Mister Five by Five,” published by Decca (performed by the Andrews Sisters). “When the Lights Go On Again,” words and music by Eddie Seiler, Sol Marcus and Bennie Benjamin, 1942, published by Decca (performed by Les Brown) and Bluebird Records (performed by Shep Fields). “Johnny Doughboy Found a Rose in Ireland,” words by Kay Twomey, music by Al Goodhart, 1942, published by Victor Records (performed by Sammy Kaye). “Paper Doll,” words and music by Johnny S. Black, 1943, published by Decca Records (performed by the Mills Brothers). “Bell Bottom Trousers,” adapted by Moe Jaffe, published by Columbia Records (performed by Kay Kyser).

⁸³ Ibid.

certainly were—and thus not, “real,” war songs.⁸⁴ Certainly, “Paper Doll” and “Don’t Sit Under the Apple Tree” focused more on romantic relationships during war, rather than exploits on the battle field, but that being said, some of the others primarily focused on the war itself. Even those two songs took on the air of war songs because of American society’s war footing. And, even Irving Berlin noted that a war song did not necessarily need to be about the war itself. According to one report, Berlin “told a *Chicago Times* reporter that a war song is any good song that becomes popular during a war. And good war songs aren’t necessarily martial ones.”⁸⁵

In August 1942, still no closer to finding the war song that the OWI wished for, William Lewis’s concerns led to an announcement of government help in the quest for a war song.⁸⁶ Lewis believed it necessary to have a specific agency as a liaison agency for the music community, intending that the agency would guide the music community and assist it in producing the type of war songs the government wanted. The OWI spelled out exactly the type of song for which they were searching, stating in early August 1942 that a need existed in the area of rousing and patriotic songs. Such songs, the OWI opined, would stir the imagination and pride of the American public in relation to the war exploits of the armed forces.⁸⁷

Although the OWI wished to guide music publishers, the wheels of government turned slowly and there was still no official guideline for producing the great war song of World War II by the end of September 1942. A proposed meeting had been announced with the intention of formally producing such a guideline. However, although the issue had been raised in congressional hearings on the AFM strike, no further actions had been taken. Senator Charles O Andrews of Florida had questioned James L Fly about “the possible elevation of the standard of radio

⁸⁴ Allen L Woll, “From Blues in the Night to ac-cent-tchu ate the positive: Film Music Goes to War, 1939–1945, *Popular Music and Society* 4: 2, 67.

⁸⁵ “Why War Songs Click,” *Billboard*, February 13, 1943, 64.

⁸⁶ “Govt. Help for War Songs,” *Variety*, August 26, 1942, 3.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

music.”⁸⁸ Andrews hoped the music community might provide the public with “a fresh crop of stirring songs that would intensify the public war effort.”⁸⁹ Lewis, however, was extremely keen to “pitch into the 1942 effort to get the American people humming and chorusing, rousing, unifying tunes,” and he hoped to move the committees forward as soon as he could⁹⁰

Although not specifically mentioned as being Lewis’ work, the OWI did find time in September to recruit the services of Kay Kyser, the famous band leader, in the effort to produce a hit song about the war.⁹¹ Strangely, *Billboard* reported the formation of this same group in May 1943.⁹² Either way, Elmer Davis, director of the OWI and distinguished newspaper reporter, requested Kyser to solicit the assistance of some of the top names in the musical entertainment world.⁹³ Kyser formed a “committee of twenty-five top radio performers anxious to serve their country in even more valuable capacity than at present.”⁹⁴ According to the band leader, the purpose of the committee was to provide “information and inspiration” to the American people.”⁹⁵

In October 1942, the OWI finally formed the much-discussed committee on war songs—the National Wartime Music Committee (separate to that organised by Kyser), to be chaired by Lyman Bryson, Chief of Special Operations in the OWI. The stated objective was to “coordinate the writing and publishing of worthwhile war songs as a psychological weapon of war,” in spite of the public’s lack of enthusiasm

⁸⁸ “OWI Organising Campaign to Spur Bigger Output of Fighting Songs,” *Variety*, September 23, 1942, 41.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

⁹⁰ “OWI Organising Campaign to Spur Bigger Output of Fighting Songs,” *Variety*, September 23, 1942, 41.

⁹¹ Roger D. Kinkle, *The Complete Encyclopedia of Popular Music and Jazz, 1900–1950* Volume 2 (New Rochelle, NY: Arlington House Publishers, 1974), 1265.

⁹² “Songsters Banded To Aid War Effort,” *Billboard*, May 22, 1943, 20.

⁹³ Davis, himself, actually took to the radio with a series of weekly broadcasts on NBC, CBS and the Blue networks starting in February 1943. “Davis Will Go On Radio Weekly,” *New York Times*, February 26, 1943, 17.

⁹⁴ “Kyser’s Telegraphed Invitation,” *Variety*, Sept 9, 1942, 47.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

for such fare up to that point.⁹⁶ *Variety* magazine reminded both the publishers and the government that it was the public who would buy enough songs to turn any one tune into a major hit.⁹⁷ Despite the magazine's lack of faith, the committee came into existence and its members were A J Nordholm of the War Production Board, Harold J Sgalyn of the Federal Security Agency, Dr. Harold Spivacke from the Library of Congress, Ira Walsh from the War Manpower Commission, R D Welch with the Treasury Department, Jay Deiss from the Office of Education, E A Sheridan of the Office of Civilian Defence and Jack Joy from the War Department.⁹⁸

Responding to the formation of the Wartime Music Committee, song writers covered all the various war-influenced themes. Most of the new offerings used the attack on Pearl Harbor as their inspiration in one form or another, often using the imagery of the attack to urge the listener not to forget and to use the attack as a stimulus for action in wartime. Other songs pointed to the idea of quick or inevitable victory for the United States. "Let's Dance to Victory," "We'll Win" and "When the Lights Go on Again," examined the assumed inevitability of victory for the United States and encouraged people to look forward to that moment.⁹⁹ There was a false sense of optimism in such songs and their visions of immediate victory found only a short period of popularity. Despite the "false dawn" idea depicted in some of these songs, this type of song enjoyed a comeback later in the war when it appeared that victory was once again in sight.

Not so much an ode to the allies ability to win easily, but more a wish for peace to come quickly, "When the Lights go on Again" still merits inclusion in this group. Released as both sheet music and gramophone record in mid-1942, it alluded to a quick allied victory simply in its writing and recording. Looking ahead to

⁹⁶ "U.S. War Song Comm.," *Variety*, October 7, 1942, 2

⁹⁷ "Public, Not Publishers, Pick Song Hits," *Variety*, November 4, 1942, 1.

⁹⁸ "US War Song Comm.," *Variety*, October 7, 1942, 2.

⁹⁹ "When the Lights go on Again," words and music by Eddie Seiler, Sol Marcus, Bennie Benjemen, published by Campbell, Loft Porgie, Inc., 1942.

eventual peace at such an early stage of the war can only be described as optimistic or perhaps as a stimulus towards the goal of speedy and all-out victory. This optimism and hope can be found in its lyrics, which discussed the good that would come with an allied victory and warned of the things that would no longer be a part of everyday life as a result of war:

When the lights go on again all over the world
And the boys are home again all over the world
And rain or snow is all that may fall from the skies above
A kiss won't mean good bye but hello to love.

When the lights go on again all over the world
And the ships will sail again all over the world
Then we'll have time for things like wedding rings and free hearts will sing
When the lights go on again all over the world.¹⁰⁰

“When the Lights go on Again” achieved notable success for a truly war-themed song. It debuted in the *Lucky Strike Your Hit Parade* on October 17, 1942 at number ten. Recorded by Vaughn Monroe’s Orchestra, it moved up and down the various published charts throughout the rest of October, into November and December 1942, and then January 1943, before its final showing in February 1943. Its highest position during those five months was number two in the December 5, 1942 *Your Hit Parade* chart, and it has been described as one of the best war songs of the early 1940s in its own right.¹⁰¹

The United States had been involved in the war for seven months by the time “We’ll Win” was released, but the lack of military success up to this point did not appear to deter the sentiments contained in the lyrics of “We’ll Win”:

We’ll win, we’ll win
We’ll sink those dog-gone Japs right in the sea
Give out! With grins!

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ <http://www.newworldrecords.org/linernotes/80222.pdf> accessed July 24, 2006. In the liner notes to *Praise the Lord and Pass the Ammunition: Songs of World Wars I and II*, published by New World Records, Carl H. Scheele noted that “When the Lights go on Again” had been considered (musically and lyrically) one of the two best specifically war-themed songs of 1942. Scheele is Curator, Division of Community Life, at the Smithsonian Institution.

Let's show those gun-ga-dins.¹⁰²

Song writer Mickey Albans ignored the set-backs afflicting American forces in the initial period of conflict—particularly in the Pacific—and instead focused on positive thoughts and victory. Albans' song came in the wake of a March 1942 government announcement that the overly positive slant that popular culture gave to news items about the war was not appreciated.¹⁰³ They demanded that a more accurate picture be portrayed. An assumption within society existed that American forces would win easily and quickly and song lyrics consistently reflected this belief in the first year or so of American involvement.

Such sentiments did not necessarily help the war effort because, to some extent, the government needed people to appreciate the severity of the conflict and the sacrifices necessary to win, rather than simply believe victory would occur no matter what. As political scientist Stuart Chase noted, "Hollywood, Wall Street, Miami Beach, glamour girls, the Rose Bowl, the comic strips, a radio diet of soft soap, laxatives, pep talks and jazz—all conspired to keep millions of us insulated from reality for many hours in the day. Discipline is impossible in dream worlds. We lost our sense of discipline and of responsibility. . . . Our job in 1942 is not to out-talk the enemy. Our job is to outshoot him."¹⁰⁴ Songs such as "After It's Over," "The Song of Victory," "V for Victory," and "We'll Win Through, We Always Do"¹⁰⁵ contained similar ideas on victory being achieved in the shortest time possible and helped insulate Americans from reality. The lyrics of each song evinced no doubt that the United States and her allies would be victorious.

¹⁰² "We'll Win," written by Mickey Adams, 1942.

¹⁰³ "Newsreels Sugarcoat War," *Variety*, March 4, 1942, 1.

¹⁰⁴ Stuart Chase, "The Salesman's Era," in Richard Polenberg, *America at War: The Home Front, 1941-1945* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1968), 5.

¹⁰⁵ "After It's Over," words and music by Paul Brenner, Gilbert Mills and Ted Rolfe, published by Barton Music Corporation, 1942; "V for Victory," words and music by Robert Elmore and Robert B Reed, published by Theodore Presser Co., 1942; "The Song of Victory," words and music by Albert W Haberstro, published by The Victory Publishing Company, 1942; "We'll Win Through, We Always Do," music by Vic Mizzy, published by Santly-Joy-Select Inc., 1942.

The authorities, the media, and luminaries in the music industry called for what they described as a true war song for the duration of the war. An endless search that never produced the kind of song with the amount of popularity and success that they wished for, song writers nonetheless wrote and published songs as they strove to achieve that goal. The critical element that those calling for such songs and those writing them did not appreciate was the fact that times had changed and the type of songs that had been popular in World War I no longer found favour with the buying and listening public. While the search proved fruitless, it still held merits, and led to publicity for popular music in the mainstream press, earnest discussion of the merits of popular music during wartime, and the formation of committees that kept music at the forefront of important discussion throughout the war. All the time people sought the war song for World War II and lamented the wait, war songs existed and found great popularity; they just followed a slightly different tune.

The Move Towards a Different Type of War Song for a Different Type of War

The necessity of commercially successful songs formed part of the reason for the lack of war songs emulating “Over There.” While many hundreds of patriotic, stirring and inspirational war songs were written and published, very few were recorded by the big bands. The style of popular music also changed and developed. Swing music enjoyed extreme popularity and had overtaken the more traditional marches and foxtrot styles.¹⁰⁶ Furthermore, as Robert Murray, director of customer relations for the ASCAP, pointed out, “There wasn’t any radio in the time of ‘Over There’ or it wouldn’t have last through the war,” either. “There are many good war songs,” he continued, “but they’re chewed up by radio.”¹⁰⁷ Many of the more overt

¹⁰⁶ Scott DeVaux argued that in fact the war was both saviour and boon for swing music, as it created a temporary but extreme demand for that style. DeVaux, *Birth of Bebop*, 156–7.

¹⁰⁷ Murray’s point alluded to the fact that many songs only lasted a short while in terms of popularity because radio often overplayed each song and then discarded it in favour of something new. “ASCAP

war songs followed the latter styles and thus did not suit the tastes of American society as well as swing tunes did.¹⁰⁸ This was particularly so for the younger generation (those aged 15–35), who were almost certainly the largest purchasers of popular music during WWII.¹⁰⁹ This led to the big “name” bands shying away from recording such songs. Profitability, marketability and staying in the best sellers lists and most played lists on jukeboxes interested these bands far more than recording a patriotic tune. To achieve this, bands had to release songs that appealed to younger audiences—the traditional war song (with some notable exceptions) generally did not. In his book, *The Songs that Fought the War*, John Bush Jones argued against a wartime observation that there were no marching songs.¹¹⁰ His argument is correct; there were indeed many marching songs. The problem with the marching songs is that they were not all that popular and thus, in terms of finding a “war” song for World War II, such tunes failed miserably.

The American Federation of Musicians (AFM) strike impacted the production of war songs in addition to these commercial considerations. With this strike lasting for much of the duration of the United States’ involvement in the war, there was little time for the big bands to record some of these Tin Pan Alley songs and attempt to make them into hits.¹¹¹ Prior to the strike coming into effect, publishing companies

Defends Current War Songs, Calling ‘Over There’ Comparison Unfair,” *New York Times*, September 15, 1943, 29.

¹⁰⁸ Thirty-eight percent of those listening to the radio, chose to listen to popular music shows. This statistic emphasizes the preference of American listeners for music such as swing, jazz and sweet, over genres such as foxtrots and waltzes. Survey conducted November 15, 1943, Hadley Cantril & Mildred Strunk, *Public Opinion, 1935–1946* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1951), 719.

¹⁰⁹ Although I have been able to find no evidence to indicate this for certain, the assumption that younger people bought more popular music is perfectly reasonable.

¹¹⁰ John Bush Jones, *The Songs that Fought the War: Popular Music and the Home Front, 1939–1945* (Lebanon, NH: Brandeis University Press, 2006), 15.

¹¹¹ James Caesar Petrillo ordered members of the Musicians Union to strike in August 1942. The strike lasted until 1944 when the various recording companies began to broker deals with Petrillo and started recording once more. The AFM strike has been considered in far greater detail than is required here in various publications over the years. For a more complete study of the strike and its impact, see for example, Christopher H. Sterling and John M. Kittross’s *Stay Tuned: A History of American Broadcasting* (New York: Routledge, 2002), which has an excellent one-page description of the “Petrillo Affair,” as the authors call it, on page 257.

had bands record as many songs as they could so that there would be a backlog to see them through the duration of the recording ban. Only songs expected to succeed made it to record during this rush. Risk taking on potentially less popular songs decreased because there would be no opportunity to rectify those mistakes until after the ban, and band leaders preferred to avoid risky songs as mistakes of that nature could have cost the band their popularity. With a shortage of materials expected (and in some cases already noted), it did not make any sense to waste precious recording time, shellac and money on songs that did not fit a pre-determined mould for success.¹¹²

The shortage of materials at the same time as the strike forced record manufacturers to concentrate on bands known to be popular and successful and on songs with the potential to achieve the greatest profit.¹¹³

Following the end of the recording ban in 1944, the top big bands once again chose to play it safe and recorded only songs they expected to succeed. The reasoning then lay in not wanting to risk their name or their success on overtly topical or slightly out-of-date songs. The bands realised that people wanted to hark to the past, to remember the good times as opposed to be reminded of the difficulties of the war and its cultural impact: "The additional burden . . . of war, which drew workers into urban factories and GIs onto lonely battlefields, led many in both groups to long for the music they had left behind."¹¹⁴ This emotional gaze into the past came, in part, as a result of "American GIs encounter[ing] for the first time, or renew[ing] through phonograph records and electrical transcriptions broadcast over radio, commercialised

¹¹² The War Production Board limited shellac use in June 1942 to thirty percent of 1941 usage levels. War Production Board, Shellac Conservation Order M-106, as reproduced in "Diskers Ready New Plans," *Billboard*, April 25, 1942, 68. A few months later, in September 1942, rumours began to circulate that because entertainment of troops was going to take on even more importance as a result of expected high losses of men in the Pacific shellac allowances would be increased again so that publishers could make more records. "War News May Free Shellac," *Down Beat*, September 1, 1942, 1.

¹¹³ "1,000,000 Pop-Disc Sales," *Variety*, April 7, 1943, 33. See also Scott Yanow, *Swing: Great Musicians, Influential Groups, 1,500 Recordings Reviewed and Rated* (San Francisco: Miller Freeman Books, 2000) for a brief discussion of the "perfect timing" of the AFM strike in conjunction with the other wartime factors that affected the music industry in this regard.

¹¹⁴ Kenney, *Recorded Music in American Life*, 182.

collective memories of 'home.' . . . The phonograph replayed for many of those in harm's way a variety of musical sounds that evoked friends, hopes, schools, dance halls, and soda shops that they had left behind."¹¹⁵ Culturally-aware, the big bands naturally shied away from anything that did not look back to what had been left behind.

The big bands' reaction rendered many of the war songs produced by Tin Pan Alley writers obsolete. Without the backing of a successful and popular big band, true war songs did not have a commercial, recorded outlet to the mass market.¹¹⁶ When a well-known band or singer did record a war song it generally made it into the best sellers at the time and of those songs that did, it was more common than not that they remained for a considerable amount of time in those charts; a ten week stay in the top ten was common, although this was far less than the World War I longevity standard for songs of anywhere up to two years in the public eye. Bands such as those of Charlie Spivak, Kay Kyser, Sammy Kaye and Harry James all recorded songs with lyrics specifically about the war, the fighting and the men in one fashion or another. All of these efforts reached at least number ten in the *Hit Parade*.

Other top selling war songs included "Comin' In On A Wing And A Prayer" by the Song Spinners, Spivak's "I Left My Heart At The Stage Door Canteen," "Mister Five By Five" performed by Harry James's orchestra and "Milkman, Keep Those Milk Bottles Quiet," by Ella Mae Morse, Tommy Dorsey and Woody

¹¹⁵ *ibid.*, 195.

¹¹⁶ The list of best-selling sheet music of 1942, for instance, highlighted the necessity of a big band with a recording contract picking up a sheet music song. The list of fifteen songs included seven war songs—all of which had been recorded by the top level bands in that year. Without the accompanying name band, those songs would likely not have made it to the best-selling list, as was the case with the much larger number of war songs written in sheet music format that year that did not sell well-enough to make the top fifteen.¹¹⁶ The *Lucky Strike Hit Parade* top ten included just twenty-five war-inspired songs during the period January 1942 to May 1945. Even if the top forty songs were included there would still be fewer than fifty war songs in the entire three and a half year period in that best-selling list. As there were more than six hundred songs written about the war, the number that made it on to the *Hit Parade* was very small indeed. "Best Sheet Sellers in 1942," *Variety*, January 6, 1943, 189. The list of seven war songs was: "Army Air Corp Song," "Don't Sit Under the Apple Tree," "He Wears a Pair of Silver Wings," "Johnny Doughboy," "Praise the Lord and Pass the Ammunition," "Star Spangled Banner," and "When the Lights Go On Again."

Herman.¹¹⁷ “Milkman” was one of the most heavily plugged records on the major networks in May 1944 and debuted at number ten on the best selling records chart for juke boxes in the same month.¹¹⁸ By mid-June, the song made famous by the King Sisters, Herman and Morse had entered the best sheet sellers top-ten list.¹¹⁹ The rise of “Milkman” did not stop and so by the end of June 1944, it could be found sitting proudly as the fifth best-selling song on juke boxes across the country.¹²⁰

These positions on such charts indicated the considerable success of songs with military topics at their heart. The Song Spinners’ “Comin’ in on a Wing and a Prayer” concerned a bomber returning after a mission with battle damage and the heroics of the men bringing it home. “I Left My Heart At The Stage Door Canteen,” popularised by Charlie Spivak, told the story of a soldier who had met a girl at the Stage Door Canteen (a club for Servicemen), but that war had split them up. Furthermore, “Till Reveille,”¹²¹ by Stanley Cowan, used the imagery of Army life to tell of sweethearts’ dreams. “When the Lights Go On Again” also achieved significant sales, with combined sheet and record figures of approximately one and three-quarters of a million.¹²²

After some early successes, most war songs did not achieve particularly high sales figures. Certainly sales figures did not suggest a candidate for a war song to match “Over There” from World War I within this particular mini-genre of popular

¹¹⁷ “Milkman Keep Those Bottles Quiet,” words by, music by Gene DePaul, published by Leo Feist, 1944.

¹¹⁸ NBC, CBS, Blue, Mutual Plugs, *Variety*, May 10, 1944, 30. 10 Best Sellers on Coin Machines, *Variety*, May 24, 1944, 30.

¹¹⁹ 10 Best Sheet Sellers, *Variety*, June 14, 1944, 37. “Milkman, Keep Your Bottles Quiet” reached a highest position on this chart of number six.

¹²⁰ 10 Best Sellers on Coin Machines, *Variety*, June 28, 1944, 46.

¹²¹ “Till Reveille,” words and music by Stanley Cowan and Bobby Worth, Melody Lane Publications, 1941.

¹²² “This War’s Songs Way Behind ’17–18,” *Variety*, April 21, 1943, 1. There is an interesting discrepancy in the same publication. Three weeks earlier *Variety* had reported that “When the Lights Go On Again” had sold between 500,000 and one million records (it was no more specific than that), which is a far cry from the one and a quarter million in the April 21 article. It is quite possible that the period between April 7 and April 21 saw a maximum increase in sales of 750,000 records, but it would also seem a little unlikely. “1,000,000 Pop-Disc Sales,” *Variety*, April 7, 1943, 33.

songs. Americans appeared to wish for something other than fighting and death in their popular songs during the war. Corny pop tunes and sentimental ballads featured far more prevalently and successfully than did war tunes.¹²³ Although this did not stop the flow of war songs during the course of the conflict, it did stem it somewhat, so that there were gradually fewer overtly militaristic songs once the early cry had tailed off. The relative failure of true war songs to inspire the public meant that songwriters had to turn to other topics to try and enthuse the American audience and sell records. This they did with gusto.

Songwriters Aim Their Pens at the Enemy

American songwriters found many topics about which to pen new tunes other than the actions of the American military and their allies. Of these, the Axis and its leaders quickly became targets for song writers once the United States' neutrality had ended. Until that point, these same song writers had avoided writing about the enemy for fear of helping to void that neutrality. Once the Americans entered the war, song writers started to write more confident lyrics lambasting the enemy and its leaders.

Lyricists employed two standard methods to show that defeat: lauding the power of the American military in comparison to the Germans and the Japanese and belittling the enemy in any way possible—including blatant racism. In disparaging the enemy, lyrics commonly employed a comedic or sarcastic element, or highlighted supposed shortcomings in the enemy. Historian John W Dower argued that the supposed shortcomings and the racist undertones found in World War II songs existed because the same language was used in all parts of American life.¹²⁴ In other words, popular songs mirrored the popular image of the Japanese rather than set the tone for that imagery. “We’re Gonna Have to Slap That Dirty Little Jap” and “We’re Going to

¹²³ “Heart-Throb Ballads Sell Strongly; More Pop Hits Current than Usual,” *Variety*, March 18, 1942, 43.

¹²⁴ John W Dower, *War Without Mercy: Race & Power in the Pacific War* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1986), pp. 9, 78, 81.

Find a Fellow Who is Yellow, and Beat Him Red, White and Blue,” and “You’re A Sap, Mr Jap,” were all of that ilk. Part of the success that they achieved during the first months of American involvement in the war should be put down to the recitation of such rhetoric.¹²⁵

“You’re a Sap, Mr Jap” was the first of these anti-Japanese songs to appear in best sellers lists, initially making it into the most played on jukeboxes list in late February 1942 where it stayed for a few weeks.¹²⁶ Despite this popularity with jukebox audiences, “You’re A Sap” never appeared on the best selling sheet music lists nor in the most promoted records lists for the NBC, CBS, Blue or Mutual radio networks.¹²⁷ “Goodbye Mama, I’m Off to Yokohama” actually debuted on the most played lists for jukeboxes prior to “You’re A Sap,” but it was not quite as caustic nor as virulent in its lyrics towards the enemy and so does not count as the first truly anti-Japanese song to be successful.¹²⁸

While the lyrics of some of the “enemy” songs were at times crude, and, by today’s standards, offensive, during the war years they helped cement the typical image of the enemy in the mind of the public. Popular images of the Japanese, in particular, portrayed the people—specifically the military, although the distinction between Japanese civilians and their military was far less obvious in American society than that of the German military and civilian populations—as a “dangerous foe,” one

¹²⁵ “We’re Gonna Have To Slap That Dirty Little Jap” words and music by Bob Miller, published by Bob Miller, 194. There is also a version by Carson Robison. Robison also wrote “Hirohito’s Letter to Hitler,” “Hitler’s Last Letter to Hirohito, Mussolini’s Letter to Hitler,” and “Hitler’s Reply to Mussolini” during World War II. “There’ll Be A Hot Time In The Town Of Berlin (When The Yanks Go Marching In),” written and composed by Joe Bushkin and John De Vries, published by Barton Music Corporation, 1943. “You’re A Sap, Mr Jap,” words and music by James Cavanaugh, John Redmond & Nat Simon, published by Mills Music Inc., 1941.

¹²⁶ 10 Best Sellers on Coin-Machines, *Variety*, February 25, 1942, 36.

¹²⁷ None of the anti-Japanese songs written about here ever appeared in the sheet music and most-promoted lists that *Variety* magazine printed each week.

¹²⁸ “Jukeboxes as Aid to War Effort,” *Variety*, February 4, 1942, 1. “Goodbye Mama” was more of a “I’m off to war, and I’ll be back soon” type of song, although it did include some racist language in its lyrics.

that was arrogant and untrustworthy.¹²⁹ Popular culture, including music, played on the stereotypes of facial features and other racial characteristics (at least as seen by Americans at the time). The War Production Board even approved an “advertisement published in 1943 that called for the extermination of the Japanese rats.”¹³⁰

Psychologically, for the war effort to be as effective as possible, the enemy needed to be portrayed as an evil entity that should be defeated at all costs. The lyrics of “enemy” songs gave expression to this idea in a popular culture medium and reinforced that “evil” imagery.¹³¹ The third verse of “We Did it Before and We Can Do it Again” utilised racism in this manner, enforcing this image of evil.

We did it before and we can do it again
And we will do it again
We'll take the “nip” out of Nipponese
And chase them back to their cherry trees
And we will do it again
Before we're thru with those little mice
They'll run and hide in a bowl of rice¹³²

Written and released at the start of American involvement it targeted the Japanese. At that juncture of the war, Japan was the main enemy for the United States. It was also far easier to stereotype the Japanese people—the Germans looked much like many Americans and there was a large German immigrant population in many Midwestern cities. “We Did it Before” did attack the Germans, but with a far greater degree of subtlety than that devoted to the Japanese:

We'll free the nations that had to kneel
And bow their heads to a Nazi heel
And we will do it again
We'll take the stooge with the jaw of glass

¹²⁹ John W Dower, *War Without Mercy: Race & Power in the Pacific War* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1986), p. 78.

¹³⁰ Blum, *V was for Victory*, 46.

¹³¹ Charles Steinberg argued that mass media or, popular culture in this sense, provides a pattern by which individuals can form part of the whole. In the sense here, portraying the enemy in a negative light in popular songs allows all individuals who listen to the song to be a part of the larger society and enables the individual to find conformity in their thought patterns. Charles S. Steinberg, *Mass Media and Communications* (New York: Hastings House, 1966), 4.

¹³² “We Did It Before and We Can Do It Again,” word and music by Cliff Friend and Charlie Tobias, published by M. Witmark & Sons, 1941.

And slap him over the Brenner Pass¹³³

“We’re Gonna Have to Slap That Dirty Little Jap,” “You’re A Sap Mr Jap” and “Goodbye Mama (I’m Off To Yokohama)” all also placed emphasis on the reputedly evil and dastardly Japanese soldiers and played on popular stereotypes to help create and reinforce the “evil enemy” imagery in the minds of the American public.¹³⁴ However, considering the camps that Japanese-Americans were being transported to, the lyrics of such a song not only reinforced stereotypes and images of the enemy, but potentially created even more negativity towards fellow American citizens. William Lewis addressed this matter in July 1942, when he advised song writers that more tact should be used in songs dealing with the enemy.¹³⁵ However, he did not expand upon his thinking, nor did he take the matter any further and no official proclamation or order was issued as a result.

With the consistency of this type of negative imagery in popular culture, it is likely that American troops and civilians alike picked up on the ideology in these songs. As historian John Morton Blum noted, in Hollywood depictions, the Japanese “usually tortured and mutilated their captives.”¹³⁶ Other historians have alluded to the same idea, particularly within cinematic portrayals of the Japanese. According to Thomas Doherty, “Americans dehumanised the Pacific enemy in three schizophrenic ways: he was a fearsome monster, a contemptible insect, and sometimes both at once. Separately or together, the projections promoted an impulse toward utter extermination.”¹³⁷ Popular music celebrated the same ideas as the rest of popular culture.

¹³³ *Ibid.*

¹³⁴ “Goodbye Mama (I’m Off To Yokohama),” words and music by J Fred Coots, published by Chappell & Co., 1941.

¹³⁵ “Tactless War Songs,” *Variety*, July 15, 1942, 3.

¹³⁶ Blum, *V was for Victory*, 47.

¹³⁷ Thomas Doherty, *Projections of War: Hollywood, American Culture and World War II*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993, p. 134.

The music business produced songs reflecting the public's opinion, whilst also helping to form the stereotypes and assumptions that led to the negative portrayal of the enemy being reflected. "The Japanese were, in the glib phrase of the day, hordes of a different colour."¹³⁸ These songs were thus both proactive and reactive simultaneously. With lyrics that echoed the feelings of revenge and retaliation that Americans harboured for the Japanese following the attack on Pearl Harbor, these "enemy" songs were embraced—in the case of "You're A Sap, Mr Jap" very successfully for a short while—as people found that their own feelings were not deviant or wrong and were being disseminated through one of the most popular and powerful media in society. The enemy constituted an obvious and necessary subject for all of popular culture during World War II, and songwriters took heed of the need to portray the enemy in defeat and in humourous subjugation.

Love Songs at War

Despite the occurrence of songs that focused on the war or the enemy and the ample calls for more of that type of song, there was sufficient room in the market for the traditional love song. Love songs comprised the majority of pop songs recorded and published during the war years, and it was love songs that enjoyed the most commercial success. Many of these songs used the war as their background, or even main theme. Accepting that the top three songs in *Lucky Strike Hit Parade* each week represented the most popular songs there are a total of one hundred and two songs to be examined for 1942 to 1945. It is possible to eliminate eighteen of these songs as being ambiguous in their theme or topic. Sixty-three of the remaining eighty-four included love themes in their lyrics. Those sixty-three songs represent a figure of seventy-five percent of the most popular songs in the nation during the war. Songs

¹³⁸ Ibid.

such as “Miss You” and “Somebody Else is Taking My Place” succeeded by using age-old themes but placed them in the context of the war. By contextualising and promoting love songs as war-themed love songs, the impact of the traditional love song increased, particularly in terms of how many people listened to them. War ballads sold in “substantial quantities” in early 1942 and the trend continued with romantic and sentimental songs remaining the most popular throughout the war.¹³⁹

In spite of their obvious popularity with the public, the OWI issued a statement in July 1942 requesting that songwriters publish fewer “boy-meets-girl” and romantic songs, in favour of an increase in war songs.¹⁴⁰ As has been noted, the OWI wanted to try and promote patriotism over slushy sentimentality in the hope that it would help the war effort. However, as *Variety* pointed out “there [was] no unanimity on how sad or how gay songs should be in war,” anyway, so the OWI’s suggestion may well have fallen on “deaf ears.”¹⁴¹ Certainly, songwriters continued to churn out love songs for the remainder of the war, regardless of any direction from the OWI, and a *Billboard* review of “A Boy in Khaki, A Girl in Lace” commented that this was exactly the kind of song the OWI did not wish to see published. However, with Tommy Dorsey, Kate Smith, Teddy Powell and Guy Lombardo all recording versions of the song, it also indicates how popular love songs with war themes proved to be.¹⁴²

The war-themed love song genre focused on the emotions, passion and devotion of love to suggest its messages to its audiences. The war-love song encapsulated the feelings of many people, almost seeming to mirror their own lives, giving the words more meaning and more power to better provide people with images and messages. In a 1942 letter, Edna Gladstone wrote to her soldier lover of exactly

¹³⁹ “Heart-Throb Ballads Sell Strongly; More Pop Hits Current than Usual,” *Variety*, March 18, 1942, 43; “Victories Help Song Sales,” *Variety*, June 10, 1942, 1.

¹⁴⁰ Abel Green, “First Steps Taken for Fighting Songs; Dreamy Stuff Doesn’t Fit Long War,” *Variety*, July 22, 1942, 1.

¹⁴¹ “Tactless War Songs,” *Variety*, July 15, 1942, 3.

¹⁴² “Record Buying Guide—Part 2,” *Billboard*, August 15, 1942, 66.

that power. She wrote, "There's music over the radio that's saying all I want to say to you for these songs of great love and passion seem to be made for us."¹⁴³ Her words indicated the special meaning that love songs held for men and women during World War II. Love songs fitted the moment perfectly and it was agreed that they were a necessary impetus to the morale of the American people.¹⁴⁴ The songs appeared to concern the listeners' very own lives, as the tunes and lyrics described situations of love and separation, passion and distance. These love songs were not, of course, written specifically for one couple or another, but were applicable to many thousands of people throughout the nation, giving them even more impact.

Early in the war songwriters established a common tactic of using lyrics in love songs to suggest to women that they should remain faithful, wait for their men and be there for them when they returned. Tin Pan Alley and the song publishers chose this route because of the success of such songs rather than at the behest of government or military sources. In fact, the OWI, as has been noted, bemoaned the idea of romantic love songs believing that such fare led to weakness amongst the troops. The song writers and publishers proved to be far more aware of what the public and the soldiers wanted.¹⁴⁵ "I'll Be Waiting Sweetheart Darling," "I'll Be Beside You" and "There's Somebody Waiting for Me," all carried the message to the thousands of new draftees that their girls would be there for them when they returned.¹⁴⁶ The "wait for them to come home" message in love songs suggested to all listening that the men serving in the forces should not have to worry about the fidelity of their lovers while they were gone. These lyrics were familiar plays on the "wait for

¹⁴³ Edna Gladstone to John Golan, October 18, 1942, as quoted in Judy Litoff and David C Smith, *Since You Went Away: World War II Letters from American Women on the Home Front*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 68.

¹⁴⁴ "War Songs Really Boy-Girl Songs?" *Variety*, July 22, 1942, 19.

¹⁴⁵ Costello, *Love, Sex and War*, 101.

¹⁴⁶ "There's Somebody Waiting For Me," words and music by Carrie Jacobs-Bond, published by The Boston Music Co., 1942.

me” theme common to love songs, but enjoyed the added appeal of wartime relevance.

Not only was the love song more applicable to more people than songs castigating the enemy or lauding the American hero, it also dominated the American music scene during the war years. Music fashions and tastes changed and adapted to a country at war, but the appeal of the love song increased. The increase in desire for, and popularity of, love songs mirrored the change in popular music which saw ballads increasingly take the place of instrumental and vocal swing tunes. As Marjorie Haselton, separated from her husband Richard, who was serving abroad, noted in 1944, “It’s no wonder swing is on the decline and ballads are in again. It’s the mood of the whole country with most of its lovers separated.”¹⁴⁷ Irving Berlin, upon his return home from England where he had been stationed with his “This is the Army” stage show, remarked on the desire for sentimentality in songs. Berlin noted that “The American GI is getting the war songs he wants—something sentimental about home and love and that he prefers this to the more martial tunes of the last war.”¹⁴⁸ Dr Walter H Rubsamen, professor of music at the University of California, agreed with Berlin, reiterating that martial tunes no longer appealed to Americans.¹⁴⁹

One of the reasons given for this move towards love songs was that songwriters could not sell war songs to the publishers.¹⁵⁰ Naturally conservative in their marketing of new songs, publishers did not want to record or promote any song without a love theme. Good songwriters were forced to pen love songs regardless of what they might otherwise have chosen to write in order to get songs published. The outbreak of war brought together the publishers, the songwriters and the public, as all three groups demanded love songs. Frank Loesser, the acclaimed song writer serving

¹⁴⁷ Marjorie Haselton to Richard Haselton, November 27, 1944, as quoted in Litoff and Smith, *Since You Went Away*, 107.

¹⁴⁸ “GIs Want Sentimental Numbers, Says Berlin; ‘Mairzy’ Floors Him,” *Variety*, March 8, 1944, 44.

¹⁴⁹ “Too Much Jazz in War Songs,” *Mansfield (OH) News Journal*, February 18, 1943, 12.

¹⁵⁰ “War Songs Really Boy-Girl Songs?” *Variety*, July 22, 1942, 19.

in the army, noted this difficulty and gave his opinion as to why there was such a demand for sentimental love songs. He stated that “If you want to sell a housewife Jell-O you don’t tell her: ‘Madam, it is highly probable that your son is coming home a basket case, or at least totally blind, but cheer up, tonight choose one of the six delicious flavours and be happy with America’s finest dessert.’”¹⁵¹ His point centred on the power of the advertising dollar in radio, but he noted the underlying point that no-one really wanted to hear the true horrors of war in popular songs, and that point could be applied to selling songs just as easily. The songs that made it on to the *Hit Parade* and other best sellers lists confirmed this move towards the love song. *Variety* magazine noted in January 1943, that barely any new songs entered the *Hit Parade* were not ballads or love songs.¹⁵² The fear of addressing the reality of the war within popular songs held publishers back from recording anything from songwriters other than classic, safe, love songs.

As a factor in the war effort, the love song had an important role to play. It made a good reason for fighting the war—the loved ones at home—more apparent. And, although publicly, patriotism and duty to country featured as two of the most important reasons for fighting, the desire to return home as quickly as possible featured far more heavily in love songs during the war than either of those two themes. The emotional ties of wartime couples were linked with victory in such songs. The end result of the association was an affirmation of the importance of both victory to love and love to victory. An example of this emotive power could be found in Dinah Shore’s version of “You’d Be So Nice To Come Home To.”¹⁵³ The lyrics

¹⁵¹ John Costello, *Virtue Under Fire: How World War II Changed our Social and Sexual Attitudes* (New York: Fromm International Publishing Corporation, 1987), 121. Costello quotes Loesser from an interview quoted in Richard R. Lingeman’s *Don’t You Know There’s a War On? The American Home Front, 1941–1945* (New York, 1970), 212.

¹⁵² Mark Warnow, “What Makes The Hit Parade?” *Variety*, January 6, 1943, 186.

¹⁵³ “You’d Be So Nice To Come Home To,” written and composed by Cole Porter, published by Chappell & Co., 1942 and featured in the Columbia film, *Something to Shout About*.

were simple, and had little to do with the war, but they encapsulated the essential feelings of wartime love and romance:

You'd be so nice to come to
You'd be so nice by the fire
While the Breeze, on high, sang a lullaby
You'd be all that I could desire.
Under stars, chilled by winter
Under an August moon, burning above
You'd be so nice, you'd be paradise
To come home to and love.

Shore sang of the power of love to hold people together and bring them back to each other once more. Such lyrics reminded people what love in wartime should mean, and stated what waited at home for those fighting abroad.¹⁵⁴

Despite the protestations that war songs were not being written, they were, but they had a less overt war theme than perhaps those seeking that song believed necessary. The first half of 1942, for example, found love songs such as “I Don’t Want to Walk Without You,” “Somebody Else is Taking My Place,” and “Don’t Sit Under the Apple Tree,” in the hit charts. All three of these contained lyrics with a fairly direct link to the war and the conduct of couple within that environment.

Such songs acted as a substitute for the closeness that people lacked as a result of war-created separation; the words offered comfort in difficult times. The lyrics showed people that there were others going through the same emotions, thus emphasising a commonality of experience. The emotional release came from the shared experience of listening to songs. The shared experience did not substitute for togetherness, nor replace the happiness of seeing a loved one safe and sound, but the popular song was a “comfort blanket” to hold at bay the loneliness of war. As scholar Charles Steinberg noted, “Through communication, man avoids the frustrating loneliness of isolation and finds a way of satisfying his needs and wants.

¹⁵⁴ The spectre of infidelity hung over many wartime romances and shall be dealt with in more detail later, but the message of what it meant to be in love, found echoes in many other love songs, possibly as a proactive measure against infidelity—or at the very least as an attempt to discourage it. “On the Records,” *Billboard*, November 21, 1942, 61; “Record Buying,” *Billboard*, March 6, 1943, 62.

Communication is a social process. Communications ‘pattern’ the environment for the individual.”¹⁵⁵ In other words, taking music as the communication, songs satisfy individuals by bringing them together and creating a social process. Songs “help to relate group behaviour to the environment,” creating a set of rules that allow people to interact with each other and understand what is happening.¹⁵⁶ More specifically, “the big-band vocalists gave [the men] what must have been painfully powerful memories of lost love.”¹⁵⁷

Despite the distances and circumstances separating couples, love songs popular with one partner, were, more often than not, popular with the other as well. The *New York Times* noted the common link between separated couples in terms of their music choices in an article published in October 1942, stating that “Music, soft and sweet is Army’s choice on air.”¹⁵⁸ According to a survey quoted by the newspaper on the popularity of radio programmes in Army camps, the War Department commented that soldiers favoured “soft and sweet”—read, love—songs. Damon Runyon a nationally syndicated columnist had written much the same thing a couple of months earlier. Not privy to the War Department report he had still noted that “the same songs that are popular with civilians are popular with the armed forces and that these songs have always been ‘mush.’”¹⁵⁹

Sometimes, that popularity may have been delayed as new songs took longer to reach the men at the front line, but when they did, songs popular on the home front found the same reaction amongst the men stationed abroad. Jackie Heller, a former bandleader and vocalist who toured American bases around the world, confirmed that it did not appear to matter that the GIs had no idea what songs were top of the best sellers lists at home (although some were certainly privy to this information through

¹⁵⁵ Steinberg, *Mass Media*, 4.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 4.

¹⁵⁷ Kenney, *Recorded Music*, 199.

¹⁵⁸ “Music Soft and Sweet is Army’s Choice on Air,” *New York Times*, October 5, 1942.

¹⁵⁹ Damon Runyon, “The Brighter Side,” *Lowell (MA) Sun*, August 6, 1942, 59.

magazines sent to them from home), they still consistently chose the same tunes that their loved ones were singing thousands of miles away in the United States.¹⁶⁰

Women and men such as Marjorie and Richard Haselton epitomised the effect music could have on separated lovers. In 1945, Marjorie Haselton wrote to her husband saying, "My Darling, I'm listening to the radio and I have a feeling that somewhere, right now, you are listening, too. Bing [Crosby] is talking to our hearts, as only he can do. . . . Since you've been away, my greatest comfort has been in hearing and singing the songs we've loved."¹⁶¹ She believed that the songs that they had listened to together, before they were separated, were the bonds that kept them together during their enforced parting. New songs meant less to this couple (and by extension, many others) as their shared memories came from before the war separated them.

The tongue-in-cheek "Paper Doll," recorded by the Mills Brothers in 1942, was one of the most successful songs of the war, perhaps capitalising on the cynicism of young men in uniform towards the faithfulness (or lack thereof) of their partners.¹⁶² It also benefited from controversy that developed due to its occasionally misinterpreted lyrics. Ranked as the number one war song of 1943, by *Variety* magazine, "Paper Doll" eventually sold in excess of six million records after initially spending twelve weeks at the top of the charts.¹⁶³ The song enjoyed an equally successful 1944, and continued its dramatic success through 1945.¹⁶⁴ The words painted a picture of a soldier more content with his imaginary relationship with a pin-

¹⁶⁰ "Service Jacks Might Prove Giant Killers," *Down Beat*, November 15, 1944, 2.

¹⁶¹ Marjorie Haselton to Richard Haselton, September 24, 1944, as quoted in Litoff and Smith, *Since You Went Away*, 106.

¹⁶² "Paper Doll," words and music by Johnny S. Black, published by Edward B. Marks Music Corporation, 1915, 1941. The song was originally written in 1915 but did not achieve much, if any, success. The Mills Brothers however, enjoyed massive success with on its re-release in 1941.

¹⁶³ Abel Green, "Music Biz Also Rode Wartime Prosperity Crest—800,000 to 1,000,000 Sheet-Sellers," *Variety*, January 5, 1944, 189. Sales figures from

<http://www.singers.com/jazz/vintage/millsbrothers.html>, as accessed October 1, 2005.

¹⁶⁴ "Top Tunes of 1944," *Variety*, January 3, 1945, 135.

up than conducting an illicit relationship as did many of his fellow soldiers. The one-night affairs, and the perceived faithlessness of their women at home (as confirmed by the “loose” women, soldiers were having the affairs with), combined with the words of “Paper Doll” resonated with young men in uniform. After all, the reality of the song was evident for many of them, from either side of strained relationships.

The song’s potential realism caused concern amongst social commentators, distressed citizens and broadcast institutions. American radio broadcasters had their doubts about the suitability of the song, but none went as far as the BBC; which banned it altogether for a time, because of the corporation’s belief that the song was unhealthy to morale.¹⁶⁵ The song’s publishers cabled the BBC lamenting the decision and stating that it was harmless fun and that the song enjoyed popularity with the troops in any case.¹⁶⁶

The first two verses of “Paper Doll” epitomised the willingness of many soldiers to accept the fickle nature of romance in a very pragmatic way.

I’m gonna buy a Paper Doll that I can call my own
A doll that other fellas cannot steal
And then the flirty, flirty guys with their flirty, flirty eyes
Will have to flirt with dollies that are real.

When I come home at night she will be waiting
She’ll be the truest doll in all this world
I’d rather have a Paper Doll to call my own
Than a fickle-minded real live girl.¹⁶⁷

The paper doll of the song was a perfect woman for the soldier because there was no possibility she would cheat on him, nor did he have to chase her or pamper to her whims. When considered in relation to a soldier’s uncertain life, the awkwardness of being a foreigner in a strange country with either enemy women or with different

¹⁶⁵ “Donna E Mobile,” *Pittsburgh P Q*, December 23, 1943.

¹⁶⁶ Cable from Edward B Marks Music Corporation to BBC, October 19, 1943, BBC WAC, R19/941/3, Entertainment, Popular Music Policy.

¹⁶⁷ “Paper Doll,” words and music by Johnny S. Black, published by Edward B. Marks Music Corporation, 1915.

social customs, the paper doll of the song indicated stability and faithfulness, and thus had more appeal in many ways than a real live woman.

These infidelity-themed songs (and other less overt songs) contained lyrics that helped remind both men and women of their obligation (although not just in terms of fidelity) to each other. Such lyrics also concerned obligations outside that of fidelity. Although keeping a relationship connection was not obligated by law, etiquette, responsibility and society all encouraged men and women to retain bonds from before the conflict. As such, some songs dealt with those issues, including, “Just A Letter From Home,” “Dear Mom,” “Soldier, Let Me Read Your Letter” and “I Wish That I Could Hide Inside This Letter.”¹⁶⁸ All four addressed the idea of staying in touch with a loved one through letters—thus maintaining that bond. Generally, these songs asked women in the United States to write more letters to their partners (or sons) so that the men’s morale would be kept high. However, on occasion (“Dear Mom” for example) the songs reminded soldiers to write home as well.

Sadness at the distance and separation was a common emotion to many millions of people, but joy and happiness played a large role in people’s lives as well. The happiness experiences often centred on the return of loved ones from the war. Many songs used the joy of returning to lovers’ arms as a central tenet of their message. Throughout the duration of the war, songs such as “I’ll Be Back In A Year Little Darlin’,” “There’s Somebody Waiting For Me,” “Wait For Me, Mary,” “When My Boy Comes Home,” “My Guy’s Come Back,” and “Just A Blue Serge Suit,” all referred to the return of men from the front lines.¹⁶⁹ However, as the war drew

¹⁶⁸ “Just a Letter from Home,” words and music by Harry Tobias. “Dear Mom,” words and music by Maury Coleman Harris, 1941. Glenn Miller’s band performed “Soldier Let Me Read Your Letter” for Victor Records. “I Wish That I Could Hide Inside This Letter,” words and music by Nat Simon.

¹⁶⁹ “I’ll Be Back In A Year Little Darlin’,” words and music by Ben Shelhamer Jr., Claude Heritier and Russ Hull, published by Bell Music Co., 1941; “There’s Somebody Waiting For Me,” words and music by Carrie Jacobs-Bond, published by The Boston Music Co., 1942; “Wait For Me, Mary,” words and music by Charlie Tobias, Harry Tobias and Nat Simon, published by Remick Music Corporation, 1942; “When My Boy Comes Home,” music and words by Albert Hay Malotte, published by G Schirmer Inc.,

towards a conclusion, the number of this type of song increased dramatically. At the start of the war, songs had looked to the return of the soldiers because many people thought that the war would not last more than another year or so. Thus, 1942 included the publication of many of the “happy return” songs as well. The middle years of the war, led to the publication of songs with “happy return” themes, but in a more wistful vein, than the earlier or later songs. With popular music more often reflecting popular opinion and emotion, rather than setting it, this list of songs indicated the breadth of that joy at the possibility of men returning home. No matter the actual state of the conflict, the progression of the war did not appear to matter to many songwriters. “Coming home” songs made it to publication in every year of American involvement. In 1943, for example, George Herz and Bob Osbourne wrote and published “When I Come Home Again.”¹⁷⁰

“Goodnight, Wherever You Are” contained lyrics that attempted to show couples that while distance may separate them, they were only as far apart as they let themselves be. The lyrics offered reassurance by reminding the listener, “Goodnight, wherever you are, I’ll be with you, dear, no matter how near or far.”¹⁷¹ Similarly, (and remarkably similarly titled) “Wherever You Are” reminded couples, “Darling no matter where you are/This is the moment every night set aside/As ours to share.”¹⁷² The lyrics emphasised that they were not that far apart after all. Whereas lines from “Be Brave, Beloved,” for example, tried to show that duty called and couples had to be strong through the coming separation, and that it wouldn’t actually seem that long in the end anyway:

1944; “My Guy’s Come Back,” words and music by Mel Powell, published by Peter Maurice, Inc., 1945; “Just A Blue Serge Suit,” words and music by Irving Berlin, published by Irving Berlin Music Co., 1945.

¹⁷⁰ “When I Come Home Again,” words and music by George Herz and Bob Osbourne, published 1943.

¹⁷¹ “Goodnight, Wherever You Are,” words and music by Dick Robertson, Al Hoffman and Frank Weldon, published by Shapiro, Bernstein & Co., Inc., 1944. This song was featured by prominent musicians and singers such as Vera Lynn and Glenn Miller’s Orchestra.

¹⁷² “Goodnight, Wherever You Are,” words and music by Dick Robertson, Al Hoffman and Frank Weldon, published by Shapiro, Bernstein & Co., Inc., 1944.

I hear the bugles of freedom blow,
And you must go to join the ranks of marching men,
But there will come a Spring,
When the birds will sing and we'll be together again.¹⁷³

This song and others like it linked the duty of the men off fighting and the duty of the women at home. By listening to such lyrics, the soldiers might alleviate their fear of losing their partner to another man, while women at home could feel a sense of place and position in relation to the men off fighting. Major Mario Prevosti (Ret.) reiterated the importance of songs that contained messages about the war and conduct of people.¹⁷⁴ He wrote “I do feel that the music and songs of that era [were] especially comforting to military personnel far away from home, their wives, and family and friends.”¹⁷⁵ He saw that music had a positive effect on fighting men who were so far removed from the comforts and normality of home; in many cases because of the information those songs contained. As British songstress Vera Lynn noted, war-love songs “expressed the things that ordinary people parted by war needed to say to each other, but did not find it easy to express.”¹⁷⁶

Songs do Their Duty

Not satisfied simply with addressing the war abroad, American songwriters also directed their urging or advice, towards the home front. With duty—in all its guises—in mind, songs commanded people to drive the production of the country onwards, or promoted patriotic behaviour that would stand the war effort in good stead. This general theme shall be termed, “duty.” Duty songs are categorised here as

¹⁷³ “Be Brave Beloved,” words by Hy Zaret, music by Arthur Altman, published by Leeds Music Corporation, 1942.

¹⁷⁴ Major Mario Prevosti, USAF, was a decorated WWII fighter pilot. He received the Distinguished Flying Cross in World War II and saw action in the European Theatre of Operations. www.aviatorspost.org/Marioprevostiprofile.htm, as accessed February 27, 2010; *Staten Island News* (online), www.silive.com/obituaries/advance/index.ssf?/base/news/1234185357189940.xml&coll=1, as accessed February 27, 2010.

¹⁷⁵ Mario Prevosti to Author, April 21, 2003.

¹⁷⁶ Costello, *Love, Sex and War*, 102.

those not fitting into the “war” and “love” themes, but instead are concerned with the American Dream, patriotism, and responsibility. Such songs included Irving Berlin’s “Any Bonds Today,” which encouraged people to help the cause by buying War Bonds and thus help cover war costs. In late 1941 “Any Bonds Today” was even made into the official theme tune of the National Defence Savings Programme.¹⁷⁷

Another was, “Keep ‘Em Flying,” which attempted to motivate munitions factory staff towards increasing production.¹⁷⁸

With “Any Bonds Today,” Berlin tried to galvanise people into showing their allegiance to the United States. Using language designed to stimulate the public he questioned their current devotion to the cause and demanded they do as much as they could:

Any bonds today?
Bonds of freedom, that’s what I’m sellin’
Any bonds today?
Scrape up the most you can
Here comes the freedom man
Askin’ you to buy a share of freedom today!

We’ll be blessed if we all invest in the USA
Sammy! My Uncle Sammy!
Here comes the freedom man
Can’t make tomorrow’s plan
Not unless you buy a share of freedom today!¹⁷⁹

The War Department commissioned this song from Irving Berlin directly. Berlin, only too happy to help the war effort, wrote what proved to be one of his more popular songs of the war in response to the request. As a blatantly promotional tune in favour of the government’s war drives, Berlin’s song benefited from its close ties to the war effort, as the official song of that programme. Music critics believed it would be a big

¹⁷⁷ “Any Bonds Today,” written and composed by Irving Berlin, published by the American National Red Cross, 1941.

¹⁷⁸ “Keep ‘Em Flying,” words and music by Bill Coleman, published by Broadcast Music, Inc., 1941.

¹⁷⁹ “Any Bonds Today,” written and composed by Irving Berlin, published by the American National Red Cross, 1941.

hit because of the public's awareness of its duty to buy War Bonds. Reviewed in *Down Beat* when it was first recorded, the magazine claimed that:

With the United States at war and with the unlimited cooperation of every American an absolute must, this song should be on every machine from Maine to California. Best version by far is the Jimmy Dorsey Decca on which Helen O'Connell and Bob Eberly sing. Same record, reverse side, has the Andrews Sisters turning in a grand job on the same song. Put both sides in your machines and watch 'em draw nickels.¹⁸⁰

By February 1942 the song had reached number three in the list of most popular records on juke boxes.¹⁸¹ Berlin's was not the only song to address the purchasing of War Bonds. "Buy A Bond Today" and "Buy War Bonds"¹⁸² attempted to produce the same result as Berlin's song—albeit for later War Bond drives. However, with his fame, Irving Berlin's version achieved by far the most success.

Some lyrics portrayed the American Dream in an effort to bring the pride in one's nation necessary to vanquish one's enemies to the forefront of civic responsibility. Other songs referred to images of the United States steeped in folklore. Songs such as "This is Worth Fighting For" used the imagery of a beautiful United States to drive home the message about why the country was at war.¹⁸³ Jimmy Dorsey and his orchestra featured the song, thus increasing its audience and included lyrics that reminded people what the war meant to many Americans:

Didn't I build that cabin?
Didn't I plant that corn?
Didn't my folks before me
Fight for this country before I was born?
I gathered my loved ones around me
And I gazed at each face I adore
Then I heard that voice within me thunder
This is worth fighting for.¹⁸⁴

¹⁸⁰ *Down Beat*, January 1, 1942.

¹⁸¹ Most Popular Records in the Coin Machines, *Down Beat*, February 1, 1942, 15.

¹⁸² "Buy A Bond Today," words and music by Hal Block, published by Paramount Music Corporation, 1944; "Buy War Bonds," words and music by Henry Dellafield, published by The Bach Music Co., 1943.

¹⁸³ "This Is Worth Fighting For," lyrics and music by Edgar De Lange and Sam H Stept, published by Harms Inc., 1942.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

He used extremely powerful symbols of the United States. The lyrics focused on both the physical nature of the countryside, and the emotional attachment that Americans had with the nation, across many generations. The lyrics depicted the historical nature of this attachment and tried to reinforce that idea.

The words that were sung so carefully by famous singers had an appeal because they voiced the feelings, hopes, desires and fears of people at war. These songs were not produced to take people's minds away from the war, as the up-tempo jazz and swing records were. They were not for playing at dances and parties, but at home, in stores and the barracks. The tunes that consoled loved ones separated by thousands of miles, or boosted the pride in one's country, or told of heroics in foreign fields were used to bond people to the war, not separate them by casting their minds to other pleasures. The linking of people to the war made available ideas that might not otherwise have been fed to the public, conveying messages—sometimes of great import—in a medium that was acceptable to all walks of life. These songs were listened to by men and women from different classes, backgrounds, races and education. Because of the everyday nature of the songs and the words, the ideas—anti-enemy, evil of the enemy, strength and righteousness of the Allies—were more acceptable, and indeed, accepted. The real importance of song lyrics was that they combined the familiarity and acceptance of popular music with messages concerning the run of emotions, duties, and ideas that were essential to the war effort. The impact of this on the war effort was to stimulate the men and women who heard the songs into corresponding actions. People were swamped with the messages that these songs carried. They could not avoid the requests, the admonitions, and the statements of good citizenship that these songs carried in them. Thus, although the popular song lyrics may not have directly influenced people, the incessant clamour of songwriters

to inform the public of the “proper” way to do things eventually seeped through into the public conscience.

Conclusion

Overall, the lyrics of popular songs addressed war issues in a conservative fashion. Most popular songs during the war skirted controversial topics, content instead to offer platitudes and messages consistent with government propaganda—certainly none spoke against the war effort. Songs offered the listener basic values about the enemy, about how to do one’s duty for the war effort and about how the armed forces would eventually bring about victory for the Allies, all of which constituted basic tenets of wartime propaganda.¹⁸⁵ Songs that dealt directly with the war provided simple thoughts and suggestions that offended few and fit into mainstream, conservative ideals and ideas about the war. The war stifled popular music, and forced it to look backwards in terms of style and sound because of people’s need for reminders of good times before the war.¹⁸⁶ Radical changes in style and sound were avoided for fear of them not being accepted by the listening public.

Each sub-genre of popular music moved in synchronicity with the war, content to reflect popular opinion and government messages as opposed to attempting to shape them. Each sub-genre, while appearing to address a particular aspect of the war, actually reflected the pre-war sub-genres as opposed to setting new styles and sounds for the future. This synchronicity and reflection meant that popular songs could not separate themselves from the conduct of the war; they needed the war to provide subject matter and relevance. However, much of the war-related subject matter and

¹⁸⁵ Jordan Braverman, *To Hasten the Homecoming: How Americans Fought World War II Through the Media* (Lanham, NY: Madison Books, 1996), 54.

¹⁸⁶ Scott Yanow argues convincingly that “World War II did its part to kill off the big bands.” Yanow, *Swing*, 305–306. In effect, the circumstances of the war (and the unhelpful timing of the AFM strike) helped stagnate new music and reinforced the perceived desire for “old” songs because that was all that was available.

relevance ended up under the guise of love songs, shaped in their outlook in order to feature the war and tie in to public sentiment. Occasionally, when appropriate, songwriters took up government or military causes, writing their songs to feature the messages that emanated from those institutions.

Once the United States had entered the war, songwriters never challenged government messages, always content to show a united front. When events occurred in the war and song writers chose to write about those events, the writers reflected the war; they wrote in synchronicity with what happened, not in juxtaposition to those events. The vast majority of World War II songs reflected the war as opposed to attempting to set any kind of agenda for the conduct of the war. In other words, the writers, publishers and band leaders followed rather than led, and, typically, with good reason.

Historians have addressed the lyrics of popular songs during World War II in a sporadic fashion. The topic has not proven popular itself for much of the time between the end of the war and this thesis; however, two writers in particular have sought to redress that balance in the past five years. Kathleen Smith and John Bush Jones paid some attention to the actual lyrics in their works, *God Bless America: Tin Pan Alley Goes to War*, and *The Songs that Fought the War: Popular Music and the Home Front, 1939–1945*, respectively. Neither of these books addressed songs, their lyrics, and their role in World War II society in the same manner as is attempted in this thesis. Smith used popular songs as part of her more general study of Tin Pan Alley's position during the conflict. Her analysis of the lyrics themselves is as a part of the larger narrative, and not the main focus of her work. Furthermore, Smith does not proffer a thesis regarding the impact of songs and their lyrics as is shown here. John Bush Jones's book is intimately concerned with songs and their lyrics, but he

addresses each more from a musicological standpoint as opposed to a cultural and social phenomenon as is attempted here.¹⁸⁷

These two books provide the most in-depth analysis of popular song lyrics from World War II from the past sixty years. Both authors offered a short depiction of the search for a war song and also of the discussion of what truly constituted a war song, and Jones's analysis of that search provided some perspective for the discussion of that same phenomenon in this thesis. Part of Jones's depiction of the search for a war song addressed the wartime idea that a war song may never be found. He argued that the ideas on this topic at the time were incorrect; instead suggesting that cultural and social pluralism can be accepted as the main reason for the lack of a single, overwhelmingly popular war song from World War II.¹⁸⁸ Part of his argument—that individualism had taken hold in the United States, and that World War II was a far more personal conflict than World War I—has some merit, but at the same time he downplays the significance of the specific changes to society, both civilian and military, that had occurred between the two wars. Those changes, in particular the move away from enjoyment of popular music in large groups, and the change to a fully mechanized military, carried far more weight in the endless search for a war song than Jones gives them credit for, as has been shown in this chapter.

In general, American popular songs and their lyrics played an important role in both military and civilian populations in the United States throughout World War II. The songs provided respite, relief and hope, whilst at the same time they supported those fighting and working for the war effort, encouraged belief in the ability of the Allies to win and demanded the success that everyone wanted. By sticking to a time-tested formula for writing successful songs and integrating the war and war themes

¹⁸⁷ Kathleen Smith, *God Bless America: Tin Pan Alley Goes to War* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 2003); John Bush Jones, *The Songs that Fought the War: Popular Music and the Home Front, 1939–1945* (Waltham, MA: Brandeis University Press, 2006).

¹⁸⁸ Jones, *Songs that Fought the War*, 16–18.

into such songs, American popular songwriters helped the war effort without hurting the popular music industry. As the endless search for the war song of World War II showed, the American public did not care for overt war-themed songs, but took rapidly to those that wove the theme into their standard lyrics. Yet, day after day, month after month, songwriters strove to find that illusive war song, and that search, the songwriters desires to help the war effort with little dissention, the industry's need to address consumers' desires, and the effects of the war made World War II the most important and relevant period for popular music in aid of a country's morale in modern history.

Chapter 2

The American Popular Music Industry during World War II

By the time American forces entered World War II, a dynamic and large industry existed, to create, supply and play the music enjoyed by American citizens and soldiers throughout the world. On the home front, the market for the American music industry remained, where it had been before the war, large and steady, and even enjoyed a “wartime boom.”¹ “War workers at play and soldiers and sailors on leave” sought out popular music, with music acting as one of the most important diversions from wartime life available.² For the purposes of this discussion of the American popular music industry, the industry consisted of radio, nightclubs, theatres—both movie and stage—restaurants and hotels, gramophone records, jukeboxes and sheet music. The intention of this chapter is to analyse the position of the music industry in relation to the war and how the war, in turn, affected the popular music industry. By considering each of the various parts of the industry, the general place of that industry within the wartime community and society of the United States can be determined. The large audience, that continued to exist in spite of the war, means that the music industry’s relationship to the war can be fully examined, and thus consider what effects, if any, the war had on that industry and vice versa.³

The history of radio during the war has been discussed by historians in varying detail over the course of the past sixty-five years. The majority of such works take a

¹ “Is There a Musicians’ Shortage?” *New York Times*, July 4, 1943, Music section.

² *Ibid.*

³ The heavy reliance in this chapter on the music industry trade papers, *Variety*, *Billboard*, and *Down Beat* points to the fact that these three publications covered the music industry in a manner that no other contemporary source was able to do. Their bias was, naturally, to the music and entertainment business, but they are invaluable in providing data and information about the music industry during the war years.

broad look at radio in all its forms, covering the entirety of the radio business, from news programmes to dramas, children's shows and music. Such examinations must, necessarily, pass over the specific impact of radio on music within the war environment (and vice versa). They focus on radio as a larger subject rather than the role that radio played in the impact of music during World War II. Each of the existing books considered as secondary source material for this section on radio provided background and context for radio's use of music at the time.⁴

Sheet music, coming to the end of its dominance in the public's consumption of popular music during World War II has not been covered in great detail, either. John Bush Jones examined sheet music from a musicological standpoint in his work, *The Songs That Fought the War*. He discussed a far greater number of individual pieces of sheet music, but he did not delve into the effect that the war had on sheet music. The effect of the war on civilian musicians discussed here, fills a gap in the extant literature by addressing the challenges presented to them by the war, in particular the effect of the draft on bands and musicians. Much the same considerations in the section on the live music scene are also new to this work, particularly in light of the evidence provided in light of the reduction in overall quality of bands, the shortage of available civilian musicians, the restrictions that bands dealt with, and the continued success of the very best bands in spite of all the hardships caused by the war.

⁴ For discussions of radio during the war, see for example, J. Fred MacDonald, *Don't Touch That Dial: Radio Programming in American Life from 1920 to 1960* (Chicago: Nelson Hall, 1979); Susan J Douglas, *Listening In: Radio and the American Imagination from Amos 'n' Andy and Edward R. Murrow to Wolfman Jack and Howard Stern* (New York: Times Books, 1999); Michele Hilmes, *Radio Voice: American Broadcasting, 1922-1952* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997); Christopher H. Sterling and John M. Kittross, *Stay Tuned: A Concise History of American Broadcasting*, 2nd Ed. (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing Co., 1990); Erik Barnouw, *The Golden Web: A History of Broadcasting in the United States, 1933-1953* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968); Paul F Lazarsfeld, *The People Look at Radio* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1946) and Lazarsfeld, *Radio and the Printed Page* (New York: James A McCann Co., 1950).

During World War II, the music industry benefited from a considerable entertainment boom allied with music's naturally broad audience. As a result of the 17 million new jobs created during the war the American public enjoyed increased prosperity but often lacked ways to dispose of the money.⁵ Rationing, travel restrictions and patriotic/societal concerns all created difficulties in spending war-industry-generated incomes on entertainment opportunities, but "Full employment and prosperity . . . permitted Americans . . . to begin to buy many of the necessities and some of the comforts that they had been unable to afford for so long."⁶ With such prosperity (and in spite of the difficulties in spending new-found money), a broad—and specifically a young and prosperous—audience for music existed almost from the very start of the war. Speaking on the subject of the home front's propensity towards listening to the radio, for instance, CBS vice-president Frank N Stanton alluded to the "sobering influence of war, plus [the] increasing inconvenience of enjoying other forms of entertainment," as playing a significant role in the large wartime radio (and popular music) audience.⁷

As an indication of the size of the home front market and the industry that supplied it, Americans purchased more than one hundred million gramophone records in 1941, and by 1942 they owned more than fifty million radio sets.⁸ The potential influence and power within the grasp of the music industry as a result of so many people receiving its product was even larger than that number, and popular music and radio wielded an almost unrealised, but definite effect on society, specifically on its

⁵ Blum, *V was for Victory*, 90. Blum also wrote of the almost immediate and definitive increase in prosperity and the eradication of depression-era conditions as a result of the massive influx of money and jobs provided by war contracts (90–91).

⁶ *Ibid.*, 91.

⁷ Frank N. Stanton, "Impact of War on Radio Listening Less Severe than Feared—Stanton," *Variety*, July 19, 1944, 24.

⁸ *Variety*, January 7, 1942, 158.

values and beliefs.⁹ Yet as much influence as the music industry could wield at the start of World War II, it was still at the whim of the impact of that war on all of American society.

As with every other front in the war, the American home front stood in its own unique environment. So far, geographically, from the fighting, but still impacted in myriad ways, the home front resembled more a section of no-man's land than an active fighting arena—intimate with the war, and yet, somehow uninvolved. For the entertainment world the home front offered many opportunities. Once early fears of enemy attack passed, immediate and direct danger moved away from the mainland. With fear of bombing or invasion gone, entertainment if available—at a local dance, the movie theatres or listening to a travelling big band, for instance—was a relatively safe leisure-time opportunity. Certainly, listening to the radio provided little danger—the lack of enemy threat on mainland United States being so distinctly different to that within the United Kingdom, staying at home came with no inherent dangers proffered by the bombs so often falling on the British Isles. It was also usually easy to take advantage of the available entertainment opportunities. In spite of gasoline and rubber rationing and the consequent travel restrictions, famous civilian dance bands still played (when and where they could) and local and regional bands filled any void from name bands reducing their travel and performances.¹⁰ Furthermore, in areas with concentrations of troops, military dance bands often performed off-base for civilian (as well as troop) entertainment, thus helping reduce the impact of the restrictions.

In order to treat the popular music industry during wartime most fully, the industry shall be split so that each section can be considered independently (as far as possible). Radio, sheet music, live performances and the performers themselves make

⁹ Jordan Braverman, *To Hasten the Homecoming: How Americans Fought World War II Through the Media* (Lanham, NY: Madison Books, 1996), xx.

¹⁰ The Office of Price Administration introduced compulsory gasoline and rubber (car tires) rationing in the spring of 1942. "First Leader to Feel Rubber Shortage," *Down Beat*, February 1, 1942.

up the elements of the music industry discussed here. The songs themselves are not discussed in this chapter as they warrant their own separate examination, at which time Tin Pan Alley is covered as well. The recorded music industry, so central to the post-war music industry (up until the twenty-first century) largely came to a halt from 1942 to 1944 (in terms of new music) as a result of the American Federation of Musicians strike, and thus is not discussed in any great detail in this chapter, as it has been extensively covered by other scholars within their own larger works. The interaction between the war and the music industry occurred in both directions, but the relationship skewed heavily in the direction of the war's effect on the music business. As such, this chapter shall examine each section of the music industry in order to show the importance of the wartime music industry through its interaction and relationship with the war in all its facets.

Multiple venues, through multiple media, provided opportunities for almost every single American citizen to hear popular music. A trip to the ice-cream parlour or soda-fountain could mean that a person heard recorded music available through the jukeboxes that could be found in almost every such establishment. If, instead, people remained at home, those fifty million radio sets allowed those people to tune into music programmes at almost any hour of the day or night. Furthermore, some homes enjoyed the sounds of pianos or other instruments as sheet music continued to remain popular throughout the war, although on a far smaller scale than had been true before the war.¹¹ No matter where a person lived, nor what time of the day it was, if so desired, they could listen to music in one form or another.

Radio networks provided programmes filled with popular music. Advertisers jumped at the possibilities and benefits of being associated with the music on those shows. Live performances of music could be found at venues across the country from

¹¹ Sheet music experienced a ten-year high in sales. Blum, *V was for Victory*, 96.

the grandest ballrooms in Los Angeles, Chicago and New York, to the smallest barn dances in rural Iowa, the Dakotas and Kentucky. Recorded music, although stultified by the American Federation of Musicians strike, still played an important role in the enjoyment of music. Radio stations, jukeboxes and personal gramophone players all continued to play the melodies of famous bands in spite of AFM boss James Petrillo's order to cease recording. Sheet music—with the benefit of hindsight, enjoying a final heyday—scored numerous million-copy hits as people played and sang the popular songs of the war at home. And, providing the key element to make songs into hits, or the members of the band for the dance, or the impetus to listen at all, were the performers themselves.

Radio's Role in Wartime

Radio was the primary source of most Americans' popular music during World War II. At the start of 1941 radio laid claims to being "the most widespread form of leisure time attraction,"¹² in the country, and approximately ninety percent of homes had at least one radio set, with radio listening as a pastime increasing sharply.¹³ Alistair Cooke, the famous British journalist who broadcast to England about the United States, called radio the "inseparable daily drug" for Americans.¹⁴ Indeed, by 1942, the four main radio companies—Columbia Broadcasting System, National Broadcasting Company (with its two networks, Blue and Red), and Mutual—and their programming, represented a "tremendous factor . . . in the everyday leisure time of the American people."¹⁵ Forty-six percent of Americans listened to the radio for at least

¹² Sherwood Gates, "Radio in Relation to Recreation and Culture," *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* (January 1941): 9; Paul F. Peter, "The American Listener in 1940," *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, January 1941: 1; "87% of Nation has Radios," *Variety*, March 11, 1942, 35.

¹³ John W. Jeffries, *Wartime America: The World War II Home Front* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 1996), 189.

¹⁴ Alistair Cooke, *The American Home Front, 1941–1942* (New York: Grove Press, 2006), 16.

¹⁵ Sherwood Gates, "Radio in Relation to Recreation and Culture," *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* (January 1941): 9; Paul F. Peter, "The American Listener in

thirty minutes during the daytime and after six o'clock in the evening that figure rose to seventy-five percent of Americans.¹⁶ And in 1942, the four major networks of CBS, NBC, Blue and Mutual grossed a combined \$115 million in revenue.¹⁷ Barely twenty years old, radio broadcasting approached its finest hour.

That finest hour would be World War II; after all, "World War II was a radio war."¹⁸ Heralded as an "indispensable source of entertainment," radio formed a daily component in the lives of the vast majority of American people.¹⁹ In February 1942, the government's Selective Service Department went so far as to declare that broadcasting was "an industry essential to national welfare," meaning that some important radio personnel would be ineligible for the draft.²⁰ Radio was truly an integral part of American life. A year before the start of the war in Europe, twenty-nine percent of Americans polled by *Fortune* magazine believed that of all the major industries in the United States the radio industry best met the demands and needs of the American people.²¹ The radio industry came second in terms of customer satisfaction, and industry prestige—only to that most American of industries, the automobile manufacturers—such was the importance of radio to the American public.²²

1940," *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, January 1941: 1; "87% of Nation has Radios," *Variety*, March 11, 1942, 35.

¹⁶ Survey conducted November 15, 1943. Hadley Cantril and Mildred Strunk, eds., *Public Opinion, 1935–1946* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1951), 704–705.

¹⁷ Jack Gould, "Radio Row: One Thing and Another," *New York Times*, January 3, 1943, X12.

¹⁸ J. Fred MacDonald, *Don't Touch That Dial: Radio Programming in American Life from 1920 to 1960* (Chicago: Nelson Hall Publishers, 1979), 65.

¹⁹ Sherwood Gates, "Radio in Relation to Recreation and Culture," *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* (January 1941): 9.

²⁰ "May Defer Key Radio Men," *Variety*, February 25, 1942, 29.

²¹ J. Fred MacDonald, *Don't Touch That Dial: Radio Programming in American Life from 1920 to 1960* (Chicago: Nelson Hall Publishers, 1979), 36.

²² Given the high standing of American car manufacturers in American society at that time, this represented quite a vaunted position for the music industry to hold.

As the world moved towards and into war, sales of radio sets in the United States had steadily increased during the late 1930s.²³ At the end of 1939, industry predictions indicated a continuance of this course through the beginning of the 1940s.²⁴ Unfortunately, such predictions did not take into account the military's need for various component parts, which quickly put an end to the production of new radios. Vital to the war effort and to the people who owned them, the government emphasised radio's importance, wishing to keep up public morale and allow Americans to stay in touch with important war information and news. The Office of War Information (OWI) decreed that radio should be used to emphasise the government's war aims to the masses. News services were essential to this effort, but so was entertainment in all its various guises. William B Lewis, head of one of the OWI's radio units (and a former CBS vice president) wanted to use radio to bring those aims into American homes so that everyone might understand and appreciate them.²⁵ The OWI was created in June 1942 by Executive Order 9182, and organised with three branches: Domestic, Policy Development and Overseas. Elmer Davis, another CBS news man, was appointed director of the bureau. The Domestic branch held the most importance for popular music. That branch had five main internal bureaus—the press, radio, motion pictures, publications and campaigns—of which radio and campaigns made policies that affected the music industry and “coordinated and disseminated war information within the United States.”²⁶

²³ Susan J Douglas, *Listening In: Radio and the American Imagination, from Amos 'n' Andy and Edward R Murrow to Wolfman Jack and Howard Stern* (New York: Times Books, 1999), 161–62.

²⁴ “Radio-Phonograph Sales Soar,” *Business Week*, November 18, 1939, 32. *Business Week's* prediction did not take into account the onset of war barely two years later, but the outlook was positive nonetheless.

²⁵ “Radio's Home-Front Drive,” *Variety*, September 29, 1942, 1, 47.

²⁶ Jordan Braverman, *To Hasten the Homecoming: How Americans Fought World War II Through the Media* (Lanham, NY: Madison Books, 1996), 55.

The major radio networks provided a wide range of programming with popular music accounting for approximately one third of all radio airtime during WWII.²⁷ The music industry had a symbiotic relationship with radio, and musicians and record companies needed the radio networks to feature their music as much as the networks needed their product. The radio broadcasting companies played the records that bands produced and broadcast concerts from ballrooms and hotels around the country, and through both of these things, helped promote bands and their records. Even jukebox operators took their key from radio programmes. Songs that achieved “most-played” status on the radio appealed to the operators because users of the machines were more likely to pay for those same records in jukeboxes.²⁸ Over the next few years the special relationship between popular music and radio was forced to deal with the exigencies of war.

To put the influence of radio in context in relation to popular music, in 1941 a Columbia University music professor proclaimed that music formed the most important feature on radio and that with radio’s enormous reach and potential, it had created a “revolution” in music’s place in society.²⁹ Yet even though the war did not dramatically change these relationships or the business model, the war’s influence on radio’s place in society and the industry mattered.

At the beginning of 1941, the United States contained approximately 880 broadcasting stations. This number represented a huge potential audience for the five biggest networks of ABC, CBS, NBC, Blue and Mutual, through their affiliates across

²⁷ At the end of 1941, popular (or dance) music as a separate genre of radio programming accounted for almost thirteen percent of programme hours. When Variety shows and other forms of music were added, this figure jumped to approximately thirty-four percent, or one-third of all programming. *Broadcasting Yearbook 1942*, (Washington DC: Broadcasting Publications Inc., 1942), 26.

²⁸ *Variety* magazine listed a “most played” list of songs for jukeboxes. The list was compiled from reports sent into the magazine by the operators of the machines.

²⁹ Sherwood Gates, “Radio in Relation to Recreation and Culture,” *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, January 1941: 10. The professor quoted was Peter W. Dykema, professor of music education.

the country.³⁰ That large potential audience meant that much of the power and influence within the music industry lay in the hands of the radio networks.³¹ Just one year later, at the end of 1942, the number of radio stations had increased to more than nine hundred. This figure remained consistent through the end of 1944.³² Given the inevitable fact that some radio stations must have gone out of business or stopped broadcasting for whatever reason, this relatively small overall increase during the war was quite significant, suggesting that radio enjoyed, at the very least, a small boom period during the war.

Further indication of wartime success for radio companies came in the form of officially-released figures for the networks. The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) published the profit margins and “broadcast service income” of the four majors each year. In 1944 only seventy-three of those nine hundred or so stations reported an operating loss for the preceding year. A year before that, 173 stations had operated at a loss. In general though, the vast majority of stations recorded profitable years for 1942, 1943 and 1944, with a fifty percent increase in

³⁰ “Facts-On-File Yearbook, 1941,” Vol. 1, January 26, 1942—103D; A government ruling on monopolies in 1942 meant that no company could own more than one radio network. As a result of this, RCA, which owned NBC and the Blue network, decided to sell its interest in Blue. *Time* reported in January 1943 that although no buyer had been found yet, it was only a matter of time, as the network was profitable, successful and a sound commercial investment—especially so, given that the country was at war. In August 1943, Edward J Noble, owner of WMCA a radio station in New York City paid eight million dollars for the network. For his money he gained 146 affiliated stations, with over nine hundred thousand “radio families” and forty sponsored programmes. “Blue Network Sold to Noble,” *Down Beat*, August 15, 1943, 1; “Black and Blue,” *Time*, January 11, 1943, 43. These figures represented a considerable percentage of the total number of radios, stations and radio families as reported at the end of the war. By war’s end there were approximately sixty million radios in existence in the United State, with thirty-one million “radio families” served by more than nine hundred stations. MacDonald, *Don’t Touch That Dial*, 74.

³¹ Official figures from the Federal Communications Commission’s annual financial report as cited in Paul F. Peter, “The American Listener in 1940,” *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, January 1941: 4. The dominance by these three companies is partially indicated by the fact that they employed more than twenty-four thousand people in their radio divisions. Within that group, the “big three” of ABC, CBS and NBC commanded the largest share of the market. In effect, they controlled the power and influence of the music industry.

³² *Broadcasting Yearbook, 1942*, (Washington DC: Broadcasting Publications Inc., 1942), 11. According to the Federal Communications Commission figures quoted in this publication there were nine hundred and twenty-three stations in existence.; “How America is using one of its Greatest War Weapons,” *Variety*, January 5, 1944, 133. This was an advertisement for the Yong & Rubicam, corporation—an advertising firm based throughout the United States and Canada. Despite its natural bias, the advertisement did use credible factual evidence for the most part.

operating profits between 1942 and 1943.³³ What specifically caused that increase (in both number of stations and their profits)? It would seem apparent that the desire for knowledge—news programmes—of wartime activities, successes, defeats and so on, played a role in enlarging the radio audience, and even if music did not (although there is no such evidence), it certainly capitalised on that increase.

Part of the increased wartime demand becomes obvious through the workings of the American Society of Composers and Publishers (ASCAP). ASCAP collected royalties from all performances of musicians' work—including performances on radio. During the first year of the war, ASCAP collected its equal highest royalty for one year from the radio networks. As *Variety* noted in September 1942, "ASCAP's income from radio this summer has been considerably above expectations."³⁴ Had music not equated business success for the radio stations, they would not have played so much of it and ASCAP would not have received such a large royalty. In other words, music lay at the heart of the profitability and success of radio stations. Not only did music provide an impetus for the increase in (and sustainability of) in radio stations, but also a large amount of the programming as well. By late 1942, music accounted for forty-eight percent of radio airtime. As the FCC and *Variety* noted, "radio's appetite for music has developed to the point where tunes in one form or another are staple items on the average broadcasters' diet more than three-quarters of the time."³⁵ According to the "most comprehensive survey ever undertaken by any Government or trade body . . . the average station operated 112 hours during the sample week (April 11–15) and carried musical programmes a total of 86 hours."³⁶ According to *Variety*, the "outstanding significance of the mass of data collected by the FCC via a questionnaire to all American stations is the proof that the whole

³³ "B'cast Income Up 50% in 1943—FCC," *Variety*, June 14, 1944, 1.

³⁴ "ASCAP Quarterly Royalty \$1,100,000; Radio Pays Less, but Totals Not Far Behind the Peak Year of 1940," *Variety*, September 30, 1942, 45.

³⁵ "Music Dominates Radio," *Variety*, September 23, 1942, 27–28.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

industry's economy is built around music. As Chairman Fly commented in reviewing the analyses, without music the nation probably would have only a handful of broadcast stations."³⁷

All the increased interest in radio led to more revenue for the stations. Radio broadcasters generated their income from multiple sponsorship and advertising sources. Despite the potential for the war to adversely affect advertising, officials from ad firms believed that "radio would be the least hit of all media" by the war.³⁸ Yet, in spite of this optimism, radio advertisers also realised that rationing would take effect and that the goods they advertised would likely be adversely affected. However, many national sponsors of radio programs realised the long-term benefits of remaining in the public eye through the war despite many not being able to manufacture and sell their products. When the fighting ended and people needed and wanted to purchase all those wartime-restricted luxury items, the advertising and sponsoring of radio shows would finally pay off. Coca-Cola, although not a luxury goods manufacturer, provided a good example of the potential benefits for advertisers and sponsors. The soft-drinks manufacturer continued its sponsorship of major network programmes despite the difficulties it faced with rationing of some its key ingredients.³⁹ Coca-Cola sponsored numerous radio shows, including "Victory Parade of Spotlight Bands," and employed more than one hundred name bands to "play concerts and drink Cokes at [military] bases around the country."⁴⁰ Following the end of hostilities this advertising tactic (along with the overall wartime strategy of the

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ "Radio a Favored Media," *Variety*, November 11, 1943, 25.

³⁹ "Soft Drinks Hold to Schedule," *Variety*, February 4, 1942, 24. Of course, Coca Cola also benefited from its contract with the American military, providing the forces with its drinks products. Despite some shortages in raw products such as sugar, it is unlikely that the government would have hindered the company too heavily from producing a product it gave to its troops. Patrick Morley, *"This is the American Forces Network": The Anglo-American Battle of the Air Waves in World War II* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2001), 46. Mark Pendergast argues that, in fact, Coca-Cola received preferential treatment from the government because the drink was considered essential to the well-being of the troops. Mark Pendergast, *For God, Country & Coca-Cola: The Definitive History of the Great American Soft Drink and the Company That Makes It* 2nd Ed., Rev. (New York: Basic Books, 2000), 197.

⁴⁰ Pendergast, *For God, Country & Coca-Cola*, 203.

company) paid off as the soft-drink manufacturer went from strength to strength over the next sixty years.

Advertising insiders believed that businesses needed to use radio adverts to “explain the reasons for shortages [and] the necessity for strict economy.”⁴¹ The positives of radio advertising managed to overcome the possibility that the war would negatively affect sales. Companies were so keen to continue advertising that by February 1944 “virtually all good network time [was] sold out” for weekly schedules for the year, and advertisers started to sponsor day-time programming as well as the traditional “prime-time” programmes. Industry forecasters, at that time, expected the trend to continue at least through the end of the year.⁴²

Associating their brand name with the war effort also provided an incentive to advertisers to spend their money on radio. Such incentives translated into good advertising time sales for the networks and owners. The Mutual network experienced a prime example of that relationship in January 1942. Just one month into the war, Mutual realised its best month ever for “time sales” from advertisers.⁴³ Naturally, the networks courted advertising dollars as best they could. One Mutual advertisement in *Variety* in February 1942 indicated the importance of advertising to the network, but also placed a heavy emphasis on the necessity of popular music to win that advertising. “How to glue a listener to a radio” crowed the headline of the advertisement, with a cartoon-style pitch asserting that Mutual was the leader in news and popular music.⁴⁴ The advert included the rather blatant sales pitch that “millions of listeners glued to Mutual stations listening to the kind of programs closest to everyone’s heart . . . listening today—buying tomorrow.” Significantly, the

⁴¹ “Advertising Does Plenty to Help Win the War, Malkiel Points Out,” *Variety*, March 25, 1942, 26.

⁴² “Webs’ Rubber-Clock Blues,” *Variety*, February 9, 1944, 29.

⁴³ “Mutual Network Chalks Up Its 1st \$1,000,000 Month,” *Variety*, February 11, 1942, 1; “Mutual Billings Top \$9,000,000,” *Billboard*, January 16, 1943, 6

⁴⁴ Mutual Broadcasting System advert “How to glue a listener to a radio,” *Variety*, February 25, 1942, 27.

advertisement used popular music as a sales point, indicating that Mutual believed music was one of the keys to a successful radio station.

Radio's popularity resulted in advertising revenue for 1940 of \$171,114,000 across all radio stations, and as historians Christopher H Sterling and John M Kittross wrote, "World War II was one of the best things to happen to radio advertising."⁴⁵ While this was much lower than the advertising revenue of newspapers (of which there were far more), radio attracted more advertising money than periodicals and magazines for that year.⁴⁶ The gross total for January 1942 for NBC-Blue, NBC-Red, Mutual, and CBS figured at \$10,300,000, representing a growth of roughly twelve percent on January 1941.⁴⁷ A month later, the networks continued their success, again showing growth at the same level. For 1942, based on projections from the first two months for NBC-Red, Blue, CBS and Mutual, the total income was approximately \$118,500,000.⁴⁸ That figure seems much lower than the pre-war total above, but the earlier figure represented all broadcasting stations, not just the four "big" networks. Strong radio time sales continued through May 1942, and although print media's revenue slumped in general, both newspapers and magazines realised similar growths in the first full month of war.

While the broadcasters reaped the financial benefits of radio's association and interaction with the war, the programmes that the networks and stations made and played also felt the effects of the war. News programming went through the largest growth and biggest changes. The war created a demand for up-to-the-minute

⁴⁵ Official estimate of the National Association of Broadcasters as cited in *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, "The American Listener in 1940," Paul F Peter, January 1941, 5; Christopher H Sterling and John M Kittross, *Stay Tuned: A Concise History of American Broadcasting*, 2nd Ed. (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing Co., 1990), 211.

⁴⁶ Magazines generated one hundred and fifty-one million dollars for 1939. Data for the magazines was printed in "The American Listener in 1940," *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, January 1941, 6 and came from the Publishers' Information Bureau. Radio figures for the same comparison were taken from the same source which cited data from the *Broadcasting Yearbook 1939*.

⁴⁷ "How Goes the Radio Business," *Variety*, March 4, 1942, 25.

⁴⁸ "Radio Coin Pace Strong," *Variety*, April 1, 1942, 1.

information that had previously not existed. However, while many listeners sought news, many also wished for entertainment; taking their minds away from the grim realities of war was as important as finding out how grim it actually was. To this end, radio networks aired dramas, comedies and music programmes (or a combination of all three in the form of a variety show). Amongst these genres, the networks played popular music in many different shows. One could tune in to the *Lucky Strike Hit Parade* to hear the top selling songs of the week, or listen to a concert broadcast from locations such as the Paramount Theatre on Broadway in New York, or the Coconut Grove at the Ambassador Hotel in Los Angeles, or listen to a *Command Performance*, on which troops had requested songs.⁴⁹

Realising that troops as well as civilians enjoyed popular music, the networks started to create programmes with a heavy popular music content that were aimed specifically at those men and women in the armed forces.⁵⁰ Naturally, the general public also listened to these shows wherever they were aired as restriction of access to them proved unpopular as well as difficult.⁵¹ The war also influenced programming decisions in other ways, with troop benefit and war bond programmes often airing in addition to regular shows with music content. All this was new. Before the war, there had been no need for such programming; once hostilities began, the creation of such shows became necessary and lucrative to the networks as well.

Many new radio programmes reflected war's impact on society. Shows such as NBC's *Everything for the Boys*, and CBS's *Stage Door Canteen* and *Keep Working, Singing, America* focused heavily on the war in one way or another and used

⁴⁹ *Command Performance* was first recorded on August 30, 1942, before a select group of distinguished figures, including President Roosevelt. The lineup that night featured established stars such as Dinah Shore, Bing Crosby and Kay Kyser. "'Command Performance,'" *Variety*, August 26, 1942, 4.

⁵⁰ Such programmes included *Command Performance* and *Jubilee* (as well as many others).

⁵¹ When the American military started to station large numbers of troops in England, the decision was made to provide American programming content on a specific radio station for American troops (later for all Allied troops). This network had extremely limited power and was hard to pick up by English civilians unless they lived very close to a transmitter.

popular music as a major element of their format. These three shows (and numerous others) used music to entertain, whilst highlighting the fighting men and women, and the job they were doing. The networks produced such shows for many reasons, but one consideration was the link between the war and popular music. By joining popular music and the armed forces, the broadcasters created a link between their shows and the war effort. The public still wanted entertainment, and popular music was at a zenith in its ability to captivate and the networks could take advantage of those facts. Because of the war, entertainment needed to have a khaki hue to it in order to appeal to the masses. The networks happily supported the war as doing so demonstrated their allegiance to the cause and their activism and patriotism.⁵²

Coca-Cola took the link between the war and popular music to its natural conclusion. The soft drinks manufacturer sponsored a new programme, and produced it in army and navy camps, and war munitions factories. The bands on the shows played in barracks and bases all over the country and broadcast direct from those locations.⁵³ Coca-Cola gained from the association resulting from the link of their brand name, with popular music and the patriotic cause. From the broadcasters' standpoint, such sponsorship created a positive link between the programme and the war effort by broadcasting these shows direct from the bases. The link showed the broadcaster's commitment to the war/cause. Coca-Cola used a similar link on another of its sponsored programmes, *Spotlight Bands*. Ostensibly, this show had always put the spotlight on various popular bands, but in order to "give the *Spotlight Bands* show a patriotic angle, it [was] aired as a salute to a chosen defence industrial plant."⁵⁴ Thus, the audience was introduced to another aspect of the war effort through music, the factory workers' morale was boosted and Coca-Cola once again emphasised its

⁵² "Slap-The-Japs Bond Drive," *Variety*, December 12, 1941, 1. The leading article noted that radio stations were expected to increase their support of the Treasury by commending their listeners to purchase War Bonds.

⁵³ "Coca-Cola Will Air Bands From Camps, Factories," *Variety*, August 26, 1942, 41.

⁵⁴ "Mysterious Failure of Coca-Cola Show," *Variety*, October 7, 1942, 60.

importance to the war. The conclusion to be drawn from this close association with the war effort and music (and Coca-Cola) is that it paid to link the war effort and radio programmes, no matter the nature of the programme.

Another example of the link between the war, music and radio was the government sponsored production of war-bond programmes such as *Treasury Star Parade*. This popular entertainment programme used celebrities to urge the public to support the troops and war bond drives. Sponsored (and produced in part) by the Treasury department, it featured top musicians such as Kay Kyser.⁵⁵ *Millions for Defense* and *Music for Millions* followed similar patterns, also in the aid of increased war bond sales.⁵⁶

Treasury Star Parade featured in a further radio/war interaction. In April 1943, radio stations took part in government-led efforts for the Second War Loan. Demonstrating their connection to, and support for, the war effort (and consequently the interaction and relationship between radio and the war), 850 of the roughly 900 on-air stations in the United States carried *Treasury Star Parade*, broadcasting it three times a week and donating a combined eleven million dollars of time and talent, in kind, to the Second War Loan. Vincent F Callahan, director of radio, press and advertising for the Treasury Department, noted the radio stations' efforts and gave "thanks, to the whole-hearted cooperation of radio stations throughout the county."⁵⁷

Not only did the war result in new programmes, but also, more generally, in new programme schedules. Forced to adapt their thinking and planning, the networks re-evaluated what type of programme they gave most time and consideration in their schedules. NBC, one of the first to react to the need for change, proposed basic

⁵⁵ The US Treasury Department created *Treasury Star Parade* to increase sales in war bonds.

⁵⁶ See J. Fred McDonald's article in the *Journal of Popular Culture* for a more detailed discussion of *Treasury Star Parade*.

⁵⁷ Vincent F. Callahan, "Treasury Kudos to Radio's Help," *Variety*, Director Radio, Press and Advertising, Treasury Department, War Savings Staff, July 14, 1943, page unknown.

alterations to its scheduling and programming planning as early as March 1942.⁵⁸

NBC management declared that the network would focus more of its time on “public interest programming,” and appointed Thomas Rishworth to the head of this department. Much of the public-interest programming was given to morale boosting. In an NBC list of themes and each theme’s relative importance, music appeared third, just behind health and home.

A major change for all of the radio business resulting directly from the war occurred on January 16, 1942, when the Office of Censorship released a set of guidelines entitled “War-Time Censorship Code for Broadcasters.”⁵⁹ The guidelines outlined how radio stations should self-censor in order to protect the interests of a wartime government. The code contained no guidelines for any music programmes. Censorship in relation to music programmes only went so far as to deal with any intermissions within those programmes that might relate to the weather, news or requests from the public. This final category contained the most relevance for music shows.

Some music programmes, such as *Command Performance*, were based on the show honouring submitted requests. The censorship code stated that no telephoned requests should be taken or honoured during a live broadcast because they might be used to pass subversive messages across the airwaves. In the case of *Command Performance* the rule was irrelevant as all requests on the show were received through the mail and so could be censored in advance of the broadcast. The omission of specific guidelines for music programmes indicated that the government did not see any reason to censor them. In this case, the Office of Censorship judged the situation correctly. Most songs underwent a self-censorship of a sort by the writers, and broadcasters were unlikely to risk unnecessary trouble with the government by airing

⁵⁸ “Revise ‘Public Interest’,” *Variety*, March 18, 1942, 31.

⁵⁹ *War-time Censorship Code for Broadcasters*, Office of Censorship, January 16, 1942.

songs with questionable lyrics. Restricting music programmes any further made little sense as the general rules applied to music programmes' hosts and formats, the same as any other programme.

With the war arrived new and unusual interferences with daily life. One of those was black- or brown-outs. Black-outs on the West Coast disrupted the status quo, and dictated that radio policy be changed. Advertisers on the radio did not want to lose key target audiences (particularly in the rapidly expanding Los Angeles area, which was home to many new war industry jobs) because people could not listen to the radio as a result of war contingencies. In some circumstances, radio stations were shut down at night and thus advertisers lost valuable air time. Shut-downs resulted from concerns that the Japanese might use radio signals to locate population centres and allow enemy ships and planes easier navigation at night. In an effort to combat the loss of potential advertising time because of these shut-downs, the radio networks broadcast more music shows during daylight hours. They wanted to capture those west-coast markets that they had lost to the black-outs more effectively and believed that music programmes represented one of the best methods of doing so.⁶⁰ The East Coast also experienced some blackouts and in addition to the problems advertisers suffered as a result of losing programme time to the blackouts, some bands suffered directly as well.⁶¹ Jimmy Dorsey's band lost two of its regular musicians to the blackout one night in May 1943, when, as they travelled to the band's performance, a blackout occurred and the two men were unable to make it to the theatre in time for the show.⁶²

⁶⁰ "Pacific Blackouts Produce a Change; Some Advertisers Prefer To Drop Re-Broadcasts For Daylight Hours," *Variety*, December 17, 1941, 39; "Blackouts Crimp Coast Niteries; Ray Noble, Nat Brandwynne Hurt," *Down Beat*, February 1, 1942, 12.

⁶¹ "No Worcester Blackouts; Names Flock In," *Down Beat*, February 15, 1942, 6. Despite the title of this article, it actually dealt with bands having to deal with blackouts in the northeast.

⁶² "Inside Stuff—Orchestras," *Variety*, May 12, 1943, 42.

Rationing affected radio just as it did all other parts of society. Immediately following the attack on Pearl Harbor, radio manufacturers began reducing their production levels as the government began to limit the industry's output of new machines.⁶³ In April 1942, the War Production Board (WPB) decreed the end of manufacturing radios, phonograph machines and jukeboxes for public purchase and use. As a result, the number of radios manufactured and sold in the United States dropped dramatically during the war years. Despite these restrictions, the number of radios sold continued to increase through January 1942, resulting in more than fifty-seven million radios in the United States by that time.⁶⁴ The ban on new production came because the government wanted to allow increases in the production of goods and machines essential to the war effort and some of the component parts used for radios (as well as the factories and production lines) were valuable to the war industry.⁶⁵ Radios, phonographs and jukeboxes were not considered essential to the war effort. Production of replacement parts for radios primarily (although there were some allowances for phonographs as well), could continue because the WPB believed it important to at least maintain the existing radios in the country in order that important news and morale-boosting entertainment could still be heard. The WPB hastened to point out that the music industry would not suffer financially as many manufacturing companies had already signed contracts with the military and government to produce other, essential, items. The provision for replacement parts meant the radio networks need not worry about listeners not being able to fix their radios and thus stop listening. A reduction in potential listeners would have led to a reduction in advertising dollars, which the networks had no desire to witness, but the built-in provisions muted any potential complaints from the radio industry.

⁶³ "87% of Nation has Radios," *Variety*, March 11, 1942, 35.

⁶⁴ *Broadcasting Yearbook 1942*, (Washington DC: Broadcasting Publications Inc., 1942), 14.

⁶⁵ War Production Board, March 7, 1942, as published in *Variety*, "87% of Nation has Radios," March 11, 1942, 35. The restrictions in question are discussed later.

Not all wartime restrictions caused the radio industry to suffer. In Hawaii, a curfew actually benefited radio stations as it forced people to stay at home. Radio stations did not have to curtail their programming because of the curfew, because shifts allowed the post-curfew employees to remain inside. The radio stations noted that the curfew had increased their listeners because “islanders [were] avid for any radio entertainment that they [could] get.”⁶⁶

Another example of beneficial effects of wartime restrictions for radio occurred in the summer of 1942. When the government rationed gasoline for cars, many radio industry insiders expected people to stay at home and listen to the radio. Initial reports as summer began indicated that this had not occurred, but within a few weeks the expected increase in radio listeners appeared.⁶⁷ In cities not under a gasoline rationing system, radio listeners dropped by almost one percent with the arrival of the summer driving season, but in those cities with rationing—New York, Philadelphia, Boston, Washington, DC and Atlanta, for example—radio listeners increased by as much as five percent.⁶⁸

The market research companies Hooper and CAB both noted an intriguing trend in the summer of 1943. Summertime listening figures normally dropped as people took vacations and found other outdoor activities to engage them. However, the monitoring companies expected the listening figures to once again rise because of the ban on pleasure driving and the more general rationing of gasoline forcing people to remain at home. Instead, the ratings companies noted a significant drop. At the same time (June 1943), public transport recorded a twenty-five percent increase in usage, indicating that people had found an alternative method to travel by, and did not intend to stay at home and listen to the radio. Despite this particular, unexpected

⁶⁶ “Curfew Helps Radio in Hawaii,” *Variety*, March 4, 1942, 25.

⁶⁷ Reports by ratings company C E Hooper established a clear link between rationing and the increase in listeners.

⁶⁸ “Gas Ration Helps Summer Radio,” *Variety*, June 10, 1942, 31.

summertime reaction, the expected increase in radio listening did eventually occur, as pleasure driving restrictions and fuel rationing caused people to stay home later in the year.⁶⁹

With financial success for radio seemingly assured, networks and stations turned their attention to achieving internal continuity during the war. Beginning early in the conflict, the National Association of Broadcasters lobbied the government through the Selective Service Department to add key radio positions to the list of draft-deferred jobs.⁷⁰ The radio industry asked for deferment for positions such as engineers, specialists, news interpreters and analysts. The request omitted all “mike-handlers” (as *Variety* called DJs), publicity staff and advertising employees.⁷¹

The entertainment industry struggled with the implications of draft deferment for much of the war. Requesting deferment for certain skilled jobs often attracted criticism from the media and the public. Such requests led to the idea that glamorous jobs were favoured over the everyday worker, and the radio industry never came to a satisfactory conclusion about the draft. The draft affected the entertainment world just as much as any other industry and only the end of the war brought respite. Until that time radio, in all its forms, soldiered on as the draft affected its ability to function properly.

World War II was most certainly a radio war, but it was also the war that affected radio in almost every facet of its existence. Forced to adapt and change as a result of wartime society, radio went from strength to strength, emerging from every challenge positively. Despite the problems it faced, radio continued to offer its

⁶⁹ “CAB, Hooper Both Show Sharp Dip in Listening Despite Ban on Driving,” *Variety*, June 23, 1943, 1. Although the war certainly affected the radio in many ways, a radio insider believed that little had changed between in radio broadcasting between 1933 and 1943. Don Bernard, manager of the William Esty Agency in California commented on the state of the radio industry in 1943 compared to a decade earlier. He argued that while some of the technology had been updated, in fact radio and radio programmes worked along much the same lines as it had always done. According to Bernard, it would appear that the war had little effect on what radio did.

⁷⁰ The motion picture industry had received such a declaration.

⁷¹ “May Defer Key Radio Men,” *Variety*, February 25, 1942, 29.

product, expanding where possible, solidifying otherwise. That radio broadcasters chose to use popular music with such efficacy was a result of the realisation that popular music held great importance to their listeners, but it was also a pragmatic decision because popular music led to greater numbers of listeners and increased advertising revenue. Not content to sit on their laurels, radio broadcasters developed new popular music programmes, showcased music whenever they could and allowed people to interact with music on an hourly and daily basis. Historian Michelle Hilmes argued that American radio “struggled to redefine American identity on the home front,” but such a theory does not do credit to the radio broadcasting companies.⁷² They did not attempt to redefine American identity; they tapped into the existing identity and catered to the wishes of the listening public. World War II was a radio war because broadcasters seamlessly integrated the war and all its aspects, often using popular music as the vehicle with which to do so.

Sheet Music during World War II

The boom experienced by the music industry during World War II swept through sheet music just as it did the rest of the business. Sheet music sales thrived throughout the war years, with record sales in many cases. Profits for publishing companies benefited from an Office of Price Administration (OPA) order removing the price ceiling on sheet music and orchestrations, although no reason was given for so doing at the time, it would appear that the Music Publishers Protective Association lobbied consistently to get sheet music off of the OPA list.⁷³ Writing in *Variety*, Abel Green attributed the boom in sheet music sales to the factors that made the music

⁷² Michelle Hilmes, *Radio Voices: American Broadcasting, 1922–1952* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 259.

⁷³ “Sheet Music Outside OPA,” *Variety*, September 30, 1942, 45; “Association Reports,” *The Billboard 1943 Music Year Book*, 180.

industry strong in general.⁷⁴ He believed that much of the prosperity came from the lack of other luxury items to spend money on in wartime society. The lack of luxury goods and the advent of war directly created a surge in sheet music sales in 1942, and by 1943, sheet music sales were \$10 to \$15 million per year.⁷⁵ Recorded as the best year for sheet music sales in the previous fifteen, the upsurge in songs specifically about the war in 1942 appeared to lead directly to that success, with war-themed songs such as “Praise the Lord and Pass the Ammunition” and “When the Lights Go On,” providing some of the success for sheet music.⁷⁶

Obviously, paper formed a critical component of sheet music and, along with many other items, the government rationed it.⁷⁷ Although paper never underwent severe rationing, the government forced the production and use of a far lower-grade paper than had been in use prior to the war. Despite the reduction in the quality of available paper, sheet music managed to adjust accordingly and output remained relatively unaffected.⁷⁸ Unlike many of those luxury goods about which Abel Green had written, sheet music was still easy to find during the war. Coping with the difficulties caused by paper rationing, sheet music provided a safe and pleasurable leisure activity on which Americans could spend their war-improved wages.

Despite sheet music’s wartime boom and even though it coped well with rationing, the beginning of the end of sheet music’s heyday occurred during World War II. Within a few years of the end of the war, sheet music found itself relegated to use in music-lesson purchases and as scores for bands. Outmoded by radio, the phonograph, motion pictures, and up-and-coming television, singing and playing sheet music at home gradually became less and less popular. Sheet music suffered, in part,

⁷⁴ Abel Green, “Music Biz also Rode Wartime Prosperity Crest—800,000 to 1,000,000 Sheet-sellers,” *Variety*, January 5, 1944, 189.

⁷⁵ “Disk Demand Double Output,” *Billboard*, September 4, 1943, 60.

⁷⁶ “Biggest Sheet Music Sales in 15 Yrs.,” *Variety*, November 11, 1942, 1; “Upward Spiral of Music Sales Continues,” *Variety*, November 18, 1942, 41.

⁷⁷ “News of Priorities and Materials,” *Billboard*, December 19, 1942, 69.

⁷⁸ A. A. Hoehling, *Home Front, USA* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Co., 1966), 70.

because the quicker turnover of popular songs on radio reduced the amount of time that sheet music had to capitalise on a song's popularity with the buying public.⁷⁹ But the indications that this would happen had started even before the war began. Times had changed and entertainment at home had lost much of its group mentality. High ranking military officers and politicians had been noting the same societal change in the military. The young men and women in uniform preferred to seek other forms of entertainment than gathering round the piano to sing songs as had been popular in World War I.

Sheet music's popularity would eventually wane, but a final swan-song awaited it during World War II. Immediately following the attack on Pearl Harbor sheet music sales dropped by ten percent.⁸⁰ But, three weeks after the attack on Pearl Harbor, sheet music sales were steady and rising.⁸¹ Two years later, Green noted that sales of the top sheet music pieces during 1943 had doubled and in many cases one-million-sellers were recorded.⁸² These spectacular figures occurred even with paper rationing in effect. From the beginning of the war, publishers of sheet music had been forced to ration their supply of paper to various percentages of the pre-war total usage figure. The percentage allowed by the government had risen and fallen depending on how much paper was in reserve, but in general, sheet music printing and publishing had run at reduced levels.⁸³ Despite the issues of paper rationing during the early part of the war, good news came to publishers—at least temporarily—in the fall of 1943. Walter G Douglas, chairman of the Music Publishers Protective Association, informed his members that the WPB intended to hold paper limits at the then current levels of

⁷⁹ William Howland Kenney, *Recorded Music in American Life: The Phonograph and Popular Memory, 1890–1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 186; Douglas, *Listening In*, 153.

⁸⁰ "Nothing Wrong With Sheet Music Sales A Few Nippon Defeats Couldn't Cure," *Variety*, December 17, 1941, 53.

⁸¹ "Socko Boom in Music Sales Sets In," *Variety*, December 24, 1941, 1, 52.

⁸² Abel Green, "Music Biz also Rode Wartime Prosperity Crest—800,000 to 1,000,000 Sheet-sellers," *Variety*, January 5, 1944, 189.

⁸³ "Pubs Eased by Paper Status Quo," *Variety*

ninety percent of 1942 limits for a period of at least three months—until January 1944.⁸⁴

Inwardly concerned with its own interaction and connection with the war, the music industry outwardly questioned how the war would affect the sales of sheet music.⁸⁵ At the beginning of the conflict, industry insiders had believed that the only likely outcome of the war was for the sales of sheet music to drop significantly. Some commentators believed that sales might increase once the country had become more stable, but the underlying tone resounded with pessimism rather than optimism. That pessimism was well founded at the start of the United States' involvement in the war. In spite of the competition for Americans' leisure time and entertainment dollars, sheet music held strong throughout the war, and brought popular music into the lives of many on the home front. The pessimism did not last and sheet music benefited from the impact of the war as much as any other part of the music industry, perhaps more so than most, as the war effectively extended the life of sheet music as a viable and popular form of entertainment.

World War II was the start of a decline in popularity for sheet music that would see the traditional media for music take a back seat to more modern formats such as records. However, the war years also provided sheet music with a short-term reprieve, resulting in good sales. Sheet music publishers had to deal with the negative effects of rationing of paper and the dominance of radio, but managed to stay relevant at the same time.

Civilian Musicians during World War II

While the commercial elements of the music industry took note of the immediate changes brought about by the war, and in many cases gained from them,

⁸⁴ "No Further Paper Cuts for Music Biz in 1943," *Variety*, October 13, 1943, 38.

⁸⁵ Ben Bodec, "Not Sure On War Songs," *Variety*, December 10, 1941, 3.

the war also impacted on the lives of the men and women who played the music. When the war began, musicians, just like any other group of professionals in American society, immediately began to adjust their normal way of life to adapt to wartime society. As entertainers, their ability to lift morale and keep spirits high in both civilian and military populations was extremely important. Arthur Berger, suggested this important role for music and musicians when he wrote in *The New Republic* in February 1944. He argued that morale was, in its most far-reaching sense, a measure of people's happiness in relation to the "availability of devices normally enriching to life."⁸⁶ Music has long been considered a "device" to enrich people's lives, and thus those who performed that music played a significant role in making sure that this normal "device" remained available to all who wanted it. Berger also believed that music could be used to benefit morale by unifying the citizenry of a country to a common cause—in this case, the common cause being the defeat of the enemy. A happy nation—with that happiness brought about in part by music—would be much more likely to succeed.⁸⁷

The war produced many new challenges for musicians. Among which, the draft forced some bands to split up or disband, and innovations in style and sound were introduced as the personnel of the business fluctuated and adapted to the war environment. Musicians who were sent to bases secluded from the American music scene often did not learn of the changes that were occurring to their music until they returned home. They had no contact with their contemporaries and so continued to practice what they already knew while the music scene continued to innovate and develop. Yet, musicians who were taken into the armed forces to form bands, often created new sounds and styles purely because they were removed from the traditional

⁸⁶ Arthur Berger, "Music in Wartime," *The New Republic*, February 7, 1944, 175.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

music scene and had an opportunity to practice and experiment without the pressures of the commercial side of the business.

The musicians' profession was not protected by law from the draft, nor was it proscribed as an essential profession to the war effort. Naturally, that situation put musicians at a disadvantage in terms of keeping a continuous flow to bands once war began. It took just two weeks for the war to start adversely affecting dance bands. As the implications of the war settled in and men realised that they might be eligible for the draft, bands began to break up, musicians either returning home to wait for the draft or volunteer.⁸⁸ Losing musicians to the draft continued throughout the war for all levels of bands, but in the first months of the American involvement bandleaders had to learn how to deal with the draft and its effects. Quickly learning and understanding the draft classification system, bandleaders started to specifically look for men with low draft ratings to fill gaps in their bands. According to one report, by February 1942, there were some bandleaders who would only hire men with a 3-A classification or lower, so as to minimise the chances of the draft taking them away.⁸⁹ As the war progressed, bandleaders and band organisers began to deal with the difficulties more effectively, but almost two years into the war some bands were still being hit suddenly and hard by the government's request for their men.⁹⁰

As the draft increased its intake to include previously deferred men, seasoned, veteran musicians and upcoming talent alike moved from civilian to military bands in ever increasing numbers. The less successful bands did not have such high quality men to replace, so they suffered less. Even so, the trickle-down effect of the top bands having to replace men was eventually noticed the lower level bands as well.

⁸⁸ "Army Call-Ups Ending Dance Combos," *Variety*, December 24, 1941, 37.

⁸⁹ "Low Draft Rating Excuses a Lot," *Variety*, February 4, 1942, 37. The draft classification system listed 3A as a "registrant who was deferred because of hardship to his or her dependents." United States Code of Federal Regulations, Title 32, Chapter XVI, Sec. 1630.2

⁹⁰ "No Matter How Draft Blows, Bob Allen Talks of Disbanding His Orch.," *Variety*, November 3, 1943, 31.

Prior to the war (and even through the early part of the war) big name bands could easily coax sidemen away from their rivals with the promise of better wages. Once the draft began to affect the availability of professional musicians, this practice quickly ended. Additionally, after late 1944, the articles about this practice that had appeared in the music press no longer featured as often or as prominently, suggesting that the draft had done more to stifle band leaders' attempts to steal sidemen away, than anything else.

Benny Goodman and Harry James both ended up shutting down their bands for a time in the spring of 1944 because Goodman had lost too many irreplaceable musicians and James expected to be taken in the more open draft.⁹¹ Later that same year, Count Basie's band was also hit by the draft when he lost two of his best sidemen, drummer Jo Jones and tenor saxophone Lester Young.⁹² Such was the demand of the draft that bandleader Chuck Falkner even staffed his "Hollywood Canteen Kids" with thirteen to sixteen year olds in an effort to counter the effect of the armed forces upon his music.⁹³ Such examples occurred throughout the entire war and affected all levels of bands from the most famous to the smallest town band.

Equally affected, the less-well-known civilian bands dealt with the same problems. Hayes Pillars, co-leader of the Jeter-Pillars band in Chicago during the war, recalled that his band could not recruit musicians because the draft took all the talented instrumentalists. Despite this, the band survived through the war, although Pillars believed that many fans realised what was happening to the band in terms of

⁹¹ "Draft Hits Name Orks, Trims List," *Down Beat*, April 15, 1944, 1.

⁹² Upon receiving their draft orders, Jones and Young ended up at Fort MacArthur in California. "Draft Grabs Pair from Basie Band," *Down Beat*, October 15, 1944, 1; "Two Basie Sidemen Drafted by Army," *Down Beat*, November 1, 1944, 1.

⁹³ "Canteen Kids Will Not Tour, Spot in Show," *Down Beat*, July 1, 1943, 20.

losing its pre-draft quality and so showed more understanding when they heard the band play.⁹⁴

An indication of the mercy at which the draft held civilian bands came just two weeks after Goodman and James had been forced to break theirs up. A new draft order in April 1944, deferring men over the age of twenty-six meant that well-known bandleaders such as Les Brown, Erskine Hawkins and Sammy Kaye no longer had to quit their bands as they were over that age and, at least temporarily, exempt from the draft.⁹⁵

The relatively common occurrence of bandleaders losing sidemen caused consternation to those bandleaders and disrupted a band's progress and performance, but the drafting of the leader of the band usually resulted in the disbanding of the group completely—even if the leader was the only member taken. *Variety* highlighted the examples of Orrin Tucker, Glenn Miller, Eddy Duchin and Wayne King to show how the removal of a well-known, highly successful band leader spelled the end of the road for the band. The trade paper emphasised the point, stating that "all attempts to keep name bands operating after their leaders have enlisted or been inducted into the armed forces have failed."⁹⁶ On the other hand, when Dean Hudson, the first of the well-known bandleaders to be inducted, left his band, they carried on, and Hudson attempted to help find a replacement while he was stationed at Morrison Air Field in Palm Beach, Florida.⁹⁷

However, even though these bands, and many others, suffered as a result of the draft depleting their sidemen, the recruiters for the naval bands stationed at Great Lakes actually had specific orders not to recruit men from certain professional civilian bands. Len Bowden, a former St. Louis bandleader, took charge of the African

⁹⁴ Samuel A. Floyd, "The Great Lakes Experience: An Oral History," *The Black Perspective in Music*, 11 (Spring 1983): 46.

⁹⁵ "Over 26' Draft Order to Keep Orks Together," *Down Beat*, May 1, 1944, 1.

⁹⁶ "Name Bands N. G. Sans Leaders," *Variety*, September 23, 1942, 36.

⁹⁷ "Dean Hudson Into Army; Leaves Ork," *Down Beat*, February 15, 1942, 1.

American bands at Great Lakes. One of his duties was to recruit suitable musicians for the band programme at the station. He recalled that he had orders not to recruit from certain bands.⁹⁸ In his area of recruitment, the 9th Naval District (which included most of the United States east of the Missouri river), major bands such as Count Basie's, Jimmie Lunceford's and Duke Ellington's were all placed off-limits.⁹⁹

Although the possibility of deferment from the draft naturally concerned its members, actively fighting the draft board over the induction of musicians would not have enamoured the union to the public, but the Musicians' Union did become involved in some war-related discussion on behalf of its members. In July 1942, the Musicians' Union began to draw attention to what it thought was an unfair system in which its members gave generously to the war effort but were neither protected from it nor remunerated for their efforts. J K Wallace, president of the Los Angeles Musicians' Union, brought the issue to the public's attention.¹⁰⁰ In Wallace's opinion, musicians should be treated the same as any other professional group. Although the musician's contribution was not as obvious or as tangible as the factory worker—where the end product aided the war effort in a direct and obvious manner—Wallace was not to be deterred, particularly as he had already noted music's positive effect in selling war bonds, and he campaigned for musicians to receive payment for their work for the government.¹⁰¹ He wrote:

Everyone working in defence industries today is being paid except musicians. Our contention is that music is also an essential part of the defence programme and should be figured in the budget the same as housing, clothing and equipment. Some people might object to this expense upon the grounds that music is intangible. When they buy a tank or build barracks they have something they can see and touch. Music, as far as they are concerned, flies off into the air and disappears, with nothing to show for the outlay of money. Because they can't touch it, they don't want to pay for it.

⁹⁸ Interview, 1976.

⁹⁹ Samuel A. Floyd, "The Great Lakes Experience: An Oral History," *The Black Perspective in Music*, 11, (Spring 1983): 48.

¹⁰⁰ The Los Angeles Local was one of the biggest in the country. It included much of the Hollywood movie scene, all its attendant musicians and the large night life scene in Los Angeles.

¹⁰¹ "Plan National Drive on Music for Victory," *Down Beat*, June 15, 1942, 7.

But music is tangible. It lives on in the hearts of everyone who hears it. The soldier marching into battle with a song in his heart is an irresistible fighting machine.¹⁰²

Wallace acknowledged that musicians must continue to work towards the end goal of the war effort, and, as part of that, they should be prepared to play their music whenever requested to do so. However, he said, “to give away the only commodity [musicians] have to sell—the only means musicians have of making a living,” was to deprive them of the chance to further help the war effort.¹⁰³ Unfortunately for Wallace and for all musicians, his argument met with no success. Musicians never received payment for their war work. Wallace believed that it was the right of the working man to be paid for his services, but, plying their trade in the well-paid entertainment world, the government (and, probably, many civilians) believed that musicians should be willing to give their talents voluntarily to those who needed them most.

Musicians in World War II dealt with more than just the debate about their position in relation to war work. Many of their other problems also linked their work with the war in one way or another. Whether playing for civilians or members of the armed forces, musicians dealt with how their music interacted with much larger forces and issues. In Minneapolis, for instance, the Musicians’ Union Local banned its members from playing shows for the armed forces for free, perhaps taking Wallace’s proclamations too far. The head of the Minneapolis Local defended the decision along basically the same lines as those used by Wallace. The union claimed that so many free benefits had been played in the previous year, that Minneapolis musicians had lost out on more than one hundred thousand dollars in income.¹⁰⁴ Representative of bands also confronted USO officials with regard to the loss of pay when playing camp dates when they could be taking paying jobs: “Bookers told USO that an

¹⁰² “Music as a Prime Wartime Necessity,” *L’Etude Music Magazine*, July 1942, 436.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁴ “Mlps. Musicians Now Can’t Play Army, Navy Benefits on the Cuff,” *Variety*, August 26, 1942, 41.

arrangement would have to be worked out to take care of such cases, since bands were already giving up their time and making other sacrifices, and it hardly seemed fair that they should have to shell out money, too.”¹⁰⁵ Regardless of either the union in Minneapolis, or Wallace nationally, or the bookers confronting the USO, musicians never received payment for “war work,” nor exemption from the draft.

Home Front Restrictions and Musicians

Rationing and travel restrictions also caused numerous problems for musicians during the war. One-night-stand tours, popular with bands before the war, allowed musicians and bands to place themselves in front of many people in relatively short time-spans, thus maximising their potential audience. Such one-nighters also offered bands opportunities to broadcast their live performances at locations with direct radio hook-ups. The radio hookups were of key importance to big bands and, thus so were the one-night stands. When the government placed restrictions on travel and the use of gasoline and rubber at the outset of war, bands struggled to even get to one-night gigs, and saw their takings drop as a result. As *Billboard* noted in July 1942, the “ODT’s [Office of Defence Transportation] ban on chartered busses is making one-nighters and short-jump dates a precarious source of income at best.”¹⁰⁶

While these restrictions affected both black and white musicians, black bands suffered disproportionately. By August 1, 1942, commentators were already aware of how bad the situation was proving for African American bands, stating that it was highly likely that every African American band bar the very top level would have to close down.¹⁰⁷ So acute was the problem that the Office of Defence Transportation (ODT) relented slightly on its original decrees to musical outfits in late summer

¹⁰⁵ “Agents and Orks Squawk to USO Over Camp Ills,” *Billboard*, July 4, 1942, 25, 63.

¹⁰⁶ “Washington New Key Point for All Show Biz Due to War Rules,” *Billboard*, July 4, 1942, 11.

¹⁰⁷ “Bus Situation to Eliminate Most Colored Bands,” *Down Beat*, August 1, 1942, 23.

1942.¹⁰⁸ Beginning in October 1942, and lasting for three months, the ODT authorised a trial use of five buses for African American bands to travel through the South and attempt to fulfil their commitments.¹⁰⁹ The temporary commitment resulted from band leader Cab Calloway and Walter White, head of the NAACP, petitioning the ODT on behalf of African American bands. The two men argued that without special provisions for black bands, they would be unable to work. Such bands required buses to travel throughout the South (where they made most of their appearances). Their position as “subordinate elements in a social order based on personalistic ties to whites,”¹¹⁰ and Jim Crow customs, prevented African American musicians from using other methods of transportation, so buses offered the only recourse.¹¹¹ A meeting in New York City in early September, mapped out a schedule for the five buses for the three months so that as many African American bands as possible would have use of transport during the trial.¹¹²

With the difficulties experienced by African American bands in mind, an editorial in the October 7, 1942 edition of *Variety* asked “Are colored bands doomed?” *Variety* contributor Moe Gale wrote the piece in reaction to the ODT’s temporary assistance for such bands.¹¹³ The piece questioned how the travel restrictions would affect African American bands. Gale argued that the average African American band would likely have to cease working as a result, and that the ODT’s plan offered no respite, except to the biggest of bands, which would now be able to continue at the expense of “Class B bands.” Gale wrote that the government

¹⁰⁸ “ODT Gives Negro Bands 3-Month Trial Respite on Bus Ban, but Limits Tours Strictly to Southern Territory,” *Variety*, August 26, 1942, 41.

¹⁰⁹ “No More Buses for Band Tours,” *Down Beat*, December 15, 1942, 25.

¹¹⁰ John Modell, Marc Goulden, and Sigurdur Magnusson, “World War II in the Lives of Black Americans: Some Findings and an Interpretation,” in Walter L Hixson, ed. *The American Experience in World War II: The American People at War: Minorities and Women in the Second World War* vol. 10 (New York: Routledge, 2003), 120.

¹¹¹ “ODT Gives Negro Bands 3-Month Trial Respite on Bus Ban, but Limits Tours Strictly to Southern Territory,” *Variety*, August 26, 1942, 41.

¹¹² “Mapping Negro Bands’ 3-Mo. Bus Sked,” *Variety*, September 9, 1942, 31.

¹¹³ Moe Gale, “Colored Bands Doomed?” *Variety*, October 7, 1942, 42.

understood all the problems of travel restrictions and bands—that it understood that “one-nighters through the South by train [were] impractical,” and thus had authorised the five buses for their use for three months. However, despite the fair article and his apparent concern, even he did not question how five buses would be enough.

As African American bands started to use their three months and five buses, white bands took up the cry for easing of travel restrictions as well. The army, United Services Organisation (USO) and band agents worked together on a plan to allow a restricted number of white bands to also use buses for transportation.¹¹⁴ The plan only covered the South, and stipulated that bands play at army camps at least two out of every seven days. No such plans were laid out for other parts of the country as the army believed that only the South suffered chronically from shortage of bands and lack of transportation.¹¹⁵ Rather than grant an extremely short-term solution though, as had been done for African American bands, the ODT gave approval to a longer plan (at least six months) for white bands.¹¹⁶

Many bands responded to the travel restrictions by avoiding tours as much as possible. Within the first year of the war, the shortage of bands combined with the difficulties of getting them to army and navy bases around the country led to a meeting in September 1942 between the army and band agents to try and devise a better scheme.¹¹⁷ At the meeting, the agents pointed out that in order to play the army camps for free the bands needed to play commercial dates as well—to help offset the costs, and because Wallace had not won his argument about musicians being paid for their services. All the travel restrictions (the limited trial for African American bands obviously did not help everybody) meant that playing civilian dates as well, proved

¹¹⁴ See Chapter 3 for further details about the United Services Organisation (USO).

¹¹⁵ “Neglected South Gets Bus Okay; Bands Play Two Camps Every 7 Days,” *Variety*, October 21, 1942, 44.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁷ “Army Asks Better Routing of Bands Playing Camps; Agents Point Out Travel Restrictions Detour Leaders,” *Variety*, September 9, 1942, 31.

extremely difficult. The agents argued that in order for more bands to play armed forces' camps, the government restrictions would have to end, but even they agreed, and understood, that this was unlikely at that time.¹¹⁸ The situation continued throughout the war as travel difficulties hindered all bands from appearances, free or otherwise.

The danceries and ballrooms outside of the major population centres also noticed the effect of musicians' struggles with travel restrictions—the ballrooms needed bands to play at them in order to attract dancers; without bands, the ballrooms closed down. While the debate continued over the influence of the war and rationing on the public's desire or will to travel for entertainment, it seemed that people did not stop attending dances and concerts. However, the “average name band [was] avoiding road work as much as possible.”¹¹⁹ “Insufficient gasoline, lack of buses and rubber tires, and almost insurmountable train schedules [were] forcing [band] leaders to forego all but tiny fractions of their pre-war road itineraries,” wrote Bernie Woods—this was the crux of the matter.¹²⁰ Part of the problem in terms of gasoline was that all bands had been classified as only warranting a “B” ration card for fuel, which limited them to 470 miles a month, unless they were travelling on war work duties.¹²¹

In an effort to combat the effect of bands not travelling, some Chicago night spots signed name bands to longer contracts, hoping that by keeping them in one place, the bands would be more likely to travel there in the first place. Some of the clubs even signed bands for the duration of the war.¹²² Bands sought security as well, and as *Billboard* noted, a “Concrete sign of [the] influence already exerted on baton wavers is the rush of the latter to grab off theatre and hotel dates,” as opposed to going

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ Bernie Woods, “Name Bands Just Can’t Stand Those Grueling One-Nighters,” *Variety*, October 7, 1942, 42.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ “Bands Get B Gas Cards; No More,” *Down Beat*, August 1, 1942, 2.

¹²² “Longer Runs For Bands Due to War,” *Variety*, November 11, 1942, 1.

on the road.¹²³ Two years later, the problem of insufficient bands to fill the demand for popular music entertainment remained. Band leaders still showed reluctance to engage in a series of one-nighters. The reasons included continued poor transportation networks (the main issue two years earlier) and lodging problems. These reasons outweighed the significantly higher wages that agencies and dance spots were offering by 1944. Even when war ended in 1945, bands were still leery of engaging in one-night tours, although industry insiders were predicting that such engagements would soon pick up again.¹²⁴

Although Herbie Fields and his orchestra experienced extra difficulties in playing one-nighters because they were African American, the experience of that band on one particular engagement in Norfolk, Virginia, highlighted the sort of trouble that touring caused all bands, whether black or white. Unable to reserve hotel rooms, many of the band slept in cars on the street.¹²⁵ The account of bands' difficulties by bandleader Richard Himber published in *Variety* in April 1943, is worth repeating here:

On the road for MCA

Where it's all work and no play.

You probably laughed at this parody on "Mandalay" time and time again, and believe me, brother, it's no laughing matter now. Draft, transportation, food rationing, gas rationing and shoe rationing, and defence plants, have made the old nightmare of the road a veritable paradise as compared with the road of today.

I don't have to explain about the draft—you have probably been told many times that the orchestra leader of today doesn't know who will be on the bandstand the next day. As for myself, I can tell you that it requires simplifying many arrangements in order to insure a good sounding band. As a matter of fact, I keep two arrangements of practically every number. If the man I get tomorrow is exceptional, out come the exceptional parts. . . . As far as transportation goes, you can write your own ticket, because Pullman

¹²³ "Washington Key Point for All Show Biz Due to War Rules," *Billboard*, July 4, 1942, 11; "Tire, Gas Shortage Makes Location Stands Best Bet," *Down Beat*, March 15, 1942, 1.

¹²⁴ "One-Nighter Survey Indicates Lotta Huffin,' Puffin,' Few Facts," *Billboard*, September 29, 1945, 20.

¹²⁵ "Inside Stuff—Orchestras—Music," *Variety*, July 12, 1944, 33. Herbie Fields led an army band at Fort Dix, New Jersey from 1941 to 1943, and after discharge joined Lionel Hampton's group until 1945. This example of his own civilian band must have been short-lived at best, and probably ended because of the difficulties he experienced in leading his own group, as highlighted here. Barry Kernfeld, ed., *The New Grove Dictionary of Jazz* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994), 374.

knows, you can't get one from the railroads or the airlines today. We have ridden in so many coaches that when we are lucky enough to get a Pullman we forget what the hammocks are for.

And food rationing. Well, down South, it's impossible to get any ice cream, very little meat, no canned vegetables and I have offered as high as half a dollar for a Coca-Cola.

Gas rationing has made it difficult for the promoter to fill his dancehall, and he has to count on the soldier trade from the nearby camps to fill his hoofery. Girls who formerly were not allowed to dance together are a common sight now and are accepted as a matter of course, and if you look at the girls dancing around, you will find that shoe rationing has made quite a difference. They are dancing in play shoes now and saving those precious kicks for those Sunday walks.

Defence plants in the towns have made such a terrific change in the hotel accommodation situation that it is hard to believe that the population has gone to war. I have never seen the hotels as crowded or the rooms so scarce. I checked in at the Brown hotel in Louisville and there were 200 reservations ahead of us. Only through the good fortune of having a reservation in two weeks ago was I able to get a room. Today—four days later—the reservations have mounted to 400, and still no rooms, and every town has the same situation. But business in the local night spots is terrific because of this, as the hotel guests have nowhere to go and nothing to do at night inasmuch as the roadhouses are closed. Therefore the night spots in town benefit a great deal.¹²⁶

Himber presented quite the litany of problems facing bands on tour during the war.

His report showed exactly the sort of difficulties that bands faced each time they toured, and maybe provided evidence of why many did not want to go on those tours.

His observations on the double-edged sword, of war workers taking up hotel rooms but also providing most of the paying customers at dances, indicates the effect of the war on the music industry, and the effect of the music industry on the war, in equal measure.

Civilian musicians underwent many challenges during World War II. Always seeking, but never receiving draft exemption and pay when playing for troops, many musicians still were able to find work whenever they wanted it, and many received excellent compensation for their abilities. The war impacted their jobs in myriad ways, including the major disadvantage of travel restrictions, which, given the normal manner in which bands travelled the country, playing one-night engagements, forced

¹²⁶ "Some Sidelights on Bands' Road Problems Today," *Variety*, April 21, 1943, 40.

them to adapt, usually taking more stable, but less lucrative jobs in one city. African American musicians, perhaps, experienced the greatest hardships as a result of travel restrictions. In a general sense, the problems that affected musicians individually had a knock-on effect on the night clubs, ballrooms, hotels, and so on where bands tended to play. With the draft taking many musicians out of the regular scene, the poaching of the best musicians from lower-quality bands, and the difficulty in getting to places to play, many music venues struggled to hire good quality bands throughout the war. Despite all this, musicians and bands remained in great demand, attesting to the important position they held in American society in World War II.

The Live Music Scene in the United States

When the United States declared war on Japan and Germany, the live dance-band industry stuttered. Fearful of what might happen once the full force of the war hit the country, band bookers and music venues shut down operations, slowed their business, or stopped taking requests for appearances.¹²⁷ Such actions seemed the sensible course to follow until people understood how the war might affect performances of live music. With resiliency and vigour, the live music scene took a hiatus of just a few weeks. By the end of December, industry analysts predicted that any slow-down had ended and that the outlook looked extremely positive for all facets of the live music industry.¹²⁸

Those analysts did not foresee the coming American Federation of Musicians (AFM) strike or chose not to believe that it would affect the live music industry too much. And, for the most part, the strike did not affect live music in the same way that it did recorded music. Chairman of the AFM James C Petrillo and his organisation's quest on behalf of song writers and performers for recording rights helped live

¹²⁷ "Coast Spots Set for Eventualities," *Billboard*, January 3, 1942, 6.

¹²⁸ "Dance Biz Recovers from War Chill; Bookings Nearly Normal," *Variety*, December 31, 1941, 40; "Seattle Back to Normal," *Billboard*, January 3, 1942, 5.

performances more than recorded ones for most of the war. As a result, live performances carried even more weight than usual for the average band.

Live performances allowed audiences to hear new music, which the AFM ban generally prevented; they also provided environments for customers to watch their idols in person, to dance and to enjoy a leisure-time activity outside of their own homes—in other words, they provided a social activity at a time when people needed such activities.¹²⁹ Popular music as a leisure-time and/or night-time activity could be found in numerous ways, but for this discussion the two principal methods were concerts and dances. As an alternative entertainment activity, motion picture box offices were perpetually busy, but in early 1942, it was the dance band that was considered the greatest draw at the box office and not the movie itself—even when the two were on the same bill.¹³⁰ Dance orchestras gained much of their live performance business from playing at movie theatres and provided a key reason for people to come to the theatre in the first place. Estimates of bands' worth in terms of box office receipts at movie theatres started at about thirty percent of the total take. The estimate went as high as seventy percent when a less popular film was shown and the band became the main draw for the majority of patrons.¹³¹ In December 1941, basing their predictions on examples from England, band bookers and agencies had predicted dance bands would experience a similar increase in movie theatre box-office receipts in the United States. By February 1942, they had been proved right.¹³²

Restaurants, hotels and ballrooms also provided key business for dance bands. ASCAP took royalties from bands' performances at such locations and in 1942 recorded great increases in those payments. ASCAP and the music industry attributed the record royalties to the effect of the war: "Many dine and dance spots [have

¹²⁹ See Jane Mersky Leder, *Thanks for the Memories: Love, Sex, and World War II* (Washington DC: Potomac Books, 2009), xiv–xvi, for a discussion of relationships and shared experiences during war.

¹³⁰ "Bands No. 1 Theatre B. O.," *Variety*, February 25, 1942, 1.

¹³¹ Joe Schoenfeld, "Bands at Theatre B.O. Peaks," *Variety*, October 7, 1942, 41.

¹³² "Dance Biz Recovers from War Chill; Bookings Nearly Normal," *Variety*, December 31, 1941, 40.

opened] in new war industrial areas and the use of music has been expanded materially by restaurant operators throughout the country," wrote *Variety* magazine in September 1942.¹³³ Within less than a year of the start of the war, music's interaction with the war (and vice versa) had increased business for night spots.

With the war, demand for entertainment rose across the country, and cities that had previously been considered unattractive for top-level bands often shed some of that stigma as war wages and changing populations affected their demographics. Washington DC provided an example of changes some cities underwent. Prior to the war, the best bands shied away from that city because they were not paid well enough by the local clubs and dance venues. With the advent of war, everything changed overnight for Washington DC and the bands because of the massive influx of workers to the region.¹³⁴ By the beginning of February 1942, bandleaders such as Glenn Miller and Dick Stabile travelled to the capital in order to cash in on hotel dance jobs, where couples paid up to five dollars for the privilege of listening and dancing to the top bands.¹³⁵ Such high cover charges made a trip to the city from New York well worth the trouble for bands such as Miller's and Stabile's.

Seattle, Washington, Portland, Oregon and the Los Angeles area also enjoyed a boom in band business as a direct result of the war. The three cities experienced a rapid rise in employment opportunities as a result of war industries thriving, and one consequent reaction was the increase in entertainment available to those war workers. Clubs in the Los Angeles area broke attendance records with regularity. In July 1942, reports of massive attendances for bands such as Harry James's, Jimmie Lunceford's and Jack Teagarden's reached the press. Harry James, at the Palladium in Hollywood, attracted 232,000 fans over the course of an eight-week stay, and Lunceford broke an

¹³³ "ASCAP Quarterly Royalty \$1,100,000; Radio Pays Less, But Totals Not Far Behind the Peak Year of 1940," *Variety*, September 30, 1942, 45.

¹³⁴ Blum, *V was for Victory*, 92.

¹³⁵ "\$5 Café Cover in War-Rich Washington," *Variety*, February 4, 1942, 1.

attendance record held by Duke Ellington at the Trianon in South Gate.¹³⁶ Hal Grayson, a bandleader who worked often in the Northwest, noted that the majority of the increased business occurred in small clubs rather than the big hotels.¹³⁷ He attributed part of this to a sense of thriftiness amongst the war workers, who wanted good entertainment but did not want to pay high prices for it.¹³⁸

The AFM's recording ban, led to a drastic drop in the production of new music. As a result, radio stations had far fewer new songs to play. Consequently, radio networks and stations relied more heavily on direct broadcasts from locations where bands were playing. Unfortunately for the networks, the quality of the performances occasionally suffered due to the lowering of the standards of the big bands, as a result of musicians being drafted. This situation empowered the very best bands by concentrating the available talent, but many second-tier bands suffered from an inability to attract good-quality musicians. The major civilian band leaders' practice of enticing the best musicians from one band to another through incentives and increased pay only exacerbated this concentration of talent.¹³⁹

Despite these effects, radio stations could actually benefit from those same dance band/draft implications. Although the stations did lose some of the local and regional band quality, they gained if they had an armed forces base or camp in their area, as many of the dance bands situated in such camps were of the highest order. Full of professional musicians who spent a great deal of their time practicing and playing, these military bands provided respite for local radio by reducing the impact of the draft, albeit through the draft itself.

While musicians and bands benefited from the increased business, not all the effects of the war were good. In the first year of fighting, bands dealt with

¹³⁶ "Promoters and Dansant Ops in Midwest and Coast Optimistic as Biz Continues Despite War," *Billboard*, July 4, 1942, 25.

¹³⁷ "Northwest Boom Chiefly for Small Danceries, Clubs," *Variety*, February 25, 1942, 35.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*

¹³⁹ "Is There a Musicians Shortage," July 4, *New York Times*, 1943.

conscription, rubber conservation (limited use of tires), gasoline rationing (and consequent travel restrictions) and the restriction of shellac, which made any potential recording difficult, and even shortages in the fabric to make uniforms for their bands.¹⁴⁰ By April 1943, many bandleaders believed the draft (and its follow-on effects) caused the most problems to the continuation of the profitable status quo.¹⁴¹ Losing up to half of the band's members through the draft was common. The consequent practice of headhunting top musicians added to the difficulty of replacing departed musicians in bands and maintaining them.

Naturally, the most successful bands succeeded more often in headhunting new talent, than smaller or less well-known bands. Less-well-known band leaders complained of this difficulty, especially when they played in areas that contained a lot of high quality competition. Band leaders noted "the difficulty in maintaining the same band [members] two nights running, if they [were] appearing in a metropolitan job where Class 'A' leaders can wave twice as much salary under the noses of their men."¹⁴² In this vein, Tommy Dorsey used his prestige and high wages to lure musicians to his band in the fall of 1943. Dorsey took the remainder of his band to New York City to try and recruit new band members for his reorganised band. Leaders in that city worried that they would not be able to compete with his name and money. "Though Dorsey is aiming for a lower pay roll," wrote *Variety*, "he can still afford to pay more money than the majority of rival leaders and they know that if he

¹⁴⁰ Bernie Woods, "Orchestras Outlook," *Variety*, October 7, 1942, 41; "Uniforms on Way Out; Tuxes Coming Back," *Down Beat*, March 1, 1942, 2.

¹⁴¹ "War Forces Orks Away from 802; NY Ops' Nut Up," *Billboard*, October 17, 1942, 20, 24; "National Gas Rationing Added to Inroads of Draft Blackens Western Ork Promotion Picture," *Billboard*, October 17, 1942, 20.

¹⁴² "Turnover in Musician Market Looking More and More Like Mattress Factory," *Variety*, April 1943, 43.

makes one of their men an offer it is almost a foregone conclusion that they'll be forced on the prowl for a replacement."¹⁴³

Dorsey was again involved in problems with musician shortages a few months later. By January 1944, the problem of finding suitably talented musicians reached a zenith, and band leaders found themselves in a disadvantageous position in relation to musicians for the first time. With so few men available and so many band spots open, sidemen could practically set their own wages. In an effort to avoid such issues, some bandleaders opted to recruit former professional musicians who were in the armed forces and stationed close to wherever they played. This tactic was officially against union rules, but with such a dearth of available talent, the Union Locals were often forced to turn a blind eye to the practice.¹⁴⁴ The problem of losing musicians to the draft, to war work, or to other bands occurred again and again throughout the war. Seemingly no band was safe, no matter where they were located.¹⁴⁵

By February 1944, the cost of musicians, transportation and all the other expenses of leading a band led to music industry executives discouraging the idea of starting new bands even though a significant demand existed. Fears that high operating costs would cause any new band to fold within weeks meant that the shortage of musicians and bands continued—and with no musicians to populate new bands, it seems hard to believe that anyone would have wanted to start one. The industry executives placed much of the cause for the increased cost of operating a band on the war, specifically the shortage of musicians, which generally came as a result of the war taking away many established professionals through the draft.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴³ "T. Dorsey's Band Reorg Gives Rival Maestri Concern on Holding Musicians," *Variety*, September 8, 1943, 35.

¹⁴⁴ "Southern AFM Locals 'Wink' At Use of Servicemen and Semi-pros by Union Bands," *Billboard*, June 12, 1943, 45.

¹⁴⁵ "Local Pittsburgh Bands Constantly Changing Faces," *Variety*, January 26, 1944, 45.

¹⁴⁶ "New Band Snags Too Tough," *Variety*, February 16, 1944, 37.

Such trickle-down effects occurred for all the problems facing bands and musicians in World War II, not just manpower issues. Limited travel by bands because of gasoline and rubber rationing led to smaller, rural AFM Locals suffering financially.¹⁴⁷ When bands travelled away from the area in which they were registered, they paid a performance fee to the local AFM Local. The fee was intended to help local bands who might lose jobs because bands travelled into that particular area and took jobs away from the local bands without having to pay a Local membership fee. Restrictions on travel discouraged bands from making such trips, leading to a reduction in fees taken in by regional AFM Locals, which in turn hurt smaller bands that the fee was supposed to help.¹⁴⁸

Night clubs, restaurants, hotels and any other spots that hired bands to play music for functions also dealt with the effects of the shortages of musicians and bands. These difficulties primarily affected the smaller locations or more rural towns, which could not secure big-name bands so easily. Reliant on less-well-known bands (many of which suffered more than the top level bands—as noted above), the outlying locations started hiring any available bands, almost regardless of their playing ability, such was the demand for popular music.¹⁴⁹ These smaller, more remote, locations also had to deal with another effect resulting from the limited number of musicians available. With many bands hiring younger and younger musicians to fill vacant spots, the problem of underage drinking developed in many of the locations the bands played in. More specifically, laws in Pennsylvania forbid the employment of minors in places selling alcohol—obviously a problem for bands with a lot of younger musicians playing in places such as Philadelphia and Pittsburgh.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁷ "National Gas Rationing Added to Inroads of Draft Blackens Ork Promotion Picture," *Billboard*, October 17, 1942, 20.

¹⁴⁸ "AFM Locals Hit Where it Hurts by Lack of Bands," *Variety*, April 21, 1943, 41.

¹⁴⁹ "Maestros Now Unimportant to Cheap Bands; Only demand is 'Can It Play?'" *Variety*, April 21, 1943, 42.

¹⁵⁰ "Teen-age Tooters New Niterly Worry," *Variety*, September 8, 1943, 35.

With big name bands still available and still playing with a full complement of musicians—thanks to the practice of stealing musicians away from lower-level bands—the outlook for bands in vacation locations during the second summer of the war turned upwards. According to *Variety*, the bandleaders of those top level bands all regarded playing in the East Coast hotels and clubs during the summer as critical to their success and were prepared to deal with shortages of gasoline and rubber, and the trials of travelling in wartime conditions in order to do so.¹⁵¹ The East Coast summer vacation spots generally closed during the winter and there had been some speculation during the preceding winter as to whether there would be enough demand for summer vacationing because of the difficulty in travelling.

The overall net result for the live music business in the first full year of war was that audiences were down for one-night stand locations. This was not really a surprise given all the hindrances to playing one-night tours, but it still caused concern in the music industry for what the rest of the war would bring to what had been an extremely lucrative aspect of the business. In particular, the top level bands avoided these tours, and without them, the booking agencies, the night clubs and the patrons all suffered. Revenue from one-night stands dropped fifty percent in 1942 but had represented the “mainstay of band bookings” up to that point.¹⁵² Only the “decided increase in theatre bookings, radio and the film field” kept the live music business at traditionally high income levels.¹⁵³

Despite the gloom, when one-night stand operators could get bands, they “recorded better box office reaction” than in 1941.¹⁵⁴ In the spring of 1942, Bernie Woods, contributing editor for *Variety*, looked towards the coming summer. Woods wrote with cautious optimism about the outlook for touring bands. At the time, the

¹⁵¹ “Summer Season Looks Okay for Bands; Most Spots Set Plans for Reopening,” *Variety*, April 21, 1943, 41.

¹⁵² “War Gives Bands Roughest Year,” *Variety*, January 6, 1943, 189.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

fear of bombings continued, and while unlikely, Woods noted that it had the potential to cause a serious setback in bands' plans. In general though, he believed that people would still manage to travel to see bands in spite of travel restrictions. Woods quoted Harry Moss, agent for MCA, as saying that "dancers will crawl to where a top band is on exhibition if there's no other transportation."¹⁵⁵ They were both right; people wanted and needed entertainment.

As the war moved into its second year, the surprisingly upbeat wartime feeling in the industry continued, partly because the government lifted the pleasure-driving ban on September 1, 1943.¹⁵⁶ Although this permitted many bands to take to the roads again, and potentially play one-night gigs, and, just as importantly, permitted the public to travel more freely, the general fuel and rubber rationing remained in place, thus restricting travel. Gasoline rationing did not fully end until August 1945.¹⁵⁷ However, with the ban lifted, dance clubs, theatres and hotels quickly looked to fill the openings they had available with whatever band talent they could procure. Unfortunately for them, many bands were unavailable because they had taken contracts for longer-term jobs closer to home, hoping to avoid travel difficulties.¹⁵⁸

By the spring of 1944, the big-name bands began to consider some limited one-night tours again. The Midwest in particular had struggled to lure top-level bands while the driving ban was in place. Transportation difficulties had stymied band leaders' desire to travel so far for one-nighters. Tommy Dorsey, now that he had raided others' bands and rid himself of troublesome sidemen, booked a tour of the Midwest for March and April 1944. The dance halls in that region of the country offered such high, guaranteed, payments for well-known bands that Dorsey (and

¹⁵⁵ Bernie Woods, "Good, But Iffy, Biz Outlook for Bands Coming Summer," *Variety*, March 11, 1942, 41.

¹⁵⁶ Blum, *V was for Victory*, 96.

¹⁵⁷ Gasoline rationing began in late 1942 and finally came to an end in August 1945. Dave Kenney, *Minnesota Goes to War: The Home Front during World War II*, (St. Paul, MN: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2005), 50–51.

¹⁵⁸ "1-Niters Can't Get Bands as Gas Ban Eases," *Variety*, September 8, 1943, 35.

others) could not resist the temptation in spite of the difficulty they knew they would have getting there. For his Midwest tour of six one-night stands, the locations guaranteed Dorsey \$21,500, easily covering the cost of getting there.¹⁵⁹

Conclusion

Many scholarly works have touched on the subject of the American popular music industry during World War II; none of them have demonstrated the overall picture, nor the specifics noted in this chapter. Generally, books concerning the American Home Front often include information on music in some degree or other, usually with a reference to dancing and listening to the radio. The various works to have covered the radio industry also include some information on wartime radio. However, almost without exception, the wartime popular music industry is a small facet of those larger works. For example, J. Fred MacDonald's *Don't Touch That Dial: Radio Programming in American Life from 1920 to 1960* spends just fifteen pages on wartime radio, and little of that space is devoted specifically to popular music. Elements of this chapter that have either been ignored completely or given short shrift by earlier works include the direct and overt impact of popular music on radio broadcasters, the consideration of the draft and all its implications for musicians, the attempts to gain pay for civilian musicians on war work, the effects of rationing on big bands, and, the position of African American popular music bands as a result of rationing and restrictions.

In spite of the problems encountered by musicians and bands, and because of the increased opportunities afforded by the war, by the fall of 1943 industry insiders heralded the success of the business in purely financial terms—the likes of which had not been expected for the duration of the war.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁹ "Name Bands' 1-Niter Upbeat," *Variety*, March 8, 1944, 43.

¹⁶⁰ "Exit Red Ink for Bands," *Variety*, September 8, 1943, 35.

World War II forced the naturally conservative music industry to deal with specific war-related challenges that caused changes in thinking or adoption of new practices. Brown outs on the coasts ended roof-top performances at big hotels for a time, rationing forced bands to stop touring and nightclub taxes affected how and where bands performed. These challenges and the many others brought about by the war created dynamic thinking within the industry. Rationing of gas for instance, moved the big name bands into longer hotel engagements with direct hookups to radio from wherever they were to help cross-promote new records. Nightclub taxes meant many bands moved away from adding singers when they performed live, and yet, they could not record because the AFM ban allowed only vocalists to record. The industry solution meant singers recorded and gained a new wave of followers on jukeboxes and radio, but bands performed live on direct hookups, thus maintaining their own ardent fans. Such thinking belied the conservative nature of the business. Furthermore, the war created new radio programming, specifically aimed at the armed forces, with shows full of popular music for the young, modern audience they served. Yet, at the same time, no new radios could be manufactured, no new gramophone needles were available, and shellac was at a premium; even paper shortages caused the music industry problems.¹⁶¹

Boosted by some of the most successful years on record to that date, the music industry underwent profound changes during World War II. Box office receipts were at an all-time high, musicians were receiving the highest wages they had ever commanded and radio had become the predominant form of public entertainment.¹⁶² The American music industry survived the debilitating effects of the AFM strike, rationing, the draft taking musicians and singers, and still managed to thrive during World War II. Even though it tried out new ideas, the industry adopted a generally

¹⁶¹ "Recording Sliced One-Third," *Down Beat*, May 1, 1942, 1.

¹⁶² Lewis A Erenberg, *Swinging the Dream: Big Band Jazz and the Rebirth of American Culture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 214.

conservative approach, choosing to engage in pro-war, nationalistic efforts, sticking with what it knew worked best in terms of style of music, reverting to popular pre-war sounds when prudent, and providing the consuming public with reminders of the good times.¹⁶³ Lewis Erenberg wrote that popular music took on “extra emotional weight” during World War II, but it was the proponents of the music, those within the industry, who gave a lot of that emotional weight to what they did.¹⁶⁴

However, war also proved beneficial for the industry by creating a heightened sense of living for today, by putting more money in people’s pockets, which they could spend on leisure at a cheaper rate than prior to the war, and by forcing bands to contract thereby concentrating the best available talent in fewer bands. The war affected the music industry in both positive and negative ways, encouraging the industry to follow conservative tendencies on the one hand, but providing incentives to break from the mould on the other. Full of temporary problems and short-term solutions, the industry entered the war in a healthy situation, survived what the war had to throw at it, and ended the war just as healthy as it had been when the war started.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶³ Kenney, *Recorded Music*, 193.

¹⁶⁴ Erenberg, *Swinging the Dream*,

¹⁶⁵ With regard to analysis of the popular music industry through statistics, it is necessary to consider that the American music industry during the war was not simply a slave to those numbers. The music industry interacted on other levels with its customers or users as well. Indelibly woven into American life, the industry had a direct, interactive relationship with the public, and played a role in nearly every person’s life in one way or another. So, while sales and attendance figures are crucial to showing the impact of the war on business, there are other indicators with which that impact—or interaction—may be measured. Adaptation of radio programming as a result of perceived or recorded changes in the demand of the listener; decisions by recording companies and Tin Pan Alley writers to promote a certain style of music rather than another; those same record executives advocating the mass production of one song but not the next; the public’s own demand for certain types of songs, the changes in radio sponsorship and developments in consumer desires for live entertainment; all these decisions, less statistical, more subjective, were affected by the war.

Chapter 3

American Military Bands during World War II

Military bands in the United States armed forces date back to between 1813 and 1815 when the first official military band came into existence.¹ Since then, bands and musicians have continuously been both a formal and informal part of United States military. Official regimental bands have played and fought in conflicts throughout American history and continued to do so throughout World War II. Unofficial recreational and entertainment bands also played a significant role in the provision of music to troops during World War II. The place of such bands in the United States armed forces during World War II and the various methods for forming bands form the basis of this chapter. The purpose here is to examine the position of popular-music bands within the American military during World War II, and to provide analysis of what efforts the military and government made to integrate such bands into the armed forces. By focusing on the development of music and bands as an aspect of the entertainment needs of American soldiers, sailors, and airmen it is possible to ascertain the importance placed on music and musicians by the authorities. World War II, unlike any conflict before it, made full and integrated use of music as part of its military needs, and this chapter places emphasis on how and why that was achieved.

Although significantly different in their make-up and role, the official and

¹ <http://bands.army.mil/history/default.asp?chapter=6>—as accessed May 31, 2005. The Army Bands website indicated that there is some confusion as to the precise date from which a formally organised and funded army band has existed. Correspondence from and to General Swift indicated that it was at some point between 1813 and 1815 that he summoned elements of smaller regimental bands to West Point (and then to Sacket's Harbour, NY) to create the full military band comprising twenty-four pieces.

unofficial bands in the American armed forces had equally important roles to play. Despite army bandsman Frank Mathias's belief that dance bands in the American military were more like a "nest of song-birds twittering in the mouth of a cannon," than a valuable part of the military might, World War II provided the impetus for military bands to become an integral and important part of the recreational activities of the men and women in uniform.² The number of bands grew during the war in proportion to this increased importance. By the end of the war, the army alone contained more than six hundred official bands, with "literally hundreds of smaller voluntary instrumental organizations in the United States Army all over the world."³

At the start of World War II the existing official military bands were in limited and relatively uncoordinated use. Provision of entertainment for troops remained close to where it had been at the end of World War I, and basically reinforced Major General Leonard Wood's comment from that conflict that "There isn't anything in the world that will raise a soldier's spirit like a good catchy march."⁴ Although some efforts had been made during World War I to provide entertainment for the troops (Irving Berlin's *Yip Yip Yaphank* soldier show being one of the most successful examples), those efforts had been haphazard and the armed forces had not demonstrated a great deal of support for entertainment programmes. In terms of musical entertainment in the military, little changed between the two world wars. As such, more than a year after the United States joined the war, questions started to be raised both internally and in the public forum about how best to utilise military music

² Frank F. Mathias, *GI Jive: An Army Bandsman in World War II*, (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1982), 39.

³ <http://bands.army.mil/history/default.asp?chapter=21>—as accessed, May 31, 2005; Letter from Florence Taaffe, Technical Information Branch, Special Service Division to John M Russell, Executive Director, JANC on Welfare and Recreation, 16 October, 1945, RG 225, Box 33, NARA II, College Park, MD. Precise figures for the number of informally formed recreational bands in United States forces are not available.

⁴ "These Are U.S. Soldiers," *Life*, April 13, 1942, 38.

and bands in wartime.⁵

Much of the impetus for these questions came from changes in American society, and developments in modern warfare. The improvement of military technology that allowed for efficient and quick movement of troops and the consequent advent of “Blitzkrieg” tactics, pushed the traditional marching band from the front of the column towards the rear. No longer was it necessary, or indeed practical, to have a band beating time as men marched in long columns to the chosen battlefield and then towards the enemy. Instead, entire armies moving in smaller and more mobile troop units, with less centralisation, formed much of the army’s modern system.⁶ These units needed to move stealthily and quickly without the aid of drums and bugles to bring them into position.

Innovations in radio technology allowed commanders to organise troops without alerting the enemy to their position.⁷ As a result of such changes, the original reasons for using marching bands on the battlefield all but disappeared. Major Howard Bronson of the Special Services Division noted that:

The scientific application of music relegates the strident and blood-curdling vocal efforts of our warlike ancestors to the limbo of the past and in place thereof, offers our soldiers of the present, a musical formula which is not intended to make of him a blood-thirsty savage but rather, a self-reliant, well-balanced, practical, efficient and impersonal fighter who understands why he is fighting and wants to do the job properly and as quickly as possible.⁸

At the end of the war, the Special Service Division commented on these differences, specifically noting that “In World War I we had a singing Army. In this war the story is somewhat different. Our Army is mobile rather an Army of marching men.

⁵ William H Young and Nancy K Young, *Music of the World War II Era* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2008), 17.

⁶ During the early 1920s, “General von Seeckt, the head of the German military, wrote that the future of warfare [would] be in operating smaller but highly mobile high quality forces which would be made even more efficient by support from aircraft.” <http://www.2worldwar2.com/blitzkrieg.htm> as accessed August 1, 2010.

⁷ For an excellent summary of the development and use of radio technology in the various militaries of World War II, see <http://www.nasaa-home.org/history/his5comms.htm> as accessed August 1, 2010.

⁸ Major Howard C. Bronson, address to “Town Hall of the Air” discussion on *Music in War Time America*, Station WMCA, New York City, January 12, 1943.

Soldiers often are broken up into small units generally; they travel by truck in small groups. They are spread all over the world, in isolated spots as well as centralized areas.”⁹ The Joint Army and Navy Committee on Recreation and Welfare, also emphasised these changes in June 1943. Responding to a question raised as to whether music might be used for discipline, the committee pointed out that “the men in the Services think of music as entertainment and relaxation and it is doubtful if you could change them.”¹⁰ And, *Billboard* also commented on the changes in the way war was fought and what that meant for music: “Today we have a mechanised war—and mechanised use of music, too. Instead of songs to cheer the lagging soldier, there’s a long line of motor trucks to whisk him from camp to front-line duties, and back home the juke box on the corner, together with the radio in the living room serves to bring us the music of the moment. It’s a mechanised age, and music has accepted the mechanisation, taking the change in stride.”¹¹ By the time the Americans entered World War II, the marching band had no obvious tactical function on the battlefield left.¹²

Societal Changes and Their Effects on Military Bands

At the same time that these technological and tactical developments occurred

⁹ Letter from Florence Taaffe, Technical Information Branch, Special Service Division to John M Russell, Executive Director, JANCO on Welfare and Recreation, 16 October, 1945, RG 225, Box 33, NARA II, College Park, MD.

¹⁰ Minutes of the meeting of the Music Advisory Council of the Joint Army and Navy Committee on Welfare and Recreation, June 3, 1943, RG 225, Box 33, NARA II.

¹¹ “War Songs on Wheel and Wing,” *The Billboard 1944 Year Book*, 45.

¹² <http://www.army.mil/cmh-pg/documents/abnops/tabbb.htm> as accessed October 16, 2007; <http://www.army.mil/cmh-pg/BOOKS/amh/amh-22.htm> as accessed October 16, 2007. The preceding two websites contain documents from the Center for Military History relating to strategy and tactics used in certain theatres during WWII. This is by no means a comprehensive listing of sources that discuss such matters, but the two articles in question do point to the rapid movement of troops, and the nature of warfare in World War II, which meant that army bands were not used for tactical manoeuvres as they previously had been. Although neither article specifically mentions the use or otherwise of military bands, it is the fact that they play no part in the discussion at all that warrants their use as sources here. The improvement in military capabilities in terms of troop movement and transportation negated the need for a tactical band to be present at the front. Bands took on the role of morale booster and could be brought to troops (or vice versa) as and when needed, thereby keeping out of the dangers of the front line.

in the military, new technology also shaped the American public's entertainment habits, and thus, by extension those of the men and women in the military as well. Furthermore, the American soldier had changed. A report produced for the army by *New York Times* reporter Hilton H. Railey, but never made public, indicated that, "Command, vintage of 1917, appears naively and disconcertingly unaware that its men, vintage of 1940, are a different breed of cat."¹³ That different breed preferred a different type of music. By 1941, radio had become the predominant form of easily-accessible entertainment for most Americans. Relatively inexpensive gramophone records and players (especially in comparison to pianos) also provided comfortable home entertainment. Consequently, music was readily available to all who wished to listen to it. As the president of the National Music Council noted, "To turn on music over the radio is as easy as reaching for a glass of water."¹⁴ Generalised changes in music tastes also occurred over the same inter-war period, resulting in natural developments in music styles and the public's appreciation of different sounds and techniques.¹⁵

These changes, combined with the technological developments in radio and phonographs had shifted home-based entertainment from participatory to more overtly auditory.¹⁶ Rather than gathering in groups to play and listen to music, and to accompany it with song—as had been the case during the World War I—Americans now tended to engage with music more by listening to others perform music for them through the mediums of radio and phonograph instead of playing the music

¹³ Lee B Kennett, *GI: The American Soldier in World War II* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1997), 70.

¹⁴ Edwin Hughes, president of the National Music Council, "Music in Wartime and Post-war America," Address before the Annual Meeting of the Music Library Association, n.d. RG 225, Box 33, NARA II, College Park, MD.

¹⁵ See for example, Geoffrey C Ward and Ken Burns, *Jazz: A History of America's Music* (London: Pimlico, 2001), and David ewes, *All the Years of American Popular Music: A Comprehensive History* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1977) for full discussions of the interwar years and the progression of music during that time.

¹⁶ David Ewen argues that this move to non-participatory enjoyment of music started in the 1920s.

themselves.¹⁷ Marshall Bartholomew, a presenter at the Music Educators National Conference in Milwaukee in April 1942, argued along similar lines, stating that Americans “take no active part in anything.” Bartholomew continued, “We must learn to take the singing spirit with us into our daily work.” Moving to the link between civilian society’s tastes and their impact on the military, he wished that the United States government would encourage this same ethos within the army and navy. At the same time, he believed that the modern mechanised army had little time for something as prosaic as singing.¹⁸ Despite seeming to grasp the issues, Bartholomew still argued for a return to earlier practices; his calls were already out of date.

Looking back to World War I, the Samuel T Williamson, a *New York Times* reporter, highlighted the trend for group singing that had been popular at the time. “Probably more larynxes were strained by song during World War I than at any other time in our history,” wrote Williamson. “For one reason, group or community singing was considered as much a part of our war effort as rolling bandages, serving out coffee and cigarettes at canteens and knitting socks for soldiers. Another reason was that people liked it. It was something new. It gave them a chance to let themselves go.”¹⁹

By World War II, much of the public tradition of group singing had disappeared. Indeed this change in society was summed up in a single line from a Music Adviser’s report in the summer of 1943. “The average American boy,” the report states, “is not trained in self-entertainment and needs encouragement and coaching along that line.”²⁰ But none of these comments took into consideration the nature of the change as one significantly affected by technology. The development of

¹⁷ Despite this fact, sheet music sales remained high throughout the war, and even enjoyed one or two record-setting years. *All the Years of American Popular Music*, 278.

¹⁸ Marshall Bartholomew, “Music in a World at War,” Address before the Music Educators National Conference, Milwaukee, April 2, 1942. RG 225, Box 33, NARA II, College Park, MD.

¹⁹ Samuel T Williamson, “A Singing Army? Not Yet; But,” *New York Times*, November 15, 1942, SM12.

²⁰ “Sixth Digest of Reports from Music Advisers,” RG 225, Box 33, NARA II, College Park, MD.

mass communication occurred largely between the two world wars, so that by the start of World War II the preferred manner of engaging with music had altered dramatically. The “changing relationship between the human organism and the machine,” in this case between people and how they listened to music, had occurred in the inter-war period.²¹ This changing relationship is significant because the “development of methods of intelligible reproduction where ‘interpersonal communication’ could be disseminated more widely to the group and, eventually, to the mass audience,” is essentially what happened with recorded music and radio in the build up to World War II.²² Even if nothing else had changed, the development of high quality reproduction techniques in the form of gramophone records and the development of radio had completely shifted the state of mass musical entertainment between the wars.

As an example of these changes, at the start of the war, the military authorities hoped to encourage soldiers to sing in some fashion or other, but by the time the war ended that hope had largely ended. The Army Hit Kit (also known as the Army Song Book), which was distributed to troops everywhere, had originally included words to help soldiers accompany the music also supplied in the kit. The kit, produced by the “Adjutant General’s Office in collaboration with the Library of Congress, and Published by the Secretary of War,” included songs such as the national anthem, “My Wild Irish Rose,” and everything in between.²³ However, by April 1945 the words had been removed completely, as the Special Services Department acknowledged that “popular music was not intended for mass singing [any more].”²⁴ Marching bands no longer functioned as they once had and Americans no longer sang as they once had. The combination precipitated a change in military bands and led to the formation of

²¹ Charles S Steinberg, ed., *Mass Media and Communication* (New York: Hastings House, 1966), 5.

²² *Ibid.*, 5.

²³ Samuel T Williamson, “A Singing Army? Not Yet; But,” *New York Times*, November 15, 1942, SM12.

²⁴ Letter from Harold Spivacke to Lieutenant Colonel Howard Bronson, April 11, 1945. RG 225, Box 36, NARA II, College Park, MD.

bands that played to entertain the troops, rather than to lead, direct, or inform them.

The crucial difference between the two eras of military bands lay with the function of the band as entertainer rather than tactical entity.

Initial Provision of Musical Entertainment in the American Military

Although warfare and society's entertainment choices changed relatively rapidly, the military reacted rather more slowly or perhaps deliberately, to the need for changes in the provision of music to the troops. However, the armed forces did acknowledge that its men enjoyed popular music and, as a result, attempted to provide such entertainment officially.²⁵ The relatively slow reaction in comparison to the music industry's own changes and development came about as a result of popular music not having the same importance in the armed forces prior to World War II as it did in civilian society. The limited provision of mass entertainment for troops of World War I followed by a much smaller peacetime American military (with limited international engagements in that period) meant that it was starting from a point behind that of regular society. Not having a huge standing army, nor having to provide entertainment on any real scale during the interwar years did not encourage the armed forces to build entertainment provisions into its structure.

The army based its provision of organised bands on Army Regulation No, 250-5, passed in 1924 (and updated in 1933). That regulation covered the general outlines for authorised bands (which were to consist of twenty-eight pieces), but little else.²⁶ Aside from stipulating that official bands be formed at the behest of regimental commanders, by requesting specific musicians, playing specific instruments, and the

²⁵ Fact sheet on the Army's Music Programme as compiled by Florence Taaffe, director of information and reports, Technical Information Branch, SSD in a letter from Taaffe to John M Russell, Executive Director, Joint Army and Navy Committee on Welfare and Recreation, October 16, 1945 from an Army survey in 1943 on soldiers' radio programme preferences. Record Group 225, Box 33, National Archives and Record Administration II (NARA II), College Park, MD.

²⁶ Samuel T Williamson, "A Singing Army? Not Yet; But," *New York Times*, November 15, 1942, SM12.

appropriations to be used for such positions, the two most relevant of the five main points concerning bands in World War II involved volunteer bands, and mixing civilian and military musical jobs.

The regulations for volunteer bands detailed that these should only be formed at “posts, camps or stations of a relatively permanent nature, without a regularly authorised band,” and that playing in such bands should be voluntary.²⁷ When the first stipulation was met, funds could be approved for purchase of instruments and music by the commanding officer, providing “such expenditures tend[ed] to promote the contentment and general welfare of the personnel of the post, camp, or station.”²⁸ This rule changed twice, once in 1933 and then again in 1944. The addenda mainly concerned appropriations for instruments and music, and required that volunteer-band duties should not interfere with regular military duties. Paragraph four in the original 1924 regulations referred to “competition with civilian bands,” and did not change with either of the subsequent addenda. This paragraph noted that:

No enlisted man in the active service of the United States in the Army, whether a noncommissioned officer, musicians, or private, shall be detailed, ordered, or permitted to leave his post to engage in any pursuit, business, or performance in civil life for emolument, hire, or otherwise, when the same shall interfere with the customary employment and regular engagement of local civilians in the respective arts, trades, or professions.²⁹

As shall be shown, this statement was almost wilfully ignored by many musician-soldiers during World War II.

In defence of the government agencies and their apparent reluctance to adapt to the changes in tastes off, and requirements, music, Dr Harold W Dodds, president of Princeton University noted in February 1942, that the government was at least

²⁷ Army Regulations No. 250-5, War Department, December 31, 1924. Changed March 1, 1933, and June 1, 1944.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ *Ibid.*

“making provisions for musical activities among men in the military service.”³⁰ Four months later, the War Department decreed that “every effort should be made to encourage the organisation and production of amateur dramatic and musical entertainment and for the participation of the maximum number of men therein.”³¹ The extra effort was to be applied, because as the War Department noted, “morale underlies all aspects of military life.”³² Morale had been a serious issue since the summer of 1941 in the early build up, and it had continued to bother military authorities since then.³³ The music played by military bands, and the bands themselves, it was hoped, would improve that underlying morale.

Despite these early moves towards improving the provision of music, criticism of the (perceived) slow-to-react military inevitably followed. Much of that criticism took the form of comments such as those from Lloyd Frederick Sunderman, the director of music at the State Normal School in Oswego, New York.³⁴ In July 1943, he declared that until that point the military had not made the best use of the available musical talent.³⁵ Sunderman advised that the army organise as many bands as possible and certainly, in his mind at least, it was imperative that every camp should have a musical director of some description and at least one band. He argued that official military bands’ personnel should be increased and that incentives in the form of career advancement within the army should be made available to soldier-musicians.³⁶ Prior to Sunderman’s assertion, musicians in the armed forces could not rise up the ranks and achieve officer ratings. Their military careers were stalled by the

³⁰ “Forward March with Music: Powerful Statements from Great Leaders Establish Music’s Important Role in the Fight for Freedom,” *L’Etude Music Magazine*, February 1942, 80.

³¹ US War Department, Mobilisation Regulations, MR 1–10, Section on Morale, June 12, 1942. RG 225, Box 37, NARA II, College Park, MD.

³² US War Department, Mobilisation Regulations, MR 1–10, Section on Morale, June 12, 1942. RG 225, Box 37, NARA II, College Park, MD.

³³ Lee B Kennett, *GI: The American Soldier in World War II* (Norman: The University of Oklahoma Press, 1997), 67–69.

³⁴ Lloyd Frederick Sunderman was an accepted expert in music education and extensively published in that same field.

³⁵ Lloyd Frederick Sunderman, “Band Music and Patriotism,” *L’Etude Music Magazine*, July 1943, 444.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

fact that they were musicians first and soldiers second. Having not spent time and money on entertainment between the wars, and thus, not having given entertainment much thought, it was unsurprising that the criticisms originated from without the army rather than from within.

Sunderman explained that “the greatest concomitant of [a] band programme would be its effect upon the esprit de corps of millions of American servicemen and laymen.”³⁷ With no hint of a direct reaction to such commentary, that same month (July) the War Department announced that it required a “singing soldiery”—in itself, perhaps the best indication that it was out of step with the thinking of the nation and the young men serving in the armed forces.³⁸ The announcement at least indicated that the War Department appeared to recognise the importance of music in the military.

Sunderman’s was not the only criticism of the military’s provision and use of music, but it neatly sums up the general disposition. By July 1943, the military had still not formed enough bands to meet the needs of the men. In an effort to bridge the gap between supply and demand, officers often made requests of the nearest Musicians’ Union Local to supply them with dance bands for entertainment purposes.³⁹ In other words, the limited number of available dance bands within the forces resulted in civilian bands filling the gap in military needs. This occurred only for purposes of entertaining the troops, not for any regular military musical engagements. However, it does highlight how far away the military remained from providing sufficient bands and infrastructure to fill the needs of the men.

In October 1943 (with impeccable, and rather fortuitous, timing), the War Department announced the re-structuring of the Morale Division into the Special

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ William D Revelli, “How Music can Help Win the War,” *L’Etude Music Magazine*, November 1942, 741.

³⁹ “Music—A Prime Wartime Necessity,” Editorial, *L’Etude Music Magazine*, July 1942, 435.

Service Division (SSD).⁴⁰ The War Department tasked the SSD with improving the “welfare and the physical and psychological stamina of the troops,” and “every regiment ha[d] its [own] special service officer for supervision of entertainment and recreation.”⁴¹ This development finalised the transition of the provision of entertainment from where it had been at the end of World War I to its structure during World War II, and more precisely set the position of bands within the armed forces.

Just before the armistice at the end of World War I, the War Department had established up the Morale Branch. Its mission statement had been to “research into factors affecting the morale of the troops and the development of remedial measures.”⁴² The Morale Branch quickly attempted to carry out these orders, but the end of the war, cut backs and limited funds, combined with far fewer men in active service, led to the Morale Branch closing down.⁴³ The Morale Branch remained inactive until March 8, 1941, when Secretary of War Stimson created a new Morale Branch to function under the Army’s Chief of Staff.⁴⁴ The Second World War version received orders to provide in-camp recreation and to research factors affecting morale within the armed forces.⁴⁵ In-camp recreation consisted of numerous activities including sports and athletic events such as boxing competitions and baseball games,

⁴⁰ The Morale Division was set up in July 1940, before becoming the Morale Branch, functioning under the Army’s Chief of Staff in March 1941. In January 1942, the Morale Branch became the Special Services Branch. Two months later, in March 1942, the Branch became the Office of the Chief, Special Service, under the Commanding General, Services of Supply. This office then changed to become the Special Service Division, still under the Services of Supply, in July 1942. In October 1943, the new Special Service Division was set up under Brigadier General Byron. Record Group 225, Box 42, National Archives and Record Administration II, College Park, MD.

⁴¹ Williamson, “A Singing Army?” SM12.

⁴² Frederick H. Osborn, “Recreation, Welfare, and Morale of the American Soldier,” *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 220 (March 1942): 50. Frederick H. Osborn was a Brigadier General and Chief of the Special Services Branch (later the SSD).

⁴³ Frederick H. Osborn, “Recreation, Welfare, and Morale of the American Soldier,” *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 220 (March 1942): 50.

⁴⁴ Henry Lewis Stimson served as Secretary of War under both Presidents Roosevelt and Truman from 1940–1945. Born in New York in 1867 he served in World War I before assuming the post of Secretary of State from 1931 to 1940; *New York Times*, October 21, 1950; RG 225, Box 42, NARA II, College Park, MD. It is not clear from the documents held at the National Archives as to whether this was the Chief of Staff of the General Staff, or the Chief of Staff of the Army Service Forces, or the Chief of Staff of the Army Ground Forces, but most likely, it was the Chief of Staff of the Army Service Forces.

⁴⁵ Frederick H. Osborn, “Recreation, Welfare, and Morale of the American Soldier,” *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 220 (March 1942): 51.

and other activities such as letter-writing, movies and music.

The (new) Morale Branch consisted of six divisions: the Army Exchange Service, the Army Motion Picture Service, the Welfare and Recreation Division, the Services Division, the Morale Research Division and the Information Division.⁴⁶ For the provision of musical entertainment, the Services Division and the Welfare and Recreation Division held the most relevance and importance—up until March 1, 1943, when the Music Section was formed.⁴⁷ By the end of the war, the Music Section had become the Music Branch.⁴⁸ The Services Division planned and constructed facilities for entertainment in camps and at bases. These facilities included mess halls, and barracks specifically for relaxation. Additionally, both types of buildings were often used for musical entertainment in smaller camps.

At the regimental level, the Service Division provided a recreational hall, which was a “building seating three hundred and forty men, equipped with a stage and dressing rooms.”⁴⁹ Specific activities to take place in the recreation halls included plays and concerts. At the division level—fifteen to eighteen thousand men—the buildings also included a “great hall for dancing,” which were usually in “active use” at all times as the “large camps [were] badly overcrowded.”⁵⁰ These facilities all provided room for musical entertainment and were used as such on a regular basis. Finally, the Welfare and Recreation Division concerned itself primarily with producing policy on aspects of military life such as amateur and professional dramatics, and singing and music activities.⁵¹ Thus by the time the War Department created the Special Services Division (SSD), all these programmes had been

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 52.

⁴⁷ Otto H Helbig, *A History of Music in the US Armed Forces During World War II* (New Jersey: Trenton State College, 1966), 9.

⁴⁸ Letter from Harold Spivacke to Lieutenant Colonel Howard Bronson, March 29, 1945. RG225, Box 36, NARA II, College Park, MD.

⁴⁹ Frederick H. Osborn, “Recreation, Welfare, and Morale of the American Soldier,” *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 220 (March 1942): 52.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 51.

established for at least two years.

Under the leadership of Brigadier (later Major) General Joseph W Byron, the SSD supported and helped provide entertainment (including music) for the benefit of the morale of servicemen.⁵² Byron and the department provided recreational services and post-exchange services for men in all theatres of operation. At the end of the war, Byron stated that of all the recreational services provided—music, movies, soldier shows, library services, sports and other games and entertainment—music was the most important, noting that the SSD concurred with its comments that music was the “heart of any programme of entertainment.”⁵³ However, despite Byron’s and the SSD’s confidence, some elements of the War Department—including even the Morale Branch—could not see the benefit of music at all. The chief of the Athletic and Recreation Branch went so far as to state in the summer of 1941 that “you aren’t going to win the war with piccolos.”⁵⁴ By 1942 those words started to sound rather hollow as changes to the provision of music for the forces began to indicate that while piccolos did not literally vanquish the enemy, the good spirits and morale of soldiers caused by such instruments certainly stirred the men to victory.

As part of the effort to provide the best possible musical entertainment, the SSD worked closely with the Joint Army and Navy Committee (JANC) on Welfare and Recreation’s Music Advisory Council (and its many civilian co-organisations).⁵⁵

⁵² Brigadier General Joseph W Byron was the head of the Army Special Service Division at the time of this appointment and served throughout WWII in that position. He was appointed head of the Special Service Division at its inception in October 1943. RG 225, Box 42, NARA II, College Park, MD.

⁵³ “The Army’s Music Program,” *Music Educators Journal*, 32 (June 1946): 13.

⁵⁴ Otto H Helbig, *A History of Music in the US Armed Forces During World War II* (New Jersey: Trenton State College, 1966), 6.

⁵⁵ The Joint Army and Navy Committee on Welfare and Recreation was created on February 12, 1941 “as an advisory and liaison committee on problems in welfare and recreation of servicemen. It provide[d] expert advice to the responsible officers in the army and navy and act[ed] as liaison between the army and navy and government and private agencies dealing with related problems.” United States Government Manual, 1945, First Ed., Division of Public Enquiries, Office of War Information, as cited at <http://www.ibiblio.org/hyperwar/USGM/War.html> accessed April 3, 2007. The minutes of the meeting of the Music Advisory Council of the Joint Army and Navy Committee on Welfare and Recreation also noted the committee’s focus: “the committee was set up by the Secretaries of War and Navy to act in an advisory and liaison capacity between the Service and the

This council encompassed numerous subcommittees, of which one was the Music Subcommittee. The Music Subcommittee advised the SSD on music policy and helped oversee music in the forces for the duration of the war.⁵⁶ The members of the Music Advisory Council (when it was first commissioned) were, JANC member: Raymond B Fosdyck; Music Adviser: Dr Harold Spivacke; Music Programme: Eric Clarke, executive secretary of the Metropolitan Opera Company; Music Critic: Olin Downes, *New York Times* music critic; Publication and Distribution Problems: Harry Fox, general manager, Music Publishers' Protective Association; Education: Earl V Moore, director, school of music, University of Michigan; Latin American Relations: Charles Seeger, chief of the music division, Pan-American Union; Negro Activities: Noble Sissle, composer and president, Negro Actors Guild of America; Radio Music: Davidson Taylor, CBS; US Treasury: Roy D Welch, music division, Princeton University; and music coordinator of the USO Programme Service, Raymond Kendall. In addition, at later stages, singer Bing Crosby, and V-Disc director, Major Howard Bronson also played roles in the development of the policy.⁵⁷ Crosby served primarily on the Subcommittee for Radio, formed in May 1942.⁵⁸ The council's policies included defining play lists for official military bands, supplying them with equipment and diverting skilled civilian musicians into military bands. The latter role was performed in close conjunction with military regulations concerning the placement of skilled musicians.⁵⁹ Byron helped ensure the alignment of the Music Advisory Council and the Army Music Programme to achieve such placement. All of these

civilian agencies such as the Red Cross, USO, and Federal Security Agency with regard to the off-duty programmes provided for the men in the armed forces." Minutes of the Meeting, June 3, 1943, RG 225, Box 33, NARA II, College Park, MD.

⁵⁶ Frederick H. Osborn, "Recreation, Welfare, and Morale of the American Soldier," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 220 (March 1942): 54.

⁵⁷ See page 32 of this chapter for more details about the V-Disc programme.

⁵⁸ Report of Glenn Bainum, March 14, 1942. RG 225, Box 33, NARA II, College Park, MD; Minutes of the First Meeting of the Subcommittee on Radio, JANC, RG 225, Box 34, NARA II, College Park, MD. Major Howard Bronson headed the V-Disc operation throughout the war.

⁵⁹ "The Army's Music Program," *Music Educators Journal*, 32 (June 1946): 13.

committees and subcommittees showed the American military's slow, but steady move towards a more full inclusion of music in the armed forces during World War II. The inclusion and provision was neither full nor swift, but considering the position and importance of popular music in the forces at the start of the conflict, the changes were most welcome.

Bands in the American military

With these resources in place, the amount of attention paid to military bands by the military authorities increased significantly. Rules and regulations proscribed by the SSD formalised the number and type of bands in each branch. The army created at least one fifty-six-piece "Organisation" band within each division and specified that there should be a song leader and a soldier capable of playing a small instrument in every squad. An Organisation band was set at fifty-six pieces so that it doubled the number of pieces in a "Separate" band and had the capability to split into numerous smaller bands to offer greater flexibility to commanders.⁶⁰ At the platoon level, regulations called for a barbershop quartet and a "campfire instrumentalist, with guitar or ukulele." Every company should include a company song leader and accordionist, each battalion should provide a dance orchestra and glee club, and every regiment, a drum and bugle corps. Finally, at the division level, there should be "two well-trained authorised bands."⁶¹ The Army Air Force stationed a twenty-eight-piece "official" band at major air bases with at least 1,000 men, with two such bands per division depending on situational circumstances.⁶²

In addition to the division level "organisation" or "official" bands, the various military branches used the SSD's support (in part, through training centres) to help

⁶⁰ <http://bands.army.mil/history/default.asp?chapter=21> — as accessed January 28, 2007

⁶¹ "The Army's Music Program," *Music Educators Journal*, 32 (June 1946): 13.

⁶² Otto H Helbig, *A History of Music in the US Armed Forces During World War II* (New Jersey: Trenton State College, 1966), 4. The situational circumstances in these cases referred to size of the base and number of men.

create and sustain hundreds of bands and “field music units.”⁶³ By the end of the war the army alone contained more than six hundred bands of all sizes and organisational type.⁶⁴ The navy, army air force, Marines and coast guard all had far fewer, but space constraints for the navy accounted for that discrepancy and the army had far more men to entertain in any case. In the case of the coast guard, Lieutenant Joseph Baldwin of the Welfare Division of the coast guard noted in a report to the Music Advisory Council of the Joint Army and Navy Committee on Welfare and Recreation in June 1943, “there [was] little opportunity for musical activities to be developed.”⁶⁵ In spite of this and to the credit of the coast guard, it managed to provide its sailors with six “authorised” bands, equivalent to the “Organised” level of band in the army, despite the small number of men in that service and the problems to which Lieutenant Baldwin alluded.⁶⁶ All the bands at the largest organisational level performed under the baton of an officer, usually assigned directly by the SSD.

Each of the four main branches—army, navy, marines, army air force—had an official service band and orchestra. Based in and around Washington DC, they were recognised for their quality, but restricted to the capital area, so most troops and civilians never heard these bands play, except through radio broadcasts.⁶⁷ In November 1942, Dr Harold Spivacke attempted to make better use of these four bands. Writing to chairman of the Joint Army and Navy Committee on Welfare and

⁶³ <http://bands.army.mil/history/default.asp?chapter=21> —as accessed January 28, 2007

⁶⁴ Letter from Florence Taaffe, director, information and reports, Technical Information Branch, SSD, to Mr John M Russell, Executive Director, Joint Army and Navy Committee on Welfare and Recreation, 16 October, 1945. This letter contained a report, written some time before, on the subject of the Army’s Music Programme. RG 225, Box 33, NARA II.

⁶⁵ Minutes of the meeting of the Music Advisory Council of the Joint Army and Navy Committee on Welfare and Recreation, June 3, 1943, RG 225, Box 33, NARA II.

⁶⁶ Approximately nine million men and women served in the army, 4,183,466 officers and enlisted men and women served with the navy (including marines), and 241,093 men and women served in the coast guard during WWII. <http://aad.archives.gov/aad/series-description.jsp?s=3360>; http://www.history.navy.mil/library/online/ww2_statistics.htm; <http://www.uscg.mil/history/faqs/wars.html> as accessed June 18, 2007.

⁶⁷ “Music in Wartime and Post-War America,” address by Edwin Hughes, president of the National Music Council to the Annual Meeting of the Music Library Association, Buffalo, NY, n.d.; Letter from Dr Harold Spivacke to Arthur W Page, chairman, JANC on Welfare and Recreation, November 30, 1942. RG 225, Box 33, NARA II, College Park, MD.

Recreation Arthur Page, Spivacke asked if the bands could be sent around the country rather than remain in the Washington DC area. Spivacke believed that touring the four official bands would have multiple benefits, including serving as a model for the smaller unit bands, and bringing the various branches more closely together by using the marine band at an army base or the air force band at a coast guard base for instance.⁶⁸ A week-and-a-half later, Page passed Spivacke's letter on to Brigadier General Frederick Osborn, director of the Special Service Division, adding that Spivacke's suggestions should be looked at carefully, as Page believed that the "project seems to be one with enough military value to warrant serious consideration."⁶⁹

Only two obstacles remained in the way of this proposal finding acceptance. The first was the desire of the various branches to enter into such a project and the second was logistics and transportation. Both obstacles proved impossible to overcome. While the army air force thought the idea meritorious and gave its approval to use its band in such a fashion, the army disagreed with the merits of Spivacke's plan. Captain Alf Heiberg, commander of the Army Air Force band from 1941 to 1943, regarded the band's schedule as flexible enough to be able to travel and still meet its recording and broadcasting commitments, but Captain Thomas F Darcy, commander of the United States Army band from 1935 to 1946, believed that similar commitments for his band made it difficult to fit extra travel into an already cluttered schedule.⁷⁰

The transportation of the bands proved an equally awkward obstacle. Rail traffic was strictly regulated to ensure that troops could be moved most efficiently,

⁶⁸ Letter from Dr Harold Spivacke to Arthur W Page, chairman, JANC on Welfare and Recreation, November 30, 1942. RG 225, Box 33, NARA II, College Park, MD.

⁶⁹ Letter from Arthur Page to Brigadier General Osborn, director, Special Services Division, December 10, 1942. RG 225, Box 33, NARA II, College Park, MD.

⁷⁰ http://www.oldbeacon.com/beacon/air_corps_song.htm;
http://www.usarmyband.com/leaders/captain_thomas_f_darcy.html

and with rubber rationing already in effect, use of buses for less essential travel was also curtailed. According to Colonel Livingston Watrous, deputy director of the Services of Supply, gaining permission to use rail or bus transport for bands would prove impossible. Colonel Watrous recommended Page, and by extension, Spivacke, drop their proposal as it would likely not meet with approval.⁷¹ Although disheartened by the lack of enthusiasm for his project, Spivacke wrote once more to Page on the subject, in February 1943, stating that while he understood the objections, he still believed that the benefits outweighed the difficulties in getting the bands to the right places, and that the benefit to morale of the troops would be immeasurable.⁷² However, Spivacke requested that Page take his comments no further, but merely acknowledge them for the record, as he did not “believe it advisable to submit the matter for reconsideration at present.”⁷³

Staffing Military Bands with Musicians

With so many bands to fill, the various branches of the military needed to find a considerable number of men. Even with an extremely conservative estimate of an average five men per band, there would have been at least three thousand men in just the army’s six hundred bands at any one time during the war.⁷⁴ Factoring in the other branches, that number would have been larger still. Even in reduced “combat” mode, official bands often numbered as many as twenty pieces. When not in combat areas, a fully-complemented authorised band had at least twenty-eight men, and often up to

⁷¹ Letter from Colonel Livingston Watrous, deputy director, Services of Supply, Special Services Division to Arthur Page, December 26, 1942. RG 225, Box 33, NARA II, College Park, MD.

⁷² Letter from Harold Spivacke to Arthur Page, February 17, 1943. RG 225, Box 33, NARA II, College Park, MD.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ This estimate is conservative because with between twenty and twenty-eight men in an official band (and often many more in “complete bands”) the average—even allowing for individual instrumentalists, who were most likely not considered “bands”—would have been at least five men per band. While 3,000+ men may not seem a large number, it is worth remembering that these were (in many cases) professional musicians and as such were recruited or taken from a relatively small, original group.

double that number.⁷⁵ Consequently military bands counted more members than most civilian big bands.⁷⁶ For example, Tommy Dorsey's outfit—a fairly standard civilian big band for the time—had twenty-one members in 1940, but the 100th Infantry Division band stationed at Fort Jackson, South Carolina, was fully seventy strong in its complete format.⁷⁷ Another large military band was that stationed at the Army Air Force base at Gardner Field in California. This band had sufficient musicians to provide a full dance band, a jam session band and even a salon outfit (simultaneously if necessary) from within its permanent complement, which would have meant at least thirty members, if not many more.⁷⁸

In addition to official and organised bands, the armed forces also included small, “unofficial” dance bands. Generally formed from within the larger official bands, dance bands provided services for troop/civilian dances and other social functions. They did not, according to historian Otto Helbig, always come from the authorised bands. Helbig noted that “dance bands flourished whenever a group of musicians could get together.”⁷⁹ This development fit the needs of those in the forces. An army survey in 1942 found that eighty-seven percent of the surveyed soldiers preferred popular and dance music.⁸⁰ Rehearsing outside of their normal military

⁷⁵ Meeting notes of the JANC on Welfare and Recreation, July 22, 1943. RG225, Box 36, NARA II, College Park, MD.

⁷⁶ “Ravings at Reveille,” *Down Beat*, December 15, 1942, 24.

⁷⁷ Richard Cook notes in his *Jazz Encyclopedia* that the big bands of the late 1930s and early 1940s typically contained about thirteen members, but that during the war years the number of members of the big bands generally increased even further. Richard Cook, *Jazz Encyclopedia* (New York: Penguin Books, 2005), 58; Geoffrey C. Ward and Ken Burns, *Jazz: A History of America's Music* (London: Pimlico, 2001).

⁷⁸ Ravings at Reveille, *Down Beat*, January 1, 1943, 20.

⁷⁹ Otto H Helbig, *A History of Music in the US Armed Forces During World War II* (New Jersey: Trenton State College, 1966), 50. As noted in the literature review, Helbig provides a wealth of information pertinent to this study, and his appendices and reference material have been used in this work where useful. However, his book does not provide any analysis or comment with which it is possible to engage in further discussion in this study.

⁸⁰ Fact sheet on the Army's Music Programme as compiled by Florence Taaffe, director of information and reports, Technical Information Branch, SSD in a letter from Taaffe to John M Russell, Executive Director, Joint Army and Navy Committee on Welfare and Recreation, October 16, 1945 from an Army survey in 1943 on soldiers' radio programme preferences. Record Group 225, Box 33, National Archives and Record Administration II (NARA II), College Park, MD. The report did not indicate the number of men surveyed.

schedule and duties, such bands “provided much toward overall morale and enjoyment for themselves and others.”⁸¹ Cognizant of the need for entertainment for the men whenever and wherever possible, the War Department encouraged large bases to find as many talented musicians from within their own ranks to form such bands. With so many men at those large bases, “amateur talent of [that] kind [was] abundant,”⁸² and bands formed and often quickly became high-level entertainment for the men at those bases.⁸³

In order to fill so many band spots, the armed forces needed a coherent plan. Such a plan did not exist at the start of the war, partially as a result of many ranking officers not foreseeing the development of music into such an important element of the armed forces. As with the creation and evolution of the SSD, it took almost two full years of war to create specific policies detailing how to fill military bands with personnel through the draft.

A key piece of policy arose from the nature of the draft itself. Indiscriminate as it was, the draft delivered a great many professionally qualified musicians into the forces. Despite numerous attempts to warrant formal draft deferral, the music business never achieved such a declaration for its professionals. As a result, professional musicians and singers received their orders in the same proportion as any other career. In an attempt to maximise the use of that influx of talent, the War Department announced in May 1943, in one of the most important orders of the war for music, that all skilled and professional musicians entering the service should be found a suitable place in a military band in order to enhance their benefit to the

⁸¹ Otto H Helbig, *A History of Music in the US Armed Forces During World War II* (New Jersey: Trenton State College, 1966), 50.

⁸² Mobilisation Regulations, MR 1-10, War Department, June 12, 1942, RG 225, Box 37, NARA II, College Park, MD.

⁸³ “Army Develops New Jazz Units,” *Down Beat*, September 15, 1942, 2.

army.⁸⁴ The new regulation ordered commanding generals to pay special attention to the “instrument played, number of years experience, last organisation with which associated, age and whether general or limited service.”⁸⁵ The War Department categorised the order as “Effective Immediately,” thus eliminating any doubt as to the importance placed on the need to regulate musicians coming into the forces.

This order was a crucial step towards making the bands more professional and higher quality. Prior to the declaration, no such specialised placement of musicians existed and so the talent level of some of the bands suffered as a result. Yet, before the United States even entered the war, the Adjutant General had been advised that it might be a good idea to use a classification system to ensure the best use of musicians—something that took the best part of two years to bring into effect. A memorandum arrived at the War Department for Lieutenant Colonel Willard S Paul of the Adjutant General’s Office in July 1941 advising, “To create a Bandsmen Pool, a system of classification is recommended which will clearly show the complete musical history of each prospective bandsman.”⁸⁶ The situation concerning the use of musicians within the armed forces warranted strong action. The reports, memoranda and orders issued from the War Department were meant to streamline the induction of musicians and find the best use for them. However, even with the best of intentions, the result did not always end as was hoped and the misuse of the high level of talent available continued.

A report based on visits made to the Great Lakes Naval Training Station and to Mitchell Field in Long Island highlighted the misappropriation of professional musical

⁸⁴ Memo to Commanding Generals, All Service Commands, May 27, 1943, from Adjutant General J A Ulio, War Department. RG 225, Box 33, NARA II, College Park, MD.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Memorandum for Lieutenant Colonel Willard S Paul, Adjutant General’s Office, July 24, 1941, as cited in Otto H Helbig, *A History of Music in the US Armed Forces During World War II* (New Jersey: Trenton State College, 1966), 129.

talent.⁸⁷ It pointed out the assignment of non-musicians to bands throughout the services. Poor scrutiny of musicians entering the services led to weaker musicians being placed in bands and a resulting reduction in quality. "There [was] a deplorable lack of qualified musicians in many authorised bands, despite the fact that sufficient talent [existed] in the units concerned."⁸⁸ The number of spots in bands that needed to be filled compounded the problem of the misuse of talent. With so many spaces available, overlooking the most qualified and the best talent in the haste to fill the seats in the bands occurred almost as a matter of course.

The practice of poor placement of musicians, combined with this over-eagerness to fill bands with any vaguely passable musician, led to further new policies in June 1943. One of these new policies determined that the experience and quality of musicians prior to joining up should be ascertained and used to achieve the best possible placement of that musician. Special attention was to be placed on bandleaders and under no circumstances should any skilled musicians be assigned regular duties without the War Department's approval, as had been suggested in July 1941 with regard to creating a Bandsmen Pool.⁸⁹

In July 1943, in further recognition of the problems involved in finding, placing and supplying the official bands with suitable men, the War Department authorised a plan to set up three training camps for professional musicians to develop replacements for military bands.⁹⁰ Camp Crowder in Missouri and Camp Lee in Virginia, the Signal Corps Replacement Training Centre and the Quartermaster Replacement Training Centre respectively, housed these new training units, while Fort

⁸⁷ Great Lakes Naval Training Station is discussed more fully later in this chapter.

⁸⁸ Sixth Digest of Reports from Music Advisers. Record Group 225, Box 33, NARA II, College Park, MD.

⁸⁹ Minutes of the meeting of the Music Advisory Council of the Joint Army and Navy Committee on Welfare and Recreation, June 3, 1943.

⁹⁰ Otto H Helbig, *A History of Music in the US Armed Forces During World War II* (New Jersey: Trenton State College, 1966), 7. The official announcement for this piece of policy came in October 1943. US War Department Press Release, "War Department Establishes Two Band Training Centres for Professional Musicians," October 7, 1943, RG 225, Box 33, NARA II, College Park, MD.

Myer contained the Army Music School.⁹¹ This plan had also been almost two years in the making. Five separate studies in 1942 had examined the feasibility of, and desire for, the development of Army Music Schools, but, “despite the enthusiastic concurrences of the Adjutant General and some War Department agencies, approval was not given to the plan by the Chief of Administrative services.”⁹² Increasing evidence pointed towards a need for such centres, and approval followed.

Commencing September 1, 1943 with the first training cycle of 160 men, the centres provided bandsmen with basic military training in addition to their music studies and preparation for army bands.⁹³ In addition to replacement bandsmen, both centres also trained Music Advisers who could be sent to help bands wherever they might be located throughout the world. Major Bronson described the purpose: “We are trying to develop the utility of the band so that it can carry on a complete music programme in the army. . . . Also, the duties of army bandsmen are no longer purely musical; they must be versatile entertainers as well as competent soldiers.”⁹⁴ *Variety* described the decision to set up the camps and the expected duties and operation of Camp Lee in an article in October 1943:

Hundreds of soldier-musicians will be trained for duty with bands already organised or to form new music units for service with combat troops in all parts of the world. . . . The unit already has more than one hundred students, representing a cross-section of leading symphonic and dance combinations. They will learn to perform in regular army bands and smaller musical units to work in isolated sectors of the fighting front. The course will include instruction in small instruments, such as the harmonica and ukulele. Song leading, glee club and quartet work will be taught, as well as instrument

⁹¹ Major General Joseph W. Byron, “The Army’s Music Program,” *Music Educators’ Journal* 32 (June 1946): 13. In an interesting aside, Camp Lee also housed African American troops. However, despite the modernity of housing a training centre for musicians, the camp did not exhibit the same progressivism in its treatment of its black soldiers. Percival L. Prattis noted that the black troops had been housed at the extremities of the camp at all times. They were considered only to warrant a position far from the main activity of the camp. Percival L. Prattis, “The Morale of the Negro in the Armed Services of the United States,” *The Journal of Negro Education*, 12, (Summer 1943): 358.

⁹² Otto H Helbig, *A History of Music in the US Armed Forces During World War II* (New Jersey: Trenton State College, 1966), 7.

⁹³ Memorandum from Lieutenant General Somervell to Commanding General, Quartermaster Replacement Training Centre, Camp Lee, Virginia, July 24, 1943. The centre at Camp Crowder in Missouri received the same memo.

⁹⁴ War Department press release, October 7, 1943. RG 225, Box 33, NARA II, College Park, MD.

repair and other skills. Fundamentals of soldiering will first be taught all students of course.⁹⁵

The musician replacement centres only accepted “skilled musicians with professional backgrounds” for training.⁹⁶ Their training consisted of “specialist courses of nine weeks each” that followed six weeks of basic training. The activities in the specialist training courses focused on the items and instruments noted in the *Variety* article. However, as the War Department’s press release also noted, “while these replacement centres will supply musicians as replacements for bands overseas and provide complete band units if needed, the programme will give much wider training than just playing in a band.”⁹⁷ The courses were not designed to instruct music, but to teach musicians how to apply their musical abilities and knowledge in the army. And, as *Billboard* joked in a photo essay covering music’s role in the military in January 1944, “They’re in the army now, and they’ll learn to play the Ocarina if it kills them. These lessons at Camp Lee are all a part of building morale in the armed forces.”⁹⁸ In these endeavours—training replacements, band leaders and entertainers, the two camps enjoyed great success, although Camp Lee outlasted Camp Crowder with the latter deemed surplus to requirements from January 1944 onwards.⁹⁹

Almost immediately, the army benefited from those Music Advisers, using approximately seventy-five of them to travel the various theatres of operation and help initiate measures to improve music and musical facilities at various camps. They helped select and train song leaders and unit bands, as well as provided guidance to the authorised band leaders. In a retrospective article in its September 1, 1945 issue,

⁹⁵ “Band Training at Camp Lee,” *Variety*, October 20, 1943, 4. For whatever reason this article did not mention the sister camp at Camp Crowder.

⁹⁶ War Department press release, October 7, 1943. RG 225, Box 33, NARA II, College Park, MD

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

⁹⁸ “Music’s Big War Job,” *The Billboard 1944 Music Year Book*, 35.

⁹⁹ Otto H Helbig, *A History of Music in the US Armed Forces During World War II* (New Jersey: Trenton State College, 1966), 7.

Billboard, using documentation provided by the Music Branch of the Special Services Division, summed up the role and impact of the Music Advisers:

Most important, the Music Branch of Special Services has gone out of its way to select and recommend music advisers from qualified army personnel. These men, chosen after thoro screenings, are attached to service commands, staging areas and ports of embarkation. Not only have they done a wonderful job of directing musical talents of G.I.s into organised channels and stimulating music entertainment activities, but they have been and continue to be the motivating forces for the use of music in the reconditioning, rehabilitation and recreational programs of general and convalescent hospitals.

The 30-odd music advisers . . . carry with them always at their individual stations thruout the globe, the basic objectives, goals which the Music Branch of Special Services set for itself upon its formation in 1941. Every soldier, they are determined, must know songs in the *Army Song Book*, the *Hit Kits* and at least 25 other singable songs. They make sure that every squad has a song leader and a pocket instrument player, and that every platoon has at least one barbershop quartet and one campfire instrumentalist (guitar, ukulele, etc.).

Before they leave any company, the music directors see to it that a company song leader and an accordionist have been appointed. No battalion, no regiment shall be without a dance orchestra and drum and bugle corps respectively. And lastly, every music director on his toes—and the majority are—is determined that each division has a well trained authorised band.¹⁰⁰

However, despite the obvious success of Music Advisers, they could not reach every single person in the armed forces; the Music Advisers were successful but on a limited scale.¹⁰¹

Camp Lee also formed and trained Special Services Companies. These companies, numbering one hundred and ten men and five officers provided “recreational services” to divisions, corps and armies, and musicians formed a “predominant part” of each one.¹⁰² Major General Byron believed so firmly in these Special Services Companies, that he declared that, “recreation in the army reached its highest degree of fulfilment through [them].”¹⁰³ The army’s training venue at Fort Meyer in Virginia focused on training band leaders for army bands and, after activation in July 1941, spent four years supplying so many band leaders that it was

¹⁰⁰ “Music in the U.S. Army Manner,” *Billboard*, September 1, 1945, 19, 28; Taaffe to Russell, October 16, 1945. RG 225, Box 33, NARA II, College Park, MD.

¹⁰¹ Raymond Kendall, “Army Does Like Songs,” *New York Times*, July 4, 1943, E9.

¹⁰² Byron, “Army’s Music Program,” *Music Educators Journal* 32 (June 1946): 64.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*

deactivated in June 1944 having fulfilled its designated purpose.¹⁰⁴

Having finally found methods that worked to fill the bands, the SSD, War Department, and various branches of the armed forces still needed to convince members of their organisations that bands were even necessary to the fighting of a war. Major Bronson noted that the army in particular, encountered difficulty in convincing some of its officers of the need for bands and music to entertain the men.¹⁰⁵ The apparently obvious need to fill them, once the bands were in place, and the inefficient methods before the changes in policy noted above, did not seem to solve the lethargy exhibited in instigating new policies to deal with music in the forces. Regardless of such ambivalence, the army still needed to fill those bands—and, preferably, with competent musicians.

The Main Techniques for Staffing Military Bands

In an effort to achieve the goal of filling all the bands, the assistance of the SSD, and the programmes and policies from the War Department performed admirably, facilitating the provision of qualified musicians to bands. Two predominant methods, a third rarer technique, and a fourth one, unique to unofficial bands, procured the necessary musicians. The first method consisted of specifically recruiting men to serve as musicians with no, or few, other formal duties. The second technique sifted through the draft for men who had been musicians in civilian life and then sent them to one specific location in order to form a high quality band. The main difference between the two methods centred on a reliance on the vagaries of the draft in the latter, as opposed to direct recruitment leading to a man volunteering for duty in the former. The third, but much rarer, method, entailed recruiting a well-known civilian bandleader and having him form a military band; Glenn Miller being the

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁵ Minutes of the meeting of the Music Advisory Council of the Joint Army and Navy Committee on Welfare and Recreation, June 3, 1943.

prime example of this method. Finally, the fourth method, which was exclusively the preserve of small “unofficial” dance bands, relied on those men with musical talent who had slipped through the recruitment and draft processes, getting together in units to form a band of their own accord.

Of the four methods mentioned above, the draft process registered as the most typically used. The recruitment of professional musicians occurred with great frequency and many high-profile names entered military bands through that method. Drafting whole bands was rare and usually only one such band existed in each branch of the forces. The fourth method is much harder to quantify as the data for unofficial bands formed by like-minded men is limited.

Of the three “official” methods, the armed forces had the most control over their musical talent when recruiting, rather than relying on the draft. This method procured many top-level professional musicians for military bands. Talent-spotting officers toured the country, searching in cities with high concentrations of civilian musicians. Such cities included Los Angeles, New York and Chicago, where the live music scene flourished despite the war, and the entertainment industry in general, made a home.¹⁰⁶ Both the army and navy used recruiters in this way, but the navy made the fullest use of them, recruiting highly established and talented musicians from these and other music hubs. The technique involved frequenting bars, nightclubs and hotels where musicians could be found playing, or to find out from Musicians’ Locals who was good, and then approaching them at an opportune moment and

¹⁰⁶ Xavier Cugat and Charlie Spivak both enjoyed attendances of over 3,000 people in one week in January 1944, while Clyde Lucas entertained more than 8,000 in Chicago a couple of weeks later. “Bands at Hotel B.O.’s,” *Variety*, February 2, 1944, 34; *Variety*, February 16, 1944; “From a Nightclub to a Ballroom,” *Billboard*, January 10, 1942, 11; “Promoters and Dansant Ops in Midwest and Coast Optimistic as Biz Continues Despite War,” *Billboard*, July 4, 1942, 25; “Coast Nitery Ops receive Double Jolt,” *Down Beat*, January 1, 1944, 7. There are numerous examples of such articles showing the burgeoning music and dance hall scene in such cities throughout the war years in *Variety*, *Billboard*, and *Down Beat*.

offering them the chance to be in a military band for the duration.¹⁰⁷ In one particular case, the Marines actually used the music trade papers to advertise for musicians needed for six new bands.¹⁰⁸ These methods of recruiting allowed the military to control personnel and placement choices, while the musician gained a small degree of personal control over his vocation in the forces.

From the military's perspective, choosing musicians usually led to better quality bands. A 1942 report based on interviews with musicians in service bands and visits to camps such as Great Lakes indicated that, "In those cases where there has been an opportunity to enlist musicians directly for service bands, the level of musicianship and average performing ability of bands is higher than most people could possibly realize."¹⁰⁹ For the musician on the other hand, rather than submitting wholly to the whims and vagaries of the draft, this method, in effect, encouraged them to volunteer (or at the very least, made the decision easier). By doing so, they essentially picked their vocation—musician—and gained the security of knowing that they would likely remain out of combat and play in a band for the duration.¹¹⁰

As will be seen, the United States Navy required a large number of musicians to fill the Ship's Company Bands at the Great Lakes Naval Training Station alone—up to 225 at any one time.¹¹¹ Add ships' and naval stations' quotas to that number and it increases even more. In order to fill their bands, the navy readily turned to the recruitment method using it far more widely than the army. Recruitment along the

¹⁰⁷ The Musicians' Union Locals were also segregated by colour, thus a recruiting officer for a branch of the armed forces searching for musicians, visited whichever local he needed to based on race to find a suitable recruit.

¹⁰⁸ "Marines Form Six New Bands," *Down Beat*, September 1, 1942, 2.

¹⁰⁹ Report of Mr Glenn Bainum, dated March 14, 1942, on his recent visit to Great Lakes Naval Training Station and to Mitchell Field. Box 33 RG 225 (joint Boards and Committees), Joint Army and Navy Committee on Welfare and Recreation. General Subject Files 1941-1942.

¹¹⁰ "Few Good Units in Baltimore Despite Draft," *Down Beat*, December 15, 1942, 22; "Army Keeps Trio Intact," *Down Beat*, March 1, 1942, 20.

¹¹¹ An article in the *Chicago Daily Tribune* indicated that the main full band included one hundred musicians, but this figure only alluded to that one band. When all musical combinations at Great Lakes were taken into consideration, the number added up to roughly 225. Lehman Engel, "Band Aids Morale of Men at Great Lakes," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, August 23, 1942, G5.

strict guidelines of the navy's racial segregation policies resulted in segregated sailors requiring separate bands. African American bands entertained African American sailors, and white bands performed for white sailors. This situation required even more bands and musicians than might otherwise have been necessary. The result was active recruitment of both black and white professional musicians. The vast majority of whom, regardless of colour, ended up at Great Lakes Naval Training Station for training, if not permanent duty. Three complete Ship's Company Bands formed the backbone of both the black, and white, musical presence at the station.

So successful was the recruitment technique that naval officers managed to encourage musicians such as Gerald Wilson, Willie Smith, Clark Terry, Jerome Richardson, Wilbur Baranco, Andy Anderson, Quedellis Martyn and Marshal Royal (for a short time), who were all based in Los Angeles, to join the navy in this manner.¹¹² These men had been playing for some of the top bands on the West Coast, including Jimmie Lunceford's outfit, and many had been contracted by Hollywood for film scores when needed.¹¹³ They were well-known within the dance-band community and were rated as some of the top sidemen in the business.

Losing high quality sidemen made professional life difficult for civilian band

¹¹² Clara Bryant et al., *Central Avenue Sounds: Jazz in Los Angeles* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 331. Gerald Wilson (b. September 4, 1918), was a composer, arranger, bandleader and trumpeter in his career. He played with Les Hite and Jimmie Lunceford and was part of Willie Smith's Navy band during the war. Wilson joined Lunceford's band in late 1941. Willie Smith (b. November 25, 1910; d. March 7, 1967), played alto saxophone and clarinet during the war when he led a band in the navy at Great Lakes. Clark Terry (b. December 14, 1920), played trumpet with Charlie Barnet and Count Basie's bands during his career. Jerome Richardson (b. November 15, 1920) played alto saxophone. He sat in for Willie Smith in Lunceford's band when Smith went to the Navy, before Richardson volunteered and joined Marshal Royal's Navy band. Wilbur Baranco (b. c1912), played piano and sang in the mid 1930's. Did not perform regularly again until his military service in WWII. Marshal Royal (b. May 12, 1912), alto saxophonist and clarinetist, band leader in Navy during WWII and also played with many of the bigger names in jazz in the 1940's and 1950's including Lionel Hampton and Count Basie. Bibliographic information taken from Barry Kernfeld, ed., *The New Grove Dictionary of Jazz* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1994); Leonard Feather and Ira Gitler, *The Biographical Encyclopedia of Jazz*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999); Richard Cook and Brian Morton, *The Penguin Guide to Jazz Recordings: Eight Edition* (New York: Penguin Books (USA), 2006).

¹¹³ Jimmie Lunceford played alto saxophone and led his own band. In addition to losing men to the bands of the armed forces, some of his sidemen left in the early 1940s over pay disputes. Richard Cook and Brian Morton, *The Penguin Guide to Jazz Recordings: Eight Edition* (New York: Penguin Books (USA), 2006), 822.

leaders such as Lunceford because such sidemen often formed the hub of their bands. Conversely, the navy recruiters wanted exactly that type of musician—depleting the ranks of the best civilian bands was the point of the exercise for the navy recruiters. The navy attempted to recruit the best men it could from draft-eligible musicians, and if the big bands had to replace the recruited sidemen with other musicians of lesser quality, that was, in effect, their contribution towards the war effort.

By recruiting the best jazz musicians they could find, the navy formed some of the best dance bands in the country, civilian or military. Although the bands containing these particular men often stayed in relative obscurity, their ability and music was lauded on the bases, and occasionally in public.¹¹⁴ The Detroit area serves as an example of the standards expected by the navy of its musician recruits. Despite an obvious need for musicians—this area's draft board opened up the acceptable age range to include all men between seventeen and fifty years of age—navy bandmaster Howard W Williams, an apparent perfectionist, still turned down recruit after recruit as he searched to fill the technically demanding positions of clarinets, trumpets, and trombones.¹¹⁵

Just like the navy, the army also realised the importance of entertaining its men and, similarly, attempted to form dance bands from high-quality musicians in a structured manner rather than leave it to the fates of the draft board. However, the army's approach was not always as direct or thorough, as the navy's and recruitment of musicians more often occurred through the draft board rather than officers acting as agents. Leaving recruitment to the draft, as opposed to approaching the best musicians as the navy more commonly did, the army filled its bands from within its ranks once the talent had been procured. Despite not adopting the navy's reliance on

¹¹⁴ "Armed Guards Play Like Crazy," *Down Beat*, July 15, 1943, 26; "No Stands Too Risky for Coast Guard Ork," *Down Beat*, March 1, 1944, 13; "Navy Finds Music Vital Factor," *Down Beat*, May 1, 1943, 14–15.

¹¹⁵ "Got to be Good," *Variety*, November 18, 1942, 40.

recruiting, the army still used the technique to fill its bands with enough high-quality musicians. Noting this, *Yank*, the army newspaper, stated in September 1942, that “today Uncle Sam waves the [orchestra] stick and he has enough talent to make more top dance bands than MCA ever dreamed of.”¹¹⁶

A prime example of the army’s use of recruiters (and the advantages of volunteering when approached by a recruiter) was the case of David Bryant, a professional musician from Los Angeles. He enlisted in the army following a recruitment visit while he was working out of Musicians’ Local 767 in Los Angeles. An officer from the Tenth Cavalry, who was organising a dance band, spotted him playing in the city and suggested that he join the army as a musician. It did not take much to convince Bryant. He knew that he would be classified 1A and that he could therefore be drafted at any time. Bryant, an African American, spoke of how his main motivation was to avoid being sent to an army base in the segregated South. By volunteering, he was able to define his own military future because he had a choice in where he was sent and because he was able to join a band and play music. Stationed outside of San Diego and with the benefit of the relative proximity to Los Angeles, Bryant was joined by Elmer Fain, Lloyd Reese, Jake Porter, Bill Douglass, James Nelson, Herb Mullins, John Randolph and Bill Hadnott, who had all been recruited in the same fashion and whom Bryant had played with, or knew of from civilian bands.¹¹⁷ Thus, for both the armed forces and the targeted civilian musicians, the benefits of recruiting rather than waiting for the draft were obvious.

Waiting for talented musicians to come through the general draft left more to chance than direct recruitment. The two orders from the War Department regarding best-use of talent meant that any draftee with a particular musical talent would be sent

¹¹⁶ “Swing in Wartime,” *Yank*, September 16, 1942, 18. MCA was the Music Corporation of America and had been the first major label to embrace the swing movement, signing Benny Goodman’s band when most mainstream music had been “sweet.”

¹¹⁷ Clora Bryant et al., *Central Avenue Sounds: Jazz in Los Angeles* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 172.

to the bands of the service in to which he had been inducted. The actual process involved draft reception centres referring draftees with musical experience to the Music Section. The Music Section, acting as a “distributing agent . . . assign[ed] such men to the places where they [were] needed.”¹¹⁸ These orders allowed the services to wait for suitably talented men to receive their draft orders and then assign them to any band they wished. Major Bronson addressed the Joint Army and Navy Committee for Welfare and Recreation and “stressed the importance of this order [that ensuring that men alerted reception centres to their talents], which [gave] the Music Section control over the musicians as they [came] into the Army, so that they [could] be used to the best advantage.”

The main negative with the process was the lack of a guarantee that any suitable men would be available when needed, or indeed that any would be available at all; albeit a statistically unlikely occurrence.¹¹⁹ Furthermore, without the control of hand-picking the musicians that came with the recruitment method, there was no telling what quality that inductee would be, nor what instrument they would play, or what experience they had. Despite these problems, the use of draftees to fill official bands (and indirectly the unofficial bands as well) formed the largest section of professional or highly qualified musicians in any branch of the service.

The navy, army, army air force and coast guard all used the third method of procuring talent for bands—that of creating high quality bands around a famous civilian bandleader—in limited instances. Creating such bands meant solving the problems of finding qualified musicians, training and rehearsing them, and developing the intangibles in a band that allow it to function at the highest level. It also meant that a branch of the services had to be lucky enough to somehow acquire an extremely

¹¹⁸ Minutes of the meeting of the Music Advisory Council of the JANC on Welfare and Recreation, June 3, 1943, RG 225, Box 33, NARA II, College Park, MD.

¹¹⁹ As noted, the draft favoured no particular career (except those exempted from the draft by special order) and so the chances were fairly good that there would always be a musician coming through the system.

well-known bandleader. Glenn Miller, Artie Shaw and Dick Stabile (amongst others) solved that particular problem by volunteering for service—knowing full well that they would not be sent to war but asked to form a band instead.¹²⁰ Miller almost solved the entire problem of creating a band by apparently asking his civilian band to enlist with him.¹²¹ Unfortunately, the majority of them did not agree with their bandleader and so chose to remain out of uniform.

Miller took on the role of forming a band of the highest quality and the army air force empowered him to recruit any musician he found within the army and army air force, no matter where they were stationed. As guitarist Carmen Mastren remembered, “Miller had charge of all the music [in the army air force] and had the cream of the crop to pick from.”¹²² Miller’s power included, the authority (at least in Miller’s eyes) to sign the name of General Yount (the commanding officer of the Training Command of the army air force) on requests for musicians from other bands and locations.¹²³ With this “power” at his disposal, Miller attempted to find as many of his civilian band members—now in uniform—as he possibly could, although as it turned out, he only managed to obtain three of them—Reuben Zarchy, Herman Alpert and Jimmy Priddy.¹²⁴

¹²⁰ Miller disbanded his group in October 1942 (only a few months after entertaining troops at the Great Lakes Naval Training Station) and joined the US Army Air Force (after initially choosing the regular army) with the rank of captain. Shaw disbanded his group in January 1942 and enlisted in the US Navy, “Shaw Gets USO Berth; Draft Free,” *Down Beat*, April 15, 1942, 1; “Shaw, O. Tucker Will Join Navy, Others Called,” *Down Beat*, May 15, 1942, 1; Barry Kernfeld, ed., *The New Grove Dictionary of Jazz* (St. Martin’s Press: New York, 1994).

¹²¹ Geoffrey Butcher, *Next to a Letter from Home: Major Glenn Miller’s Wartime Band* (Edinburgh: Mainstream Publishing, 1986), 6.

¹²² Carmen Mastren, as quoted in Geoffrey Butcher, *Next to a Letter from Home: Major Glenn Miller’s Wartime Band* (Edinburgh: Mainstream Publishing, 1986), 10. Mastren ended up with Miller’s band following a period of about three months in another army air force band stationed at Camp Upton in New Jersey where he had first been sent following induction.

¹²³ Bob Ripley (cellist with Miller’s army air force band) as quoted in Geoffrey Butcher, *Next to a Letter from Home: Major Glenn Miller’s Wartime Band* (Edinburgh: Mainstream Publishing, 1986), 21.

¹²⁴ Geoffrey Butcher, *Next to a Letter from Home: Major Glenn Miller’s Wartime Band* (Edinburgh: Mainstream Publishing, 1986), 8. Butcher’s book is an excellent account of Miller’s story during the war.

The least well-known (at least in present-day terms) of the three band leaders, Dick Stabile, formed a Coast Guard band based on the successful civilian band of Shep Fields. The novelty of Fields's band at that time came from the all-reed format he employed. Stabile used nine reed instruments and four percussionists in his Coast Guard band, which was stationed in the New York City area and often performed on the WNEW radio station.¹²⁵ Stabile later went on to head up the Coast Guard's Third Naval District's musical activities, where he created a large eighteen-piece coast guard band.¹²⁶

A more extreme, and far rarer, example of forming military bands around an established civilian leader was the volunteering of an entire civilian band for naval duty.¹²⁷ The first civilian band to be inducted en masse into any of the branches of the military was that of Clyde (Sugar Blues) McCoy.¹²⁸ The navy drafted McCoy's Sugar Blues Orchestra in the autumn of 1942 and made McCoy, as its leader, a Chief Petty Officer, while his sidemen were given the rank of petty officer, first class. The navy stationed McCoy's band at the Naval Training School in Millington, near Memphis, Tennessee.¹²⁹ His wife Maxine recalled that they all joined up at once as they were all classified as 4-F in the draft.¹³⁰ The idea of taking a band en masse caused some consternation amongst naval authorities. *Variety* reported that "naval authorities were afraid the public might get a false impression of what is taking place . . . Misguided

¹²⁵ "Dick Stabile Builds All-Reed Band for Coast Guard; on WNEW," *Variety*, January 12, 1944, 49.

¹²⁶ "Dick Stabile Will Build New Coast Guard Band," *Variety*, November 3, 1943, 31.

¹²⁷ "Clearing Clyde McCoy," *Variety*, November 4, 1942, 41.

¹²⁸ "Evening Report," *Yank*, October 14, 1942, 19; "Ex-Troupes, Now Gobs & WAVES, Draw \$ at Memphis Show," *Billboard*, May 1, 1943, 4.

¹²⁹ "Clyde McCoy's Entire Band into the Navy," *Variety*, October 7, 1942, 1, 85. McCoy was originally reported as being sent to the Great Lakes Naval Training Station. Inside Stuff—Orchestras, *Variety*, September 23, 1942, 38.

¹³⁰ "Cocktail and Service Bands Take Spotlight as America's Musicians March Off to War," *Newsweek*, December 21, 1942, 66. Trumpeter Clyde McCoy and his orchestra joined en masse in 1942 and played primarily at naval bases and hospitals for the duration. Ted Weems took many of his men into the Merchant Marine, where he directed the Merchant Marine Band.

http://www.parabrisas.com/d_mccoyc.php—as accessed January 24, 2007;

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ted_Weems—as accessed January 24, 2007;

<http://www.bigbandlibrary.com/clydemccoy.html>—as accessed October 21, 2007.

critics would be quick to pounce upon the wholesale enlistment as a phoney of some sort, it was feared.”¹³¹ In a rather sensationalist manner, *Variety* went on to report that it had the “scoop” and that the band’s enlistment had been carried out in a proper fashion. Upon induction, the band replaced its civilian name of Clyde McCoy’s Sugar Blues Orchestra, with The Aviation Machinist’s Mates Orchestra, although it was known informally as the Navy Blues Orchestra, simply replacing “Sugar” with “Navy,” and trained and lived as regular seamen.¹³² They were, as the article put it, “just another unit among 10,000 sailors training for duty as the Navy’s Aviation ground crews.” The band remained in the military for the duration.¹³³ McCoy’s band joining all at once, echoes, in some sense, the plaintive cry for more like-minded musicians in “The Boogie-Woogie Bugle Boy of Company B.”

Artie Shaw’s band joined the navy almost immediately following the attack on Pearl Harbor. Upon signing up in January 1942, the navy stationed Shaw in Newport, Rhode Island. From there he set about recruiting and forming his navy band. Some musicians attempted to join his band through volunteering, but in general, Shaw struggled to populate the band and so within a month he had moved to New York City in an attempt to find suitable musicians from civilian bands. Shaw held rehearsals and try-outs on a training ship moored on the Hudson River.¹³⁴ Once he had filled and outfitted his band in 1943, Shaw left the United States to tour bases throughout the Pacific theatre. On this tour of roughly one-and-a-half years, the band often played up to four shows a day for navy audiences.¹³⁵ The distance from the United States and the locations Shaw’s band played in, combined with military-only audiences on remote Pacific Ocean islands, kept civilians largely unaware of the band and its

¹³¹ “Clyde McCoy’s Entire Band into the Navy,” *Variety*, October 7, 1942, 85.

¹³² *Ibid*; “Ex-Troupes, Now Gobs & WAVES, Draw \$ at Memphis Show,” *Billboard*, May 1, 1943, 4.

¹³³ “On the Stand,” *Billboard*, February 9, 1946, 21.

¹³⁴ “Artie Shaw Navy Band Recruits in Gotham,” *Variety*, November 4, 1942, 39.

¹³⁵ <http://www.bigband-era.com/forum/messages/8716.html>—as accessed June 21, 2005; *Variety*, “Inside Stuff—Orchestras,” November 11, 1942, 39; http://www.pbs.org/jazz/biography/artist_id_shaw_artie.htm—as accessed October 21, 2007.

talents. In terms of radio, the band performed almost exclusively for government and military radio programmes, adding to its isolation from the public. None of these recorded performances were ever released. Despite this isolation, the band was still considered one of the best of the time by fellow musicians, and critics who heard the band play.¹³⁶ Shaw himself went even further than the experts. He claimed there was no disagreement whatsoever about it being the best band of the war era.¹³⁷ To support his statement, Shaw's navy band won the *Esquire* magazine national poll soon after its formation.¹³⁸ After the navy discharged Shaw on account of poor health, Sam Donahue took control of the band.¹³⁹ In the Donahue format, the band toured England, rather than the Pacific, where, able to compare them directly with Miller's outfit, some considered Donahue's group to be superior.¹⁴⁰ The plaudits for the Donahue version were not surprising given that every single member of his group had played for a name band before either volunteering or being drafted.¹⁴¹

One final example of the armed forces actively attempting to fill their bands rather than wait for draftees to fill them through the system was that which occurred at West Point Air Field. The airfield's commanding officer arranged a deal with Local 802 in New York City whereby any draft-eligible musicians classified as 1A would enlist and receive orders to ship to the airfield's band at West Point. In essence, the

¹³⁶ <http://www.bigband-era.com/forum/messages/8716.html>—as accessed June 21, 2005.

¹³⁷ <http://www.pbs.org/jazz/about/pdfs/Shaw.pdf> — as accessed Aug 19, 2005

¹³⁸ <http://www.artieshaw.com/bio.html>—as accessed October 21, 2007.

¹³⁹ Born March 8, 1918, in Detroit, Michigan, Donahue led many of his own bands including the navy band after Shaw's departure. <http://www.musicweb-international.com/encyclopaedia/d/D119.HTM>—as accessed October 21, 2007.

¹⁴⁰ <http://www.bigband-era.com/forum/messages/8716.html>—as accessed June 21, 2005.

¹⁴¹ "Ex-Artie Shaw Navy Band Lands in England," *Variety*, April 26, 1944, 31. Other slightly less well-known bands with name leaders, or high-profile sidemen, also received positive and consistent press. Claude Thornhill's band and Bud Freeman's 38th Special Service Company dance band were two examples of reasonably well-known civilian musicians who received good press for their forces bands. Dick Stabile's Coast Guard band also received good press and plaudits from the media and the men it entertained. Armed forces bands of all descriptions warranted praise from the music press, regardless of whether the bands' leader was well known or not. "Army Ork Stirrs Houston Dance," *Down Beat*, March 15, 1944, 13; "Bud Freeman's Band Lifts Aleutian Morale," *Down Beat*, January 1, 1945, 2; Harold Halton, "Musicians Lead Busy Lives in Coast Guard at Manhattan beach," *Down Beat*, June 1, 1943, 21.

air field attempted to guarantee the quality of the musicians it would have in its band. A local radio advertising personality, Murray Kellner, was given the rank of master sergeant and the task of finding suitable men. Al Jolson's accompanist and arranger, Martin Fried; Joe Conn, an NBC studio pianist; and several sidemen from Gene Krupa's band all numbered amongst the immediate recruits for this band.¹⁴² This practice was duplicated by Local 47 in Hollywood. Local 47 advertised for four hundred musicians to be placed in army air force bands throughout the United States. *Variety* reported that as of April 1943, Local 47 claimed to have recruited 1,300 musicians for the forces.¹⁴³ The main difference between the two examples being that Local 47 supplied men for bases across the country, rather than one specific base.

By April 1943 the list of well-known big band leaders who had entered the service read like a "Who's Who."¹⁴⁴ Not all the leaders who joined up kept their career of choice, but many did find a position at the head of a military band. Bobby Byrne and Ray McKinley both found band positions in the army air corps, while the navy contained Thornhill, Shaw, Donahue, Eddy Duchin, Orrin Tucker, Buddy Clarke, Emery Deutsch and Clyde McSpy, amongst others. The army enjoyed the presence of Dean Hudson, Cecil Golly, Dick Jurgens, Wayne King and Emerson Gill, while Ted Weems entered the Merchant Marine, and the coast guard had Clyde McCoy and Rudy Vallee.¹⁴⁵

Overall, the four main methods of staffing military bands all led to similar results in that the bands were filled with quality, professional musicians. The bands formed by these various methods proved that quality through their performances and the plaudits they received. The fact that the various branches of the military invested

¹⁴² Inside Stuff—Orchestras, *Variety*, November 11, 1942, 39.

¹⁴³ "Coast AFM Seeks 400 Air Force Musicians," *Variety*, April 28, 1943, 48.

¹⁴⁴ *Down Beat*, July 15, 1943, 26.

¹⁴⁵ "Non-Essential Status for Show People Guided by Public Opinion, Sez Hershey," *Variety*, April 7, 1943, 3. Tucker entered the Great lakes Navy Training Station in July 1942 as an officer. "Orrin Tucker into Navy as Lieutenant; Orchestra Goes on With New Baton," *Variety*, May 20, 1942, 41.

so much time and effort in finding suitable musicians for their bands indicates the level of importance that was placed on such entertainment and pointed to the role that these bands fulfilled once they had been staffed.

Conclusion

The United States armed forces made a concerted effort during World War II to increase and improve the provision of live music to their soldiers, sailors, and airmen, and they did so almost entirely as a result of the perceived necessity of good morale amongst the men. As Paul Fussell wrote in his book, *Wartime: Understanding and Behavior in the Second World War*, “raising and sustaining morale became all-important, and morale itself developed into one of the unique obsessions of the Allies in the Second World War.”¹⁴⁶ The armed forces achieved those goals of increasing and improving the provision of live music through the development of official bands from tactical to entertainment systems. Furthermore, unofficial bands took up any slack in the network of bands so that uniformed men everywhere had access to the morale-boosting entertainment the bands provided. The War Department increased the accessibility, took note of what men wanted and moved to ensure that they could have live music, and if not possible, to at least provide records.

The various branches of the military all used the same basic methods to fill their bands. The two most common methods—recruiting and picking from the draft—provided the vast majority of musicians, with the recruitment technique allowing the military to get the men it really wanted for the bands. This in itself represented the level of importance placed on those bands by the military. Specifically recruiting men to serve in non-combat roles was an expensive and time-consuming process. Spending so much time and money on what some conceived as non-essential

¹⁴⁶ Paul Fussell, *Wartime: Understanding and Behavior in the Second World War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 143.

manpower, shows just how seriously the military took the morale and entertainment of its men.

Military bands were overhauled and brought up-to-date as music no longer served a primary function in military strategy and tactics. Rather than eradicating bands from the military, the authorities instead saw the opportunity and redirected the bands to be popular and dance combinations, again, with the sole responsibility of entertaining the men and women in uniform. Quick to spot the value of the best of these bands in terms of marketing and promotional opportunities, the mission of many of those bands expanded to also include civilian entertainment. And, recruitment policies were overhauled and musicians became valued assets.

The legacy of World War II, in terms of the popular-music bands in the armed forces can be summed up with three main conclusions. Military procedure and changes in internal structure allowed the armed forces to accommodate changes in musical taste and need. Furthermore, infrastructure designed for musicians meant there were sufficient numbers of musicians in the military for all its needs. Finally, in order to fill the bands, and the bases, the armed forces adapted its techniques so as to bring highly skilled musicians into the armed forces. This all meant that the United States military realised the true benefits of popular music to the well-being of its men and women.¹⁴⁷ The essential transition for music in the armed forces was that music was no longer a tactical device, and instead its real *raison-d'être* in the military was to entertain and to boost and maintain morale levels. During World War II, the military embraced and utilised popular music to its fullest extent possible, aiming towards the goal of keeping the men and women in uniform ready and willing to fight. That it

¹⁴⁷ Unfortunately, while examples of surveys and questionnaires that the armed forces sent out to their men and women to determine how important popular music was to them do exist, it has proven impossible to track down answers to the questions or any substantial reports compiled by the military on those responses. It would seem probable that such reports exist, but given that other studies have not used such information it might be the case that these reports are no longer available.

achieved this goal so superbly is the lasting impression of the interaction between the United States' military and popular music in World War II.

Chapter 4

Recording and Performing in American Military Bands

The changes that brought about the increased use of military bands to entertain the troops (and civilians to a lesser degree) gave rise to a massive number of men in uniform playing in bands. One estimate put the total number of musicians in the armed forces at roughly thirty thousand by the start of 1944.¹ With so many bands, performing and recording for the troops became a significant aspect of the military's use of modern dance bands. Now that bands such as these had no tactical function on the battlefield, the only use for them was in performing, and the military put its talent to work.

Performing and recording took on many guises, with the newly formed V-Disc programme and the United Services Organisation providing two of the largest opportunities for military musicians to record and perform. In addition, military bands played at dances, official functions, and bond drives, always with the intention of entertaining the troops primarily, but sometime with the added bonus of civilian participation as well, and the overall goal of boosting the morale of those listening to the performance or record.

While the armed forces actively recruited musicians for their bands, the process was not a one-sided affair; civilian musicians often tried to take control of their draft status, volunteering with the intention that they would join a military band. Various musicians took this route into the armed forces and used a number of methods to make certain of their position once they had signed on. Despite being in the

¹ "Music's Big War Job," *The Billboard 1944 Music Year Book*, 37.

military and at war, World War II was not always tough duty for those musicians, and their experiences often had much in common with playing for the big, famous bands that they had been accustomed to before donning khaki or blue.

The Great Lakes Naval Training Station near Chicago held special importance for musicians as it housed the largest contingent of uniformed musicians during World War II. As an aspect of the interaction between the military and popular music it was unsurpassed and its history and relevance to the role of popular music during World War II warrants special attention. It has largely been unstudied, hence the discussion in this chapter.

These various aspects of military's provision for with popular music make up the basis for this chapter. Studying the recording and performing opportunities available to musicians in the military, and the existence they led while in uniform allows further consideration of how the military used music and how musicians adapted to life in uniform. The intention here is to show the central role that music and musicians, and the performance of popular music all took in the United States' armed forces during World War II.

V-Discs and other Recording Opportunities

Despite the obvious restrictions on personal freedom, privacy and independence, and the fact that they might be sent into combat areas, military service actually had some benefits for musicians. One of the most important benefits (both for the musicians and the public) was that the Musicians' Union and its strike had no power over musicians in the military. Thus, while civilian bands were unable to record new music during the recording ban, those in the armed forces could all produce and record new music without union restriction. Many of the bigger service bands recorded music with much of it transcribed to V-Discs. V-Discs represented the

typical manner in which service bands made it to record and practically the only new recorded music made at that time. As a result of the V-Discs only being available to forces personnel much of the recorded music from service bands never reached the ears of the American public. Regardless, as historian William Howland Kenney noted, V-Discs represented a “fundamental change in the government’s official understanding of the role of music in making war,” and thus the programme deserves full consideration here as one of the best examples of popular music’s place in World War II.²

Beginning in July 1943, the V-Disc programme was a series of phonograph records, recorded and produced by the War Department to be shipped to the men and women of the armed forces at home and abroad. The programme filled a gap that the USO could not, because they could be sent anywhere in the world: even the most streamlined USO outfit could not compete with a box of records in terms of mobility. V-Discs, it was hoped, “would remind [troops] of home and what they were fighting for.”³ Furthermore, from all accounts it would seem that the troops’ desire for phonograph records was never fully met.⁴

The V-Disc programme was not the first attempt at providing combat troops with music in record format. From the beginning of the conflict, troops had been sent Record Box B as part of their supplies. Produced by the American Forces Radio Service, it typically comprised of transcriptions of radio shows that had already been produced and some hit songs from the likes of Jimmy Dorsey, Harry James, Glenn Miller, Kay Kyser, The Ink Spots, Tommy Dorsey, Benny Goodman, Artie Shaw, Bing Crosby and Guy Lombardo.

² William Howland Kenney, *Recorded Music in American Life: The Phonograph and Popular Memory, 1895–1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 198.

³ *Ibid.* Kenney described Bronson as representing the “traditional attitude” of the United States Armed Forces towards music. However, Bronson’s actions would seem to indicate that he was in fact ahead of the general thinking of the armed forces towards music in that he saw its potential to help soldiers’ morale before most of those in command acknowledged this fact.

⁴ “Music Goes to War,” *The Billboard 1943 Music Year Book*, 20.

In the first meeting of the Sub-Committee on Radio (part of the Joint Army and Navy Committee on Welfare and Recreation), in May 1942, the members decided to purchase and send recordings of popular radio programmes to soldiers overseas. These recordings were in their complete, original format, including commercials and announcements.⁵ The Sub-Committee noted that “this service was designed to supplement to the use of short wave wherever reception was bad, or for other reasons it was impossible to obtain the regular programmes.”⁶ The service would eventually morph into the V-Disc programme.⁷

Colonel (later Major) Howard Bronson was involved in those early discussions in his role in the Special Services Division. Bronson had been an “arranger, composer and bandleader for John Philip Sousa” before the war.⁸ It was during that early point in the war that Bronson began to develop the idea of the V-Disc series. In June 1941 he believed that there would be a demand for portable music in any forthcoming conflict. In June 1944, after the project had been running for over a year, Bronson divulged some of his reasoning behind the programme. He said that the discs contained primarily popular music because he believed that rather than trying to educate the men in the appreciation of “good” or “serious” music, they should be given what they wanted. Bronson believed that was contemporary popular music.⁹

Under the auspices of the Special Services Division’s Music Branch and Colonel Bronson, the series mass produced records of all popular music genres for the specific and sole use of the military—specifically the Army, until the Navy, Marines and Coast Guard joined the project later in the war.¹⁰ Bronson assembled a team of

⁵ Richard Sears, *V-Discs* (Greenwood Press: Connecticut, 1980), xxvi.

⁶ Minutes of the First Meeting of the Sub-Committee on Radio, held in New York City, May 15, 1942. Record Group 225, Box 34, NARA II.

⁷ “Palitz Handling Recording for Army V-Discs,” *Billboard*, October 30, 1943, 14.

⁸ Kenney, *Recorded Music*, 198.

⁹ Meeting of the Music Advisory Council of the Joint Army and Navy Committee on Welfare and Recreation, November 9 and 10, 1944. Record Group 225, Box 33, NARA II.

¹⁰ Barry Kernfeld, ed., *The New Grove Dictionary of Jazz* (St Martin’s Press: New York, 1988), 1242.

men and women to produce the V-Discs from original conception, to shipping and everything in between. It was a fully self-sufficient military outfit staffed by Robert Vincent, Steve Sholes, Tony Janak, Walt Heebner, George Simon, Marie Swanstrom, Ed DiGiannantonio and Lee Kamern. Janak was a recording engineer and specialised in on-site recording, Simon was brought in from *Metronome* magazine and was thus an industry insider. Sholes and Heebner arrived via the Army from RCA Victor, while DiGiannantonio had been in the Navy until being injured. He was offered the position and while originally reluctant to be involved with the project due to his belief that it would not have much impact, he became one of its staunchest supporters and managed to help bring the other branches in to the fold. This unit was not the beginning and end of the V-Disc personnel, but they formed the core group for most of the duration of the project.

When the group began to produce records it started with a shipment of thirty records in a box. The first shipment left Camden, New Jersey on October 1, 1943, containing 1,780 of those boxes, and by the end of the war over eight million V-Discs had been sent all over the world. Those eight million or so records contained nine hundred unique discs with over three thousand separate recordings. It was truly a production line on a huge scale. Original and recorded material was used from a variety of sources, including special recording sessions, concerts, recitals, radio broadcasts, broadcast dress rehearsals, radio transcriptions, film soundtracks and commercial records.¹¹ Victor, Columbia and Capitol Records gave permission to use their record archives and off-the-air recordings of *For the Record* were also made into

¹¹ This information is taken from a variety of sources; Sears' book and various internet sites that have used his work as inspiration. Much of the original data is to be found in Sears' book though. However, additional and new sources have been used in this section, particularly the music trade newspapers and documents from the Music Advisory Council of the Joint Army and Navy Committee of Welfare and recreation, in order to bolster the information from Sears and to provide new evidence of the importance of this seminal programme introduced by the army in World War II.

records for shipment.¹² There were also new performances captured live by sound engineers for the V-Disc project and *Down Beat*, music magazine, being more interested in new music, wrote, "The material used is brand new, not waxed commercially and therefore not available in any form to music fans at home but only to the armed forces."¹³ An example of such recordings occurred in October 1943 in New York City, under the direction of guitarist Eddie Condon. V-Disc staff attended the jam session, and recorded such stars as Cozy Cole, Teddy Wilson, Bobby Hackett, Duke Ellington and members of Benny Goodman's band.¹⁴

That these records were ever even produced was quite remarkable given the circumstances surrounding the music industry between 1942 and 1944. The American Federation of Musicians (AFM) led by its president, James C Petrillo had ordered its members to strike. What this meant in effect was that nearly all of the top musicians and bands were barred from recording new music. Right in the middle of that strike, when no new music had been recorded for a year, the V-Disc project was trying to establish itself. It managed to do so because RCA Victor's artist and repertoire chief Walt Heebner (amongst others) persuaded Petrillo that he should allow musicians to record new material for the use of the military for its men. In a letter to Heebner, Petrillo wrote, "the American Federation of Musicians interposes no objections to the making and use of these recordings, provided they are made and used in conformance with the provisions outlined in your letter."¹⁵ The proviso he referred to was that the records were to be used solely by the military and were not for use by, nor for sale to, civilians whatsoever. The agreement from Petrillo was the most important moment in

¹² "B. Goodman Prems V-Disc NBC Program," *Billboard*, August 5, 1944, 14; "Ravings at Reveille," *Down Beat*, October 15, 1944, 13.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ "Jam Session," *Life*, October 11, 1943, 114–117.

¹⁵ Letter from Petrillo to Heebner, dated October 27, 1943. As published in Richard Sears, *V-Discs* (Greenwood Press: Connecticut, 1980), xxxiv.

the V-Discs limited history. Without the concession from the AFM the project would have failed.

Furthermore, the group convinced the major recording companies to grant them freedom to use their musicians without royalties or copyrights being kept by the recording companies and to have their contracts bypassed by the Music Section of the Special Services Division. Petrillo wrote in the same letter to Heebner of his agreement to this matter, saying, that he gave permission “for those members of the American Federation of Musicians, who are desirous of so doing, to volunteer their services for the making of such recordings.”¹⁶ The military thus avoided the prohibitive costs of buying out long term contracts and were able to record musicians without reference to those contracts.

Technically different (and superior in sound quality) to the average phonograph record, the V-Disc was bigger (twelve inches as opposed to the standard ten) and could hold more music—up to six minutes per side as opposed to four for a standard commercial record of the time. V-Discs could not be produced on the standard shellac that was used at the time in civilian production because of a shortage of raw materials and the necessity of shellac for military uses. Instead the discs were made of either Formvar (the most common) or occasionally a composite using shellac. However, both of these became far harder to gain access to by the end of the war and there were numerous changes made in the materials used.¹⁷ Shellac was also extremely fragile and thus not suited to shipping long distances. In contrast, vinylite was almost unbreakable and thus perfect for the travel involved. The Joint Army and Navy Committee on Welfare and Recreation’s Music Advisory Council was impressed by the hardy nature of the vinylite records. In its meeting of November 1944, it noted that “V-Discs have the added advantage of being unbreakable, being

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, xxxiv.

¹⁷ Richard Sears, *V-Discs* (Greenwood Press: Connecticut, 1980), lxxvi.

made on a plastic bendable material, so that practically no breakage in shipment occurs.”¹⁸

The special arrangement that had been agreed with Petrillo created a special set of circumstances for the V-Disc operation. By avoiding any contractual issues with the performers or the AFM, Vincent and his group were able to produce records that almost certainly would never have been made. Not only was the AFM not a factor in producing the records, neither were the recording companies. In peace time, the record companies were loath to allow their artists any form of lee-way, especially in recording with artists on the books of their competitors. However, because Vincent was able to ignore the industry’s common practice, some of the V-Discs contained appearances from artists together who were not able to perform collectively in peace time.¹⁹ Some examples of such exclusive recordings were Tommy Dorsey and Judy Garland, performing “Somewhere Over The Rainbow” on V-Disc 335, Ella Fitzgerald and Buddy Rich on “Blue Skies”—on V-Disc 775, and an all-star jazz session featuring Louis Armstrong, Roy Eldridge, Jack Teagarden, Coleman Hawkins, Art Tatum, Red Norvo, Lionel Hampton, Sid Catlett, Oscar Pettiford, Al Casey and Barney Bigard on V-Disc 152.²⁰

The discs quickly became extremely popular. Many men believed that the V-Disc programme was “the greatest thing the Special Services has ever done.”²¹ They were a taste of home and a link to the United States. The records were just what the men wanted to hear. Inside the boxes that they received was a survey form that from Vincent that requested that the men help the V-Disc programme by informing them what they wanted to hear. Questions on the survey included: “what five V-Discs do

¹⁸ Meeting of the Music Advisory Council of the Joint Army and Navy Committee on Welfare and Recreation, November 9 and 10, 1944. Record Group 225, Box 33, NARA II.

¹⁹ Kenney, *Recorded Music*, 196–97.

²⁰ Chuck Miller, “Victory Music: The Story of the V-Disc Record Label (1043–1949),” *Goldmine*, February 1999; “Ravings at Reveille,” *Down Beat*, October 15, 1944, 13.

²¹ Meeting of the Music Advisory Council of the Joint Army and Navy Committee on Welfare and Recreation, November 9 and 10, 1944. Record Group 225, Box 33, NARA II.

you like best in this release?" "What five V-Discs do you like least?" "What artists and selections would you like to hear on future V-Disc release?" "How many were broken?" and "Any other comments."²² Combined with this was the expertise in music that Bronson acknowledged in the men involved with the programme. Bronson told the Joint Army and Navy Committee on Welfare and Recreation that the V-Disc people "pretty much know what the public wants" and that in any case the "GIs write in and tell them what they want to hear."²³ In the same meeting, it was noted that "much attention has been paid to requests from men in the service overseas, the great majority of whom have shown a marked preference for popular music."²⁴ No new music of that type had been recorded in the period 1942 to 1944 because of the AFM strike and consequently the records represented the very latest in music ideas and playing skills.

The V-Discs were more than just new and different music for the GIs. They were symbolic of the United States and therefore of what the men were fighting for, and they took on a special significance. Ed DiGiannantonio remembered that it was not so much the fact that they were sending out records, but what the underlying message of doing so was. He wrote:

The product was a reflection of America's way of life, portrayed in its music. The high calibre of the artistic selections and the technical quality of the V-Discs made this programme one of the most important morale sustainers of the war. The V-Discs were a tie to home and presented an almost instantaneous projection of what was transpiring across the musical spectrum in our country. That the programme was an immense success was demonstrated by the thousands of responses to the questionnaires that recipients of the V-Discs returned to headquarters. The responses were fabulous in their praise of the programme, especially the ability of the staff to meet requests for particular artists, tunes, and programs, whether from live sessions, broadcasts or recordings.²⁵

²² Richard Sears, *V-Discs* (Greenwood Press: Connecticut, 1980).

²³ Meeting of the Music Advisory Council of the Joint Army and Navy Committee on Welfare and Recreation, November 9 and 10, 1944. Record Group 225, Box 33, NARA II; "V-Discs Help Hasten V-Day," *The Billboard 1944 Music Year Book*, 148.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ *Ibid.*, xviii.

V-Discs were favoured because their content was such a taste of home, but also because it was quality entertainment that was easy to handle. Joe Pearson, a radio communications officer in the United States Navy, relied on the shipments of V-Discs to continue to broadcast music on board ship when they were out of range of the English coast and could no longer receive radio signals.²⁶

The discs included a personalised message from the artists who had recorded them. These would be along the lines of telling the soldiers and sailors to keep up the good work and that everyone was really proud of them for what they were doing. The light-hearted tone of the message was intended to convey serenity and confidence. Something such as this message from Spike Jones was typical fare: "Hello fellows, this is Spike Jones. Special Services has asked us to do a record session for you, so we couldn't get here fast enough, really. Here's some relaxation at 78rpm."²⁷ The combination of top-level musicians and songs, and the link to home provided by both the music and the message from the artist made V-Discs extremely popular. A letter from one soldier in the Pacific regarding his appreciation for V-Discs was printed (in part) in *Billboard*, and the letter writer commented that, "[the records] are really doing a great job in aiding that much-needed 'snap back to normal living.'"²⁸

V-Discs made new, popular music available to the forces around the world. The program used new techniques pioneered specifically for the service and managed to bridge the gap created by the AFM strike. By having a team of men who had been intimately involved in the music industry before the war the programme was able to utilise the existing civilian music business and all its knowledge and experience. A supportive administration within the government and military was also beneficial to the project. However, it was the men who enjoyed the records most, and it was

²⁶ Oral interview with Mr Joe Pearson, Chief Petty Officer, United States Navy, Ret., Bedford, England, February 20, 2004.

²⁷ Spike Jones introducing "Minka," V-Disc 570. *Goldmine*, "Victory Music: The Story of the V-Disc Record Label (1943-1949)," Chuck Miller, February 1999.

²⁸ "V-Discs Help Hasten V-Day," *The Billboard 1944 Music Year Book*, 149.

because of them that the V-Discs were able to expand and succeed throughout the war.

The V-Discs program allowed artists to continue to make records, and in some cases, radio stations were permitted to play such records—if any were available. Armed Forces Radio or local stations near big bases most often received such dispensation. Despite the limitations, this limited airplay still resulted in both troops and civilians continuing to hear these famous musicians. Rather than joining the military and disappearing from the music scene, musician-soldiers playing for the big service bands continued to be heard playing music, both old and new, by their fans, giving them a distinct advantage over their civilian, non-recording, peers. And, considering that by March 1944, the army sent out one hundred thousand V-Discs each month, and seven months later 250,000 per month, the chances were fairly good that many people heard those musicians.²⁹

In this regard, life for musicians, in the military, continued much as it had done prior to service. This distinction regarding recording possibilities seems slight; some could, some could not—but musicians in the military could record, while civilians could not because of the AFM strike—a distinct advantage for the military musician. The military musician often remained more in the spotlight (sometimes, even the national spotlight), whereas his civilian counterpart suffered from being withdrawn from the recording scene, and limited to local appearances for limited audiences. In terms of the ability to record, and thus to be heard, the civilian musician suffered more than his military counterpart. In addition to all the other effects of the AFM recording ban, those men and women that James Petrillo wanted to help—the civilian musicians—ended up more restricted and less able to attract the public spotlight than many of the musicians who found themselves within the personal-liberty-constrained

²⁹ "USO Leaders Cite Wartime Aids of Music," *Down Beat*, March 15, 1944, 13; "Ravings at Reville," *Down Beat*, October 15, 1944, 13.

military environment.

These precious recording opportunities for military bands meant continued presence in the show business limelight. However, staying in the public eye could also be achieved through public performances. Those fans who lived near to major bases or to where the bigger service bands were stationed or travelled, had opportunities to see leading musicians and bandleaders in concert, despite the change from band, to military uniforms. The musician-soldiers performing with official bands benefited from their cachet as civilian musicians and the status of the military band they played for. That combination afforded the musician-soldier more of these important performance opportunities. By performing in the civilian arena, musician-soldiers continued enjoying support from their fans when and where possible.

One of the bandmasters stationed at San Diego Naval Training Station, Harry Greenfield, recalled that musician-soldiers continued their performances at civilian engagements.³⁰ He wrote that although they had joined the navy, their ability to play such shows remained much the same as it had been when they were civilians. The practice of playing civilian shows was a common one amongst musicians in uniform and the B-1 band in Chapel Hill, for instance, often found itself engaged for such shows.³¹ The band members recalled one instance in particular. Fletcher Henderson, the famous bandleader played a series of concerts in and around the area, and some of the B-1 band members joined him on stage, filling gaps in Henderson's complement that he had lost to the draft. In return, Henderson performed for all the men stationed at the University of North Carolina campus. On other occasions band members also played in Durham or Greensboro.³² The Henderson appearance and the other civilian

³⁰ <http://www.cnrsw.navy.mil/band/history.htm>—as accessed June 21, 2005.

³¹ The B-1 Band is discussed in detail later in this chapter.

³² <http://www.rafountain.com/navy> as accessed March 6, 2007. No date is given for the Henderson sit-in sessions.

engagements all kept the band members in the public spotlight.³³

Musicians in the American armed forces enjoyed numerous recording opportunities during World War II. For the first time in a war, musicians took on non-military roles in that, for many, their most important function in the military was to play their instruments. In those instances, the men and women in question retained much of their civilian musical responsibilities, one of which was to record and perform. The V-Disc series offered one of the best methods of recording during the war and many musicians took advantage of the excellent and unprecedented programme of V-Discs. Furthermore, as recording artists, these musicians kept themselves in the music industry spotlight, retaining some of their fame and fortune that they brought with them when they switched civilian clothing for military uniforms.

Musicians' Control of Draft Status and Their Position in the Forces

A further benefit, and one that was no doubt extremely important to individual men, came from the element of control musician-soldiers experienced over their vocation in the armed forces. The War Department rulings ensuring that professional musicians would be used as musicians in the military, created a situation whereby one's vocation led to relative safety despite still being in the armed forces. In effect, the rulings meant that even though musicians were not granted deferred status from the draft, they had a good chance to secure a non-combat position. Many musicians decided to take the opportunity to attempt to control their position in the military—an opportunity the draft would not have afforded them. In order to gain that control, a musician had to volunteer. Although the War Department ensured that musicians taken through the draft would also be used effectively, by volunteering, men gained

³³ In the case of the B-1 band, most of the members had only recently left high school, or had been recruited from college and had not had a professional career.

the greatest degree of control over their placement in the forces.

Another method of controlling one's destiny used by musicians was to practice draft avoidance. Aware of the racism that prevailed in military institutions some African American musicians used this technique. Using tricks and ruses they tried to deter the draft board officer from classifying them as fit to serve.³⁴ Charles Mingus was one of those who adopted the draft avoidance technique. Mingus, Bill Douglass and Buddy Collette all decided to take up a recruitment offer for an all-black navy reserve band near San Francisco. However, when they arrived in San Francisco for the physical, Mingus and Douglass both reversed their decisions. In an effort to convince the medical officer that he was not fit to serve, Mingus claimed he had heart troubles and struggled to walk properly. According to Collette, Mingus did everything he could think of to avoid being classified as healthy and fit for duty—and it worked.³⁵ Musicians who did not avoid the draft were left with two options: either accept the random fate of the draft system, or—if given the opportunity—embrace the offer of continuing to play music if they volunteered.

Examples of African American musicians volunteering to join up and thus securing their musical position in the armed forces include men such as Marshal and Ernie Royal, two brothers who were sent to Great Lakes when they volunteered for the Navy. Although they had volunteered and had (in effect) guaranteed their musical safety, they were still at the whim of the navy and Marshal Royal was soon transferred to the Navy Pre-Flight School in Moraga, California, with the rest of the dance band they had formed at Great Lakes. The brothers had volunteered for the navy because they knew they would be drafted and wanted to avoid the army, and wished to continue playing music. When the recruiters from Great Lakes arrived in Hollywood

³⁴ For more information on draft avoidance by black musicians, see Scott DeVeaux, *The Birth of Bebop: A Social and Musical History* (London: Picador, 1999).

³⁵ Clora Bryant et al., *Central Avenue Sounds: Jazz in Los Angeles* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 145.

and let it be known that they wanted musicians for bands in the navy, the brothers decided to join up. Their decision to volunteer as musicians—thus controlling their military destiny—was familiar to many other young black musicians who realised that they would most likely be drafted at some point. In effect, the vagaries of the draft made the decision for them.

Jackie Kelso, a leading saxophonist who played with Benny Goodman, Benny Carter, Kid Ory and Lionel Hampton, amongst others, could not believe what he was offered by the Navy to join up and play in a band. He, just as many others did, almost snatched the pen from the recruiters hand to sign up as quickly as possible, once he understood what was being offered.³⁶ Such was the demand for good quality musicians, that men could, in a fashion, pick and choose where they wanted to go in the country and what branch of the armed forces they wished to serve in. William (Bill) Douglass first volunteered to join the navy along with Charles Mingus, Buddy Collette and Jackie Kelso.³⁷ However, he disliked the sea and so, when he discovered that he could not be categorically assured that he would never be placed on a boat and sent abroad, Douglass declined the offer of joining the navy band and returned to Los Angeles. Within a year, another opportunity to be in a military band arose for him. He ended up being recruited by the Tenth Cavalry for their band. The Tenth Cavalry band's engagements included USO shows, the Hollywood Canteen, and dances, and Douglass recalled it being a "fantastic band."³⁸

A further example of the benefits of choosing to enter the military through their own volition was the evidence of those well-known musicians who did not volunteer and were subsequently drafted. For these men, it was far rarer that they

³⁶ Clora Bryant et al., *Central Avenue Sounds: Jazz in Los Angeles* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 221.

³⁷ William "Bill" Douglass was a drummer. He performed with notable musicians throughout his career, including Benny Carter, Benny Goodman, Earl Hines, Lena Horne, and Art Tatum. Clora Bryant et al., *Central Avenue Sounds: Jazz in Los Angeles* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 233.

³⁸ Clora Bryant et al., *Central Avenue Sounds: Jazz in Los Angeles* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 245–246.

ended up playing in a band in the military. Draftees did not have the choice of where they went and once there, there may not have even been a band for them to try to join. Coney Woodman, who had played with Les Hite before being drafted, was a prime example of this.³⁹ While his peers from the Les Hite band and other rival bands he knew, were joining up and playing on navy and army dance bands, Woodman was drafted, sent from one training camp to another and never came near to a dance band of any sort.⁴⁰

Despite not volunteering, enlisted men did not always suffer the repercussions of leaving their position in the military to chance. At Fort Dix, the army formed a dance band that included George Koenig from Benny Goodman's band, Carol Parvis from Joe Venuti's outfit, Bob Jenny from Claude Thornhill's band, Al Peinecke, the arranger from Dick Stabile's band, and one or two other civilian band sidemen. These men had been drafted, but the War Department rulings on best use of talent meant their abilities were used effectively rather than being lost. Private Marc Rosales was the band leader for the Fort Dix group and *Yank* noted that his band had many similar counterparts wherever American troops were stationed around the world.⁴¹

Role of military bands in boosting morale

Military dance bands—in particular those with famous leaders—carried inherent benefits for the armed forces. These benefits included morale boosts for the other troops, the fame of the bands and their members, and the resulting positive propaganda generated. The wide-spread appeal of the best military bands with avid public followings magnified the benefits. Bandleaders swapping tuxedos for khaki

³⁹ Coney Woodman was a pianist in the Woodman Brothers Biggest Little Band in the World prior to his time spent in the army. He did not play in a military band—a draftee rather than a volunteer, he never had the choice. Clora Bryant et al., *Central Avenue Sounds: Jazz in Los Angeles* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 94.

⁴⁰ Clora Bryant et al., *Central Avenue Sounds: Jazz in Los Angeles* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 99–100.

⁴¹ "Swing in Wartime," *Yank*, September 16, 1942, 18.

had the same effect. The music press in particular and the media in general, used many column inches to highlight and describe what the famous musicians did in the military. *Down Beat*, *Billboard* and *Variety* all published articles on a regular basis pointing out the positive work of such bands. Headlines such as “Blue and Khaki Replace Tourist White in Miami,” “Tommy Jones is Popular at Coast Field” and “Band Leader’s Honor Roll,” accompanied articles praising the performances and impact of the big bands in the forces.⁴²

Down Beat ran a regular column entitled “Ravings at Reveille,” that consistently paid attention to what well-known musicians in the forces were doing. The March 1, 1943, edition of *Down Beat* carried one of the best examples of “Ravings at Reveille’s” “boosterism.” It highlighted some of the major band leaders and their sidemen who performed for soldiers and sailors around the country, concluding that “if you think [you can hear these bands elsewhere] . . . you’re cooking on the wrong burner friend.” Big bands, such as those of Artie Shaw and then Sam Donahue, received similar press, especially in the light of the amount of time spent abroad, and total distance covered in the course of duty, reported fully.⁴³ To further promote the exploits of this band in particular, the press emphasised the desire of sailors and soldiers to hear the dance music that this band was famous for.⁴⁴ All of which was an excellent dose of positive public relations, propaganda, interest in the exploits of the military, and increased attention paid to a successful and public-image-friendly part of the armed forces. Myriad examples of more mainstream media providing their own positive press exist as well. The *Nebraska State Journal*

⁴² Inside Stuff—Orchestras, *Variety*, February 9, 1944, 40. This article discussed Glenn Miller’s band and its broadcasting duties. “Blue and Khaki Replace Tourist White in Miami,” *Down Beat*, January 1, 1943, 9; “Tommy Jones is Popular at Coast Field,” *Down Beat*, March 1, 1943, 20; “Band Leader’s Honor Roll,” *Down Beat*, March 15, 1943, 12. Other *Down Beat* examples included “Donahue Navy Band Due in States Soon,” March 15, 1945, 13 and “Donahue Band Found GIs were Jive-Hungry,” June 1, 1945, 1.

⁴³ “Donahue Navy Band Due In States Soon,” *Down Beat*, March 15, 1945, 13.

⁴⁴ “Donahue Band Found GI’s Were Jive-Hungry,” *Down Beat*, June 1, 1945, 1.

highlighted the good performances of the 14th AAF dance band, while *The Lowell* (Massachusetts) *Sun* proclaimed that excellent music for a dance was provided by the 320th United States Army dance band.⁴⁵ A further example of such positive press occurred in the *Reno Evening Gazette*, which heaped praise on the dance band of the 893rd Chemical Company, stationed at the Reno Army Air base.⁴⁶ These small city newspapers show the local nature of many of the dance bands within the armed forces. Entertainment provided by such bands drew the attention of local newspapers, but given that the newspapers were not music-business-specific, their praise indicates the high esteem in which the bands were held, as well as the desire to promote the activities of local armed forces units.

The Great Lakes Naval Training Station

The Great Lakes Naval Training Station housed so many musicians—both black and white—that it warrants consideration on its own, as arguably, the single most important military institution for music during World War II.⁴⁷ Situated in North Chicago, about thirty miles outside of the city itself, the station was the biggest training centre operated by the navy during World War II. At a peak capacity of seventy-five thousand recruits, the station churned out more than a million sailors by the time the war ended. Segregation within the navy carried through to Great Lakes. In order to house African American sailors, the navy created a base within a base, by establishing Camp Robert Smalls within the larger station in August 1942.⁴⁸ As the

⁴⁵ "14th AAF Dance Band," *Nebraska State Journal*, May 28, 1943, 6; "Servicemen Entertainment," *The Lowell* (Massachusetts) *Sun*, December 5, 1944, 10.

⁴⁶ "Dance is Enjoyed," *Reno Evening Gazette*, April 23, 1943, 5.

⁴⁷ Ira Gitler, *Swing to Bop: An Oral History of the Transition in Jazz in the 1940's* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985). Gitler noted that both black and white sailor-musicians were stationed at Great Lakes Naval Training Station.

⁴⁸ Perry Duis & Scott LaFrance, *We've Got a Job to Do: Chicagoans and World War II*, (Chicago: Chicago Historical Society, 1992); Michael Ebner, *Creating Chicago's North Shore: A Suburban History*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988). Camp Robert Smalls was named for a slave of the same name who was pressed into the service of the Confederate Navy in 1861. He served as a pilot in the United States Navy as a Captain, before making the rank of Commander. Smalls served in the House

number of black sailors passing through Great Lakes increased, so two more camps joined Camp Robert Smalls. Camps Lawrence and Moffett housed white sailors until January and June 1943, respectively, before changing to house black sailors.⁴⁹

Wishing to provide morale boosting entertainment and to “afford expert music necessary to the military drills and reviews,” the navy established a music programme unlike any other in military history.⁵⁰ As Great Lakes bandmaster Lehman Engel wrote, “The most extraordinarily simple and revolutionary practice in the employment of musicians in wartime is to be found in the operation of the band here at the United States Naval Training station.”⁵¹ Most importantly in this development, the men chosen for the music programme had all been professional musicians in their civilian lives.⁵²

The music programme was split along race lines, as well, with Lieutenant Commander Eddie Peabody oversaw the white bands from the programme’s beginning. Peabody had been a well-known civilian band leader before joining the navy.⁵³ Both black and white sailors enjoyed the proximity of three official station bands—A, B, and C.⁵⁴ Between August 1942 and the end of the war, more than five thousand African American musicians passed through the Great Lakes Naval Training Station. Following basic and musical training most shipped out in bands of twenty-five pieces to naval bases across the country. The best of those recruited musicians remained at Great Lakes, forming Ships Company Bands A, B, and C, for the duration of the war. The A band consisted of twenty-five “first-rate jazz players,” while the B

of Representatives of South Carolina, before later becoming a state senator and finally being elected to Congress to serve between 1875 and 1887. *The Black Perspective in Music*, “The Great Lakes Experience, 1942–45,” Samuel A. Floyd, Jr., Vol. 3, No. 1, Spring 1975, 18, n7.

⁴⁹ Samuel Floyd, “The Great Lakes Experience,” *Black Perspectives in Music*, 3 (Spring 1975): 19.

⁵⁰ “Navy Musicians,” *New York Times*, August 2, 1942, X5.

⁵¹ Engel, “Band Aids,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, August 23, 1942.

⁵² “Navy Life Lures Ace Dance Men,” *Down Beat*, April 15, 1942, 7.

⁵³ Engel, “Band Aids,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, August 23, 1942.

⁵⁴ “Navy Musicians,” *New York Times*, August 2, 1942, X 5.

and C bands contained twenty members in each.⁵⁵

The training station is evidence of the sheer number of musicians required at any one time to fulfil all musical duties. At the same time, it also solved that problem, providing replacement bandsmen for units around the country. From that permanent number, the base organised and housed four full-time official navy bands, or Ship's Company Bands, and eleven smaller units that included four dance bands and a broadcast ensemble.⁵⁶ Considering that the training station housed approximately seventy thousand men at any one time, the number of bands—while high—did fit the requirements of the centre.⁵⁷ As an example of the navy's determination to provide musical entertainment, the Great Lakes centre was unmatched during World War II.

With the Band, Music and Entertainment department at Great Lakes housing so many musicians at any one time, an audition for one of the bands would consist of hundreds of professional musicians.⁵⁸ The four official military bands and eleven smaller units, including four dance bands and a broadcast ensemble, were formed from this group of musicians through those auditions.⁵⁹ Prior to Lieutenant Commander Peabody's service he had performed vaudeville in the civilian entertainment world as the "Banjo King." Peabody oversaw all of the bands, but the Ship's Company Band "A" (the best of the navy bands at Great Lakes) was commanded by Leonard L Bowden, although at times, Peabody also led the band.⁶⁰

The Camp Robert Smalls dance band received many good reviews and

⁵⁵ Samuel A. Floyd, "The Great Lakes Experience: An Oral History," *The Black Perspective in Music*, 11 (Spring 1983): 41; Engel, "Bands Aid," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, August 23, 1942.

⁵⁶ Clora Bryant et al., *Central Avenue Sounds: Jazz in Los Angeles* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 145; *Theatre Arts*, "Music for the Sailors," March 1943, 190–93, by Lehman Engel, Musician First Class.

⁵⁷ "Navy Finds Music Vital Factor," *Down Beat*, May 1, 1943, 14–15.

⁵⁸ Musician First Class, Lehman Engel "Music for the Sailors," *Theatre Arts*, March 1943, 190–193; Clora Bryant et al., *Central Avenue Sounds: Jazz in Los Angeles*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 145.

⁵⁹ Musician First Class, Lehman Engel. "Music for the Sailors," *Theatre Arts*, March 1943, 190–193.

⁶⁰ Engel, "Band Aids," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, August 23, 1942; Samuel A. Floyd, Jr., "The Great Lakes Experience," *The Black Perspective in Music*, 3 (Spring 1975): 18.

enjoyed the popularity of the men and was acknowledged as the best of the three.⁶¹ Each of those bands though, was deemed to be of an extremely high quality, with only the best musicians chosen to play in them.⁶² Such was the prestige of the band and its musicians that well-known civilian musicians and singers visited the camp so as to play and sing with them.⁶³

In order to supply Great Lakes with enough high-quality musicians, recruiters scoured the country's most renowned jazz cities and regions, with almost free reign to take musicians back to Great Lakes. Bowden, an African American reserve officer, had a free pass to travel almost anywhere in the United States to select any musician he chose. Bypassing the standard transport for African Americans of buses or, if fortunate, trains, Bowden flew to his chosen location, scouted the talent, and sent his recommendations back to Washington DC so that those men would get their orders to travel to Great Lakes.⁶⁴ Significantly, it would appear that the introduction of black bands to Great Lakes, and the subsequent recruitment needed to fill the bands, led to a shortage of musicians for black civilian bands that had not been noticed prior to these bands' establishment.⁶⁵

Bowden's work at Camp Robert Smalls, in conjunction with the draft, and combined with the recruitment for white bands in the main camp, drew many well-known, top-level musicians into the station. In March 1942, *Down Beat* proclaimed that the musicians at Great Lakes could "really blow up a storm," with "musikers from most of the name bands stationed there, either as members of the base bands, or

⁶¹ In fact, the Camp Robert Smalls band, or Ship's Company Band "A" was held in extremely high regard. So much so that the city of Chicago "requested and secured the services of the 'A' band for its 'Forty Million in Forty Days' effort." This was a bond drive equivalent. Samuel A. Floyd, Jr., "The Great Lakes Experience," *The Black Perspective in Music*, 3 (Spring 1975): 19.

⁶² *Ibid*, 23.

⁶³ *Ibid*, 21.

⁶⁴ Samuel A. Floyd, "The Great Lakes Experience: An Oral History," *The Black Perspective in Music*, 11 (Spring 1983): 43.

⁶⁵ "Colored Bands Hit by Draft for 1st Time," *Variety*, September 16, 1942, 41.

undergoing boot training.”⁶⁶ The article continued by noting that Willie Smith, formerly of Jimmie Lunceford’s and Charlie Spivak’s bands, Ray Anthony, who had played for Glenn Miller and Jimmy Dorsey, and other ex-professionals such as John Coltrane, Eli Chalfie, Eddie Scherr and Al Sutton, were in one or other of the various bands.⁶⁷

Once recruited and ensconced at Great Lakes, the day-to-day life for musicians outside of any military duties, consisted of rehearsals, individual practice, music study halls, “regularly scheduled activities,” and “jam” sessions. Clark Terry recalled the jam sessions often lasting for two to three hours at a time.⁶⁸ These sessions and practices became an important part of the daily routine. These musicians were, in effect, isolated, practising and experimenting all the time. Their time in uniform coincided with the ban on recording by the Musicians’ Union. As a result, one of the traditional methods of new ideas being heard, shared and expanded upon by musicians was not available to them. But musician-soldiers, with so much practice time, enjoyed the chance to innovate and experiment outside of the commercial music scene.

With so many talented musicians together with a lot of time to try new things, the ingredients and military environment were perfect for producing advancements in technique and style progression. Thus, when these musicians received their discharge papers and returned to the civilian environment and the then in vogue small groups and jam sessions, they adapted quickly. Furthermore, the musicians in uniform were not completely removed from the civilian music scene. Many of the bands performed civilian engagements and as many of the musicians lived in civilian apartments in the major cities of the country, they would have had the chance to experience for themselves the new music that was beginning to crop up in places like New York and

⁶⁶ “Ravings at Reveille,” *Down Beat*, March 1, 1944, 13.

⁶⁷ Gary L. Bloomfield, et al., *Duty, Honor, Applause* (The Lyons Press: Guilford, CT, 2004), 92.

⁶⁸ Samuel A. Floyd, “The Great Lakes Experience: An Oral History,” *The Black Perspective in Music*, 11, (Spring 1983): 45.

Los Angeles. As new musicians volunteered and were sent to the Great Lakes Naval Training Station and elsewhere, they would have brought with them the newest sounds and songs they had heard and the experimentation within the military musicians' circles would have moved forward once more.

After regular military duties and practices had been completed, the men of the A, B and C bands often journeyed into Chicago to perform in civilian night clubs and dance halls. The practice became so widespread that the Musicians Union Local in Chicago complained to the navy. As a result, the navy forbade Great Lakes musicians from leaving the base with their instruments. The navy hoped that if the men did not have access to their instruments, they would stop taking civilian jobs. However, it did not stop the practice as most of the men left their non-military-issued instruments somewhere in the city to be claimed when they arrived to play.⁶⁹ Hayes Pillars, a civilian musician in Chicago during the war, recalled the navy musicians coming to play, but he painted it in a positive, rather than negative light. Pillars noted that the musicians from Great Lakes would join the civilians in big jam sessions at the Rhumboogie night club in Chicago. He recalled that everyone benefited from the practice because of the higher ability level of the navy musicians.⁷⁰

Bands at the Great Lakes Naval Training Station also performed at important naval functions, on the radio for the Blue Network on the "Meet Your Navy" programme,⁷¹ for unit dances, and at "Happy Hours," which occurred once-a-month and was based on the tradition of sailors coming ashore once each month for entertainment purposes. Bands playing for "Happy Hours" often performed to as many as 3,500 men. One navy officer was quoted as saying about the Happy Hours

⁶⁹ The location of these instruments was often a girlfriend's, wife's, or friend's place, or alternatively, at a night club where they were well known.

⁷⁰ Samuel A. Floyd, "The Great Lakes Experience: An Oral History," *The Black Perspective in Music*, 11, (Spring 1983): 45.

⁷¹ The general purpose of the "Meet Your Navy" show was to "get people to write to the boys in service. Its big added feature is in morale building." "Navy Band is Versatile," *Down Beat*, September 15, 1942, 13.

that, "That hour of entertainment tonight is going to win two battles for us later."⁷²

No matter what occasion one of the bands played for, Bandmaster Engel noted that the bands' performances "resulted in the high morale of many thousands of sailors in training."⁷³

The Navy Training Station in San Diego, California also harboured many musicians.⁷⁴ With such a huge naval presence in San Diego, the formation of bands was necessary. In addition, its proximity to Hollywood meant there were many musicians and entertainers situated there from which to recruit directly. Furthermore, the musicians available were of a high standard because of the competitive music scene in that area. Dr Frederick Fennell served as the National Music Adviser for the USO during World War II and was stationed in San Diego during 1943 and 1944.⁷⁵ He noted that although he could not be sure how many bands were stationed there during his time, there were at least two big bands of a very high standard.⁷⁶

Musicians' Experiences in the Military

Once past boot camp, the basic rules for musicians in the navy, no matter where they were stationed, differed quite sharply from those for the other sailors. They worked basic hours of eight o'clock in the morning until four o'clock in the afternoon and they had few—and liberal—navy duties to attend to in that time.⁷⁷

⁷² "This is the Navy," *Down Beat*, September 15, 1942, 12.

⁷³ Engel, "Band Aids," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, August 23, 1942.

⁷⁴ U.S. Naval Training Station, San Diego, was officially commissioned June 1, 1923, with 10 officers and 50 enlisted men for the purpose of training 1500 naval recruits every 16 weeks. By the end of 1923, four schools were operating on the base: radio, yeoman, bugler, band. In 1939, the base began to expand as the bay was dredged and 130 acres of fill land were added to the base. By 1942, the number of recruits reached 40,000 for a training period of 3 to 7 weeks, and 41 schools were active. In 1944 the base became a group command centre, with Recruit Training Command, Service School Command, and Naval Administrative Command.

<http://history.sandiego.edu/gen/local/kearny/page00e.html> as accessed October 24, 2007.

⁷⁵ Roger E. Rickson, *Ffortissimo: A Bio-Discography of Frederick Fennell: The First Forty Years, 1953–1993* (Ludwig Music Inc, 1993).

⁷⁶ <http://www.cnrsw.navy.mil/band/history.htm> — as accessed June 21, 2005.

⁷⁷ Clara Bryant et al., *Central Avenue Sounds: Jazz in Los Angeles* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998).

Their favourable status included (better) housing arrangements, lax attitudes towards official duties, non-standard working hours and the ability to add to their standard pay through outside civilian music jobs. Musicians enjoyed a general improvement in their treatment and an increased standard of living from those not fortunate to play an instrument. Many of the musicians recruited from Los Angeles concluded that their music skills provided the greatest incentive towards their positive experience in the military.

At Moraga and Great Lakes many of the dance band members were given stipends to find housing in apartments off-base and were allowed to use their own cars to drive to and from the base when they were required to be there. Gerald Wilson was given an apartment in Chicago, despite it being thirty-five miles from the Great Lakes facility.⁷⁸ Living so far from the base he had to use his own car to get to work, but never had any trouble with this arrangement, either personally or professionally. Considering the restrictions on travel, and the rationing of gasoline, the use of a personal car to travel seventy miles every day was quite an extravagance on the part of the navy. Buddy Collette, who was stationed at Moraga in California at the navy's Pre-Flight Training School, was also given off-base accommodation. He recalled that it was standard procedure for all the musicians at that base to be given apartments at the navy's expense in the San Francisco and Oakland area.⁷⁹

The musicians who were recruited for the bands at Moraga, were there to practice, play and entertain. They were not expected to perform any military duties outside of playing their instruments for marches and colours parades. Marshal Royal was placed in charge of the number one band at Moraga between 1942 and 1945. While bandleader he did not even live on the base. The navy gave him a stipend to rent a room in San Francisco and he drove his own car to work at Moraga each

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 331.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 145.

morning. As military life went, Royal remembered, "it wasn't bad at all."⁸⁰ Not all musicians lived in private housing, though, as unmarried musicians at Camp Allen near Norfolk, Virginia were required to live on the base, but married men found off-camp quarters just as Royal and the others at Moraga did.⁸¹

Other highly respected musicians such as Jackie Kelso and Buddy Collette had also been recruited from the Los Angeles musicians' union. Collette, just like the Royals, was originally sent to the Great Lakes facility and then moved on to Moraga, retaining to their old, musical stomping ground. The Navy housed Collette off-base and he recalled that all the musicians eventually received their own apartments in the Bay area around San Francisco and Oakland.⁸² Once ensconced at Moraga, the Navy guaranteed that these musicians would remain there for the duration.⁸³ Recruiting officers made this promise when scouting musicians. They indicated that the musicians would not be shipped abroad or transferred to combat outfits and would remain in the band unless they became unfit for duty. In Chapel Hill, members of the B-1 Band lived in their own houses if they were close enough to the base.⁸⁴ Members of Glenn Miller's band also enjoyed luxurious accommodations. Stationed at Yale University, bandmen all enjoyed private rooms, rather than sharing barracks.⁸⁵

When musicians in the navy did manage to drive to their base from their civilian apartments, their Navy duties were extremely light. As a contributor to *Down Beat* noted, "In addition to regular duties, [the musician's] routine is of a nature that calls for many after hour stretches. Navy dances, athletic contests and special

⁸⁰ Ibid., 46.

⁸¹ "How the Navy Musicians Live and Work, the Story of Typical Norfolk Gob," *Down Beat*, December 15, 1942, 18.

⁸² Clora Bryant et al., *Central Avenue Sounds: Jazz in Los Angeles* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 145.

⁸³ Ibid., 221.

⁸⁴ <http://www.rafountain.com/navy> as accessed March 6, 2007.

⁸⁵ Nat Peck as quoted in Geoffrey Butcher, *Next to a Letter from Home: Major Glenn Miller's Wartime Band* (Edinburgh: Mainstream Publishing, 1986), 23-24.

ceremonies—often at night—demand his presence.”⁸⁶ Twice a week, the Ship’s Company bands at Camp Robert Smalls performed for their fellow recruits. Often the Wednesday night shows included famous African American performers, such as Lena Horne, Dorothy Donnegan and the Jimmie Lunceford Band.⁸⁷ Such was the demand for these naval bands that there was a detailed weekly evening concert schedule for the bands at Great Lakes. Almost every night of the week was filled with a performance of some kind for at least one of the station’s bands, with Tuesdays and Thursdays featuring the dance bands. This frequency of performances led *Down Beat* to note that the Band, Music and Entertainment office at Great Lakes “resembles a busy theatrical booking agency.”⁸⁸

Performance duties included concerts for the recruits, dances for the officers and men, and broadcasting. At some of these concerts and dances the bands were playing for three or four thousand men at a time.⁸⁹ The best musicians from the Ship’s Company Bands formed a “Radio Band” which performed on the Blue Network for the *Meet Your Navy* programme and on the CBS network for a weekly radio show entitled *Men O’ War*.⁹⁰ Duties also included performing off the base for such things as War Bond drives and civilian dances in nearby towns and cities. The musicians viewed this lack of military duty with incredulity at times, but also revelled in the lax situation in which they found themselves. Confirming Royal’s opinion, Gerald Wilson noted that they led good and relatively easy lives in the navy, and that

⁸⁶ “Navy Finds Music Vital Factor,” *Down Beat*, May 1, 1943, 14–15.

⁸⁷ Samuel A. Floyd, Jr., “The Great Lakes Experience,” *The Black Perspective in Music*, 3, (Spring 1975): 21.

⁸⁸ “Navy Finds Music Vital Factor,” *Down Beat*, May 1, 1943, 14–15.

⁸⁹ Musician First Class, Lehman Engel, “Music for the Sailors,” *Theatre Arts*, March 1943, 190–193.

⁹⁰ Musician First Class, Lehman Engel, “Music for the Sailors,” *Theatre Arts*, March 1943, 190–193; Samuel A. Floyd, Jr., “The Great Lakes Experience,” *The Black Perspective in Music*, 3 (Spring 1975) 19. *Men O’ War* began, in 1943, as a local radio show, but by the end of the war it was syndicated across the entire CBS network. J Fred MacDonald, *Don’t Touch That Dial! Radio Programming in American Life, 1920–1960* (Chicago, 1979), 348.

they “were very privileged people.”⁹¹

Once official navy duties were completed, either in their regular working hours or in the evenings, musicians were free to pursue their own musical engagements because they were not required to be on camp.⁹² The armed forces even sanctioned such off-duty work practices. In the case of Grady Barnes, a drummer for an orchestra in Minneapolis, he continued to play for that civilian band once his basic training had been completed. Each night his commanding officer granted him permission to appear with his former band—as long as Barnes wore his uniform—because the civilian band leader was struggling to find a replacement for the drummer.⁹³ While most non-musician sailors were allowed to carry out work in their civilian trade to supplement their military income whilst stationed in the United States, in practice it was not easy for them to do so. Their regular military duties left little time to work on civilian contracts. For the musician, with so much free time available to him and with so few military restrictions stopping him from taking outside contracts, there was ample opportunity to earn more money by playing civilian dates.

Musicians in the navy continued to live in much the same way they had done in Los Angeles, New York or Chicago prior to joining up. They had so much free time on their hands and they used it to their benefit. During this free time they practised, experimented and wrote new music. Huel Perkins, a musician stationed at Great Lakes, recalled that “the experience provided the opportunity for a group of first-rate musicians to perfect their craft and to interact with other musicians of the same level of performance. . . . The opportunity to hear other musicians perform, to be

⁹¹ Clora Bryant et al., *Central Avenue Sounds: Jazz in Los Angeles* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 331.

⁹² Ibid; “How the Navy Musicians Live and Work, the Story of Typical Norfolk Gob,” *Down Beat*, December 15, 1942, 18.

⁹³ *Variety*, “Grady Barnes Fills Out Orchestra Date While in United States Army Uniform,” June 3, 1942, 39.

inspired by the techniques and ideas of others seems to have been one of the great virtues of the experience.”⁹⁴ James Parsons agreed, noting that they “practice regularly, not just for the fun of jamming, but working out, getting it perfect.”⁹⁵ A particularly good example of the result of all that practice time was Peanuts Hucko. Peanuts Hucko had played for Ray McKinley’s civilian band before being drafted. McKinley recalled that Hucko had been languishing at Fort Drum in New York State with little to do, especially musically, and had used the time to perfect his clarinet technique, that McKinley believed to have been poor enough to have fired him from his band, despite his obvious talent on the saxophone. When Glenn Miller put his army air force band together, McKinley joined him and told him of Hucko. Miller had Hucko transferred and upon joining the band, Hucko became the lead clarinetist—much to McKinley’s amazement.⁹⁶

Despite switching their big band suits for military uniforms, for many musicians in the armed forces little changed once they enlisted or received their draft papers. In a great many cases, musicians found that they actually had equal or more time to practice, little in the way of military duties, and plenty of opportunities to perform in public. The armed forces often treated these men and women in a far superior manner to the average soldier or sailor, providing them with housing and transportation, and demanding only that they practice and perform to the best of their musical abilities.

The USO, Music and Musicians

The United Services Organisation (USO) was brought into existence in 1941 by the military and government to co-ordinate and provide entertainment and

⁹⁴ *The Black Perspective in Music*, “The Great Lakes Experience,” Samuel A. Floyd, Jr., Vol. 3, No. 1, Spring 1975, 23.

⁹⁵ <http://www.rafountain.com/navy> as accessed March 6, 2007.

⁹⁶ Ray McKinley is quoted in Geoffrey Butcher, *Next to a Letter from Home: Major Glenn Miller’s Wartime Band* (Edinburgh: Mainstream Publishing, 1986), 9–10.

relaxation opportunities for men and women in uniform. In the following five years the organisation went on to become one of the most prevalent and important in the lives of men and women in the American forces, and it remains so to this day. The USO provided everything from all-star casts of famous entertainers, small troupes of amateur entertainers. It also offered clubs in which soldiers could relax, write letters, listen to a jukebox or attend a dance. It furnished men with musical entertainment in the smallest of isolated camps across the world to the biggest clubs in the biggest cities in the United States and abroad. When it came to entertainment—and more precisely, for this study, musical entertainment—the USO was the most ubiquitous organisation in the American military. The USO was devoted to the entertainment needs of American troops; it did not cater to civilians very often if at all. The intent of the organisation was to take popular American culture to the troops wherever they were stationed; to make the sights and sounds of home available to every American man and woman in uniform. From the overall reaction to its efforts, the USO succeeded in this mission. Immediately after the war ended a small history of the USO was published, the Andrews Sisters have given the USO some attention in print and the USO itself produced a report to detail its activities a year after war had ended. However, none of them have managed to show the USO in all its various formats and so there is room for more to be written, and the endeavours of this incredible organisation in World War II deserve that attention.⁹⁷

The first mass organisational meeting of the USO took place in Washington DC on April 17, 1941. The purpose of the meeting was to determine the nature of the new organisation. Six agencies already in existence were invited to compose the fledgling entertainment outfit. Those agencies were the International Committee of Young Men's Christian Associations, the National Board of Young Women's

⁹⁷ See William H Young and Nancy K Young, *Music of the World War II Era* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2008), 141, for a short summary of the purposes of the USO.

Christian Associations, the National Catholic Community Service, the Salvation Army, the National Jewish Welfare Board and the National Travellers Aid Association. With the six agencies providing much of the impetus, the USO was ultimately under the general direction of the Army and Navy. At that first meeting, one of the unique features of the USO was incorporated. The government was not asked, nor was it required to provide monies to the USO. Instead the organisation was to be financed by civilian contributions, even though its budget was subject to approval from the government.⁹⁸ Thus, supporting the USO quickly became symbolic as part of the duty of doing one's part to help the war effort.

The USO had two main sections within the overall body. Of most import to music, the USO Camp Shows Inc., was as its name suggests tasked with providing shows at military camps across the nation and, as troops began to be stationed throughout the global conflict, wherever they were to be found. Originally, there had been no provision made for the mobile, Camp Shows, as it was not predicted that they would even be needed. In the first summer of its existence, the USO provided shows at bases, but they were not under the auspices of USO Camp Shows Inc. By the end of the summer of 1941, with so many men having seen USO shows, it was determined that there should be a separate body to produce and provide those shows. The result was that in October Camp Shows Inc. came into existence and was quickly designated the official entertainer of the troops by the War Department and the Navy Department.⁹⁹ Despite the later development of Camp Shows Inc., it quickly went on to cement itself in military life. By the end of the war, the USO had given more than 300,000 shows, enlisted the services of almost 5,000 entertainers and played to a total

⁹⁸ Julia M H Carson, *Home Away From Home: The Story of the USO*, (New York & London: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1946), xi.

⁹⁹ Maxene Andrews and Bill Gilbert, *Over Here, Over There: The Andrews Sisters and the USO Stars in World War II*, (Zebra Books: New York, 1993), 32.

audience of almost 173 million people across the globe.¹⁰⁰

All other duties that concerned the USO were dealt with by the parent organisation, the USO. They were largely concerned with the provision of venues, known as USO Clubs for the troops. USO clubs were to be found both on base and in nearby local communities and came in many shapes and sizes, but the common factor was that they were facilities that allowed men to be away from military life and to choose to use that time as they wished. In big towns or cities, or areas that had a lot of troops stationed there, the USO ran numerous clubs to cater to all the needs of the men. In Columbus, Georgia for instance, USO had six clubs ranging from the small and intimate to the grand with a dance floor and constant traffic.¹⁰¹ One major difference that separated USO Clubs from any other popular venue for men in their time off, such as bars and dance halls, was that there was no alcohol in USO venues. They were intended to offer wholesome relaxation to men and women.

The USO set its agenda early and stuck to it throughout the course of the war. It managed to achieve this because of its success. In the opinion of its core audience (the men in uniform), the USO was a hit. There were dissenting voices, but the overall picture that emerges from accounts of the time and memories from years later, was that the USO provided a service that was wanted and needed, and that in general, that service was of a high order and thus greatly appreciated. Morale of the men was the main beneficiary of the USO and something that, while intangible, was extremely important.

The music industry was also a beneficiary of the USO in an indirect manner and so were the various branches of the forces. The music industry benefited because for listeners there was access to its biggest stars through the USO shows and the forces gained because the men were given that access and were able to enjoy the

¹⁰⁰ "USO, Five Years of Service: Report of the President," February 4, 1946, 18.

¹⁰¹ Frank Mathias, *GI Jive: An Army Bandsman in World War II* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1982), 18.

music and the personalities that USO could provide for them. Recollections of veterans pointed out the impact that USO made on them and their appreciation for the entertainment that those men and women gave to the troops. Gerald Rice, a soldier in the United States Army, wrote that “the USO shows we had both in the United States and overseas were very entertaining.” Mr Augustine J DiFiore also noted that the shows had been enjoyable, and Colonel R E Benson described an Irving Berlin show as the “most wonderful programme that I have ever seen,” carrying on to state that the show was discussed by the men for days afterwards.¹⁰² Not all opinion was in favour and many found the shows not to their liking or the clubs a bit too quiet, but, in general, the belief that USO did provide a good service was more common than not.¹⁰³

USO Camp Shows Inc., contained various different tours. These tours were sent out on a schedule to military bases around the United States according to size, location and other entertainment facilities in the area. The Victory Circuit and the Blue, Red and White circuits respectively, comprised the various tours that the USO provided. The differences were purely based on numbers of the potential audiences and other local entertainments. The Blue circuit was aimed at the smaller and more isolated camps. The Red and White and the Victory circuits were all intended for much larger installations, with the Victory circuit being conducted by famous professional performers who played for very large crowds—the archetype being a Bob Hope show. In a memo from the War Department in December 1942, the Blue circuit was described as including “isolated posts and detachments, which, because of [a] lack of sufficient personnel or suitable facilities, cannot be served in either of the [red

¹⁰² Letter from Mr Gerald Rice to Author, dated April 11, 2003. Letter from Mr Augustine DiFiore to Author, dated January 7, 2004 and letter from Lieutenant Colonel R E Benson to Author, dated April 11, 2003.

¹⁰³ Letter from Mr Hassel Cartwright to Author, dated March 29, 2004. In his letter Mr Cartwright remembered using the USO club in the town of Derriter near his camp, but recalled that he and his friends viewed it as being a bit too quiet for their liking.

or white circuits].”¹⁰⁴ Two months later, in a further memo, this policy was refined so that all installations of 1,500 or less were to be included on that circuit and that “military establishments adjacent to metropolitan centres where civilian entertainment and/or other forms of recreational activity are available” should not be.¹⁰⁵ Preliminary schedules showed that camps on the Blue circuit would receive a troupe once every two or three weeks. The tours varied in length from three weeks to six months and sometimes even longer. The longer tours were generally outside of the United States due to costs and difficulties in sending them out and bringing them home. A typical four-week tour within the United States contained roughly twenty performances in twelve different camps across three or more states.¹⁰⁶

Camp shows of all types were extremely popular and requests for shows to visit camps were made with regular consistency. In a survey conducted by the Special Services Division in July and August 1943 across thirty-two camps USO Camp Shows were rated by the men as the second-best type of show behind “Big time radio shows,” with eighty-nine percent of men questioned stating that USO shows were either “pretty good” or “very good.”¹⁰⁷ A majority of men in the survey group, however, had not seen a USO show at their present camp. USO admitted that it had not managed to bring its shows to every man at every base throughout the world and even by the end of the war, when it was producing over seven hundred shows a day, it could not cope with the demand for entertainment.¹⁰⁸ Consequently there were many who never saw a show. Each show was reported to the Special Services Division by

¹⁰⁴ Memo from the War Department, Services of Supply, Office of the Adjutant General, dated December 6, 1942, re: Winter Entertainment Programme.

¹⁰⁵ Memo from War Department, Services of Supply, Office of the Adjutant General, dated February 14, 1943, Winter Entertainment Programme.

¹⁰⁶ Proposed April 1944 dates for ‘Brazilian Nights’ Company, Unit 221, ‘All is Well’ Company, Unit 223, or ‘Right This Way’ Company, Unit 251. Record Group 160, Box 253, NARA II.

¹⁰⁷ Memo to the Director of Special Services Division, re: Research Report “Attitudes and Opinions of Enlisted Men Towards Stage Shows,” Report no. B-83, January 3, 1944. Record Group 160, Box 393, NARA II. The Big Time Radio Show was one that men affiliated with a famous or popular radio show on the civilian networks. These often included music industry celebrities such as Kay Kyser.

¹⁰⁸ “USO, Five Years of Service: Report of the President,” February 4, 1946, 18.

the camp that had been visited, giving information such as the venue used, the title of the show, the reaction of the men and comments on the programme from the officer filing the report. This was the Daily Army Theatrical Performance Report and it could be quite caustic in its criticism and some led to the ending of troupes being sent to the camp concerned.¹⁰⁹

Criticism that could have been more damaging was the charge made that some of the humour employed by the troupes was racist and was therefore “offensive to or not suitable for coloured troops.”¹¹⁰ There were fewer black groups of performers under the auspices of the USO than white. The issue was raised by the Negro Actor’s Guild of America in January 1944. In a letter sent from that organisation to Brigadier General Osborn of the Special Services Division, the claim was made that, “the War Department does not look with favour upon the sending of American Negro citizens as entertainers [abroad].” The letter went on to say that the black American soldiers wished to be entertained by black entertainers but were being denied the opportunity.¹¹¹ As this was an issue directly linked to USO Camp Shows, because it was concerned with entertainment provided to troops in foreign lands, the reply noted that one all-black troupe had been sent out already and that USO Camp Shows, Inc., was in the process of organising two more.¹¹² These were hardly grand gestures, nor did they meet the needs of the many black men in the forces. It seems more likely that it was a method of satisfying the demands without having to truly address the root

¹⁰⁹ These reports (when negative) and the fact that a majority of men had not even seen a USO show to that date indicate that the USO Camp Shows received a good deal of negative criticism. However, in this regard the report in question does show that of all the types of shows performed for troops, the USO Camp Shows were very well received when attended and that they were attended by more than any other show.

¹¹⁰ Letter from Lawrence Phillips, Executive Vice-President of USO Camp Shows, Inc., to Lieutenant Colonel Marvin Young, Special Services Division, dated October 8, 1943. Record Group 160 Box 400, NARA II.

¹¹¹ Letter from Mabel A Roane, Acting Executive of the Negro Actor’s Guild of America, Inc., to Brigadier General Osborn, dated January 14, 1944. Record Group 160, Box 253, NARA II.

¹¹² Letter from Lieutenant Colonel Frederick Weston, Chief of the Athletic and Recreation Division of the Army Athletic and Recreation Service in reply to Mabel Roane, dated January 28, 1944. Record Group 160, Box 53, NARA II

cause. In fact the reply may have been hastened only by the intervention of Eleanor Roosevelt. A copy of the letter had been sent to her by Mabel Roane, executive secretary of the Negro Actors' Guild of America, and the First Lady then contacted the Special Services Division demanding to know the reason for the lack of all-black troupes for entertaining the men. The end result is not clear and most likely remained with the gesture of the letter in reply.

The First Lady, however, was not finished with her interaction with the USO on racial matters. In October 1944 her attention was drawn to a matter concerning a mixed race musical duet that had already performed for the USO in the United States but was now being denied the opportunity to entertain troops stationed abroad. Libby Holman had written to Roosevelt on behalf of Josh White and herself (the performers in question) to ask the First Lady's help with the matter.¹¹³ After Roosevelt enquired as to what the official policy was, she wrote back to Holman enclosing the USO's reply. It stated that "USO does not discriminate—[it] has sent out groups of mixed races. Will be glad to consider their offer, but show must be judged on basis of suitability of entertainment, composition of a unit in which they may be included and the acceptance finally by [the] War Department."¹¹⁴ The issue was not dropped, despite the rather fudging reply from the USO and by late November, the First Lady had become fully involved, even writing to General Byron who was in charge of sending entertainers overseas for the Army.¹¹⁵

Letters from the USO and the War Department both attempted to deal with the possibility of a mixed race group entertaining the troops by referring to rather abstract regulations that allowed them loopholes to avoid the issue. Holman however, determined to champion her cause, took umbrage at statements such as that from

¹¹³ Letter from the personal secretary of Eleanor Roosevelt on her behalf, to Libby Holman, dated October 31, 1944. Record Group 160, Box 400.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁵ Letter on behalf of Mrs Roosevelt from her secretary to Libby Holman, dated November 20, 1944. Record Group 160, Box 400, NARA II.

Lawrence Phillips of the USO, who wrote “We shall of course, however, find it necessary, within the scope of our responsibilities to accept or reject the offer on the basis of suitability of entertainment.”¹¹⁶ John McClöy of the War Department expressed a similar sentiment. He wrote to Holman, “The War Department reserves the right to refuse the services of entertainers if they do not meet the requirements of a high standard of entertainment.”¹¹⁷

Unfortunately for the USO and the War Department contemporary reviews of the Holman and White performing in Chicago showed them to be of the highest standard regardless of their respective race. The *Chicago Sun* wrote, “It was an entranced audience” that listened to the duet.¹¹⁸ Mrs Roosevelt attempted further to lend her stature to the proceedings but from the remaining correspondence the matter was not solved to the duet’s satisfaction. These two examples do not portray the USO or the War Department as being particularly interested in race relations in musical entertainment.¹¹⁹

The music industry was more racially integrated than many other parts of society, including the military, and yet the USO was hesitant in using mixed race or all-black groups to provide musical entertainment for the men. The confusing thing was that when the USO did provide well-known black musicians for the men they could be given a rousing reception. Earl Hines was one such black performer who drew rave reviews from the bases at which he played. At the USO club in Lawton, Oklahoma, on May 28, 1942, Hines gave a USO show that was described by the programme director as a “magnificent concert,” with “soldiers hanging from the

¹¹⁶ Letter from Libby Holman to Mrs Roosevelt, dated December 17, 1944. Record Group 160, Box 400, NARA II.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁸ Official Press Release for Libby Holman and Josh White. No date. Record Group 160, Box 400, NARA II.

¹¹⁹ See Ulysses Lee, “The Employment of Negro Troops,” U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington DC, <http://www.history.army.mil/books/wwii/11-4/chapter11.htm#b1>, as accessed February 28, 2010.

windows.”¹²⁰ In Fort Bragg in June 1942, there were “fifteen thousand cheering, whistling GIs” to witness a ‘battle of the bands’ between Hines’ group and the classical pianist Arthur Rubenstein.¹²¹ Quite clearly, black entertainers such as these were well received.

The *raison d’être* for these USO Camp Shows was to bring the entertainment to the men wherever they happened to be. The necessity for this was that the shows provided respite from the duties of men at war or the monotony of training. The excitement of a big show coming to a camp was tangible and the desire was obvious. The USO report on the “Attitudes and Opinions of Enlisted Men Towards Stage Shows” made a convincing argument that the men had a need for them.¹²² Forty-five percent of men believed that there were not enough shows staged at the camp at which they were stationed, with only twenty-nine percent believing there were too many. This indicated that they were appreciated and desired—almost certainly (although perhaps not consciously) because of the “feel-good” factor that they brought with them. In other words, the morale of the men benefited, thus they were more content and the shows were viewed as the source of that contentment.

The Army newspaper *Yank* commented on the attraction of the shows for the men in January 1943, noting that the shows were so popular—no matter what the subject or content—that they received such a reception from the men, that on occasion the shows almost brought the “mess halls down” with the cheers of the men.¹²³ Demand was high and the USO spent much of its time and resources on trying to find suitable entertainment for the troops. As the available talent dwindled because of the draft, the organisation was forced to turn to advertising for musicians to fill the

¹²⁰ Maxene Andrews and Bill Gilbert, *Over Here, Over There: The Andrews Sisters and the USO Stars in World War II*, (Zebra Books: New York, 1993), 57–58.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 57–58.

¹²² Memorandum to director of Special Services Division, January 3, 1944, Research Report “Attitudes and Opinions of Enlisted Men Toward Stage Shows,” Report no B-83, NARA RG160, Box 393.

¹²³ *Yank*, “Seeing Stars,” January 10, 1943, 19.

void.¹²⁴ The lack of available talent was brought to the attention of the Special Services Division in September 1943. Major Karl W Marks wrote that “USO Camp Shows Inc., is experiencing increasing difficulty in securing qualified male entertainers due to the induction of many male performers and highly competitive commercial opportunities.”¹²⁵ The problem was exacerbated by the fact that in many cases women were not considered to be suitable as entertainers due to the conditions in some camps and areas. All-male troupes were deemed necessary for those camps, and therefore “[USO Camp Shows, Inc., depended] to a large extent upon men classified 4F and those over the draft age.”¹²⁶

The USO in all its forms was a hugely successful organisation. It received positive reviews in general and had the backing of the public and military alike. It took musical (and other) entertainment to men and women stationed throughout the United States and around the world. Donations from the public to the coffers of the USO allowed it to spend just under \$180 million over the course of the war.¹²⁷ Through support of bond drives, the appreciation of the men and even with the help of Tin Pan Alley and a song entitled ‘The USO Song’, the USO was able to position itself at the forefront of military entertainment during the war.¹²⁸ There were problems, not least of which was concerned with race, but overall, the USO carried out valuable and enjoyable service throughout the years of conflict.

Conclusion

Recording and performing as musicians in the military developed into an important aspect of the military’s provision of musical entertainment in World War II.

¹²⁴ *Down Beat*, “USO Shows Search for Musical Talent,” July 1, 1944, 6.

¹²⁵ Letter from Major Karl W Marks, assistant Executive Office of the Special Services Division to the Commanding Officer of the Alaska Defence command, dated September 29, 1943.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*

¹²⁷ “USO, Five Years of Service, Report of the President,” February 4, 1946.

¹²⁸ “The USO Song,” written by Gladys Belmont Allcorn, August 15, 1942. Library of Congress, Music Room.

Furthermore, recording and performing became the most important job for the actual musicians. Where musicians in the military had once been part of the tactical set up, during World War II they took on the role of entertainers, hence the critical nature of performing.

As entertainers, musicians in the military enjoyed plenty of recording and performing opportunities; more, in fact than their civilian counterparts. The American Federation of Musicians strike had no effect on musicians in the military, and thus they had freedom to record where those not in uniform had to abide by the ban. James C Petrillo had grudgingly acquiesced to allowing armed forces musicians to record, most likely because he would run the risk of appearing unpatriotic had he not done so. Additionally, music publishers allowed musicians in the military to ignore any contracts they had signed that might prohibit them from making records with a musician who was not signed to that same company. Without precedence in the modern music era to that point, musicians recorded in combinations seldom, if ever seen.

The main recording opportunity for musicians in the armed forces came in the guise of the V-Disc programme operated initially solely by the army, but eventually with navy elements as well. Hugely popular with the troops, the V-Disc programme developed into a massive undertaking with millions of records sent all over the world. The records were, however, solely for the use of the troops, and civilians were unable to receive them. This fact limited the musicians' exposure, but given that they were the only ones making records for a couple of years, the exposure they did receive was far greater than their civilian compatriots could enjoy.

During World War II musicians had the opportunity to exert some control over their position in the military. By choosing to volunteer for the forces, professional musicians could often assure themselves a role in a band. The military authorities, realising that they needed numerous musicians gave the civilian bandsman the chance

to secure a spot in the armed forces doing what they did best; many non-musicians did not have the same chance. Many professional musicians took this opportunity, and African American musicians, in particular, realised that this gave them a better chance of avoiding the difficulties of a regular role in a segregated camp, particularly one in the South. By including African Americans in the overall entertainment programme, the authorities implicitly acknowledged the, perhaps even greater need of black soldiers and sailors in terms of morale. Given the segregated system in the armed forces, entertainment was needed for both black and white troops, and the Great Lakes bands as well as specific USO shows aided that cause.¹²⁹

The main role of musicians in the military was to boost the morale of their fellow soldiers and sailors. By being assigned duties that only consisted of practicing and performing their music, these men formed the vanguard of the attempts to maintain and improve morale. Attracting top-level civilian bandleaders into the armed forces gave an extra boost in that regard because such men were massive stars, and many would not have been taken in the regular draft. To do this, musicians were placed in environments conducive to playing music. Their military duties were light, their musical development, heavy. As a result, the ability and the proficiency of the musicians in uniform improved as well. Those musician-soldiers played in bands of the highest calibre; the equal, or perhaps superior, to their civilian counterparts. Those fortunate enough to hear them play were treated to some of the best musical entertainment available.

The Great Lakes Naval Training Station, filled with hundreds of musicians throughout the war, made a massive contribution to musical entertainment for the

¹²⁹ In his study of the employment of African Americans in the armed forces in World War II, Ulysses Lee has addressed morale issues and how they were combated in some detail. While not specifically focusing on music, Lee points to the acknowledgement of need and the significant improvement undertaken by the military to cater for African American entertainment in all its guises and the subsequent benefits to morale. Ulysses Lee, "The Employment of Negro Troops," (Washington DC: The Center of Military History, United States Army, 1966).

navy throughout the war. The navy invested in its musicians, actively recruiting top-level professionals to staff its bands and giving them opportunities to perform and record at the very highest level. Great Lakes bands played on nationally-syndicated radio programmes and recorded for the V-Disc series, aiding the morale-boosting goals through both endeavours.

The United Services Organisation took government and military organised entertainment of troops to new levels. Never before had such a programme existed and its development pointed to the importance placed on mass entertainment during World War II. The USO Camp Shows catered for all types of entertainment in all types of camps offering the best civilian bands to men and women in uniform across the globe. Despite, at times, suffering from not being able to attract enough performers, the USO's offerings were successful and appreciated by those fortunate to attend the shows.

World War II created a series of challenges for the American armed forces to meet in terms of the provision of entertainment for the men and women serving. The primary challenge was to address the changed needs of its manpower as a result of the progression of society between the two wars. As the military entered World War II, little had changed since World War I in its procedures and policies for troop welfare. Military authorities quickly saw the benefit of using popular music to provide much of that entertainment and throughout the conflict the armed forces adapted to the new possibilities that modern technology afforded them.

Improvements in radio broadcasting and quality allowed soldiers, sailors and airmen across the world to hear American broadcasting and music. The military attempted to create the situation whereby American popular music could be heard on the radio or record by all its troops. New programmes were devised, often in conjunction with the broadcasting companies, but in the case of the V-Disc

programmes, simply through the energies of its own people. Similarly, better recording and reproduction techniques allowed the armed forces to develop the V-Disc series and to export it to troops stationed all around the world, again keeping them in touch with their homes, no matter where they were based.

Overall, government and military programmes for musicians in the forces set new levels of interaction between popular music and the armed forces and offered myriad opportunities for musicians to perform and record. Such activities were new to World War II, largely in response to the changes in needs of the men and women in uniform. The treatment of musicians, the benefits they enjoyed, and the entertainment they provided were central to the war effort in terms of attempting to keep morale levels at the highest possible point. Without these programmes entertainment of troops would have been substandard and not in keeping with the expectations of the 1940s soldier and sailor.

Chapter 5

The British Civilian and Military Popular Music Scene during World War II

Across the Atlantic Ocean, the British music industry shared many similarities with its American counterpart yet, retained its own style and sound, and from London to Liverpool men and women danced to the sounds of Jack Hylton and Geraldo, or tuned their radios, (ninety percent of British people owned one) to catch another broadcast of Bert Ambrose's Orchestra.¹ The soldier on leave might be heartened by the up-tempo sounds of the RAF No.1 Dance Orchestra,—the Squadronaires—while those at home were perhaps comforted by the crooning of Al Bowlly and Sam Browne or cheered by the comedy songs of George Formby.² While Gracie Fields and Vera Lynn entertained young men and women in uniform, others, working in factories to produce munitions, kept time with Jack Payne and his Orchestra. Popular music was everywhere. And, just as in the United States, the music industry formed one of the most important aspects of the British public's lives in a society at war.³ The sound of the big bands—swing, dance music and jazz in general—provided the soundtrack to the war in the United Kingdom as well, and much of it had an American tinge, given that the “cultural traffic was now predominantly one-way.”⁴

The music industry's ubiquity in wartime life created an intense relationship between popular music and war and wartime society. That interaction forms the

¹ Hadley Cantril and Mildred Strunk, eds., *Public Opinion, 1935–1946* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1951), p. 703.

² George Formby was so popular that his performances on the radio were a reason to tune in all by themselves. Richard Broad and Suzie Fleming, eds., *Nella's Last War: The Second World War Diaries of Housewife*, 49 (London: Profile Books, Ltd., 2006), p. 179.

³ Frank Mee, who experienced the war as a teenager, has said that “music then was our life.” <http://www.bbc.co.uk/dna/ww2/A2553761>, Frank Mee—Memoirs, as accessed, October, 28 2004.

⁴ Angus Calder, *The People's War: Britain—1939–1945* (New York: Pantheon House, 1969), 311.

central theme of this chapter.⁵ By addressing the position of popular music within the various elements noted here, and examining the music scene, the importance of dancing and live music, the role of musicians in the armed forces and the bands they played in, it is possible to determine the role of popular music in the British Isles during World War II.

The British Music Scene

Thriving in wartime conditions, popular music was available to the public through many different outlets. Those outlets included radio, sheet music, recorded music and live performances. Although the war made some of these media harder to enjoy, generally it pushed entertainment to the fore, rather than reduce it to the periphery of daily life.

At the start of the war, all the different types of music outlet featured mainly British-style music, with some American influence. The more up-tempo style of jazz, popular in the United States, remained on the edge of the British public's taste-spectrum; more popular was music more closely resembling the older or traditional Tin Pan Alley style.⁶ British music tastes did include hot jazz, but for much of the war period the sweeter tones of the BBC Contract Dance Bands led by Geraldo and Jack Payne, influenced by the likes of Glenn Miller and Kay Kyser, remained the more popular.⁷ A BBC Listener Report towards the end of the war showed that of

⁵ The songs were not included in the American music industry chapter as the sheer number of songs written and recorded in the United States warranted a separate discussion.

⁶ Although dance music was highly rated in a survey by the BBC prior to the war, it was variety that had the greatest following in the British public, with ninety-two percent of respondents rating as one of their favourite programmes on the air. BBC WAC (BBC WAC from here on), File R9/9/3 Audience Research - Special Reports 3, Sound and General, 1939.

⁷ Both these bands played hot jazz at times, but were more known for their sweeter style and were categorised thus, by the music press, such as *Melody Maker* on many occasions; Memorandum from Cecil Madden to Mrs Spicer, July 31, 1943, "Use of Dance Bands," BBC WAC R27/71/4, Dance Bands 1942-1944, File IV; Dorothy Lowry, who lived in Belfast, Northern Ireland during the war recalled the importance of the radio and the signature bands such as Geraldo, Ambrose, Jack Payne and Billy Carlton. Dorothy Lowry, "London Calling," BBC Website, WW2 People's War, article A6886579, www.bbc.co.uk/ww2peopleswar/stories/79/a6886579.shtml, as accessed October 2010.

eleven thousand listeners questioned about their preferred dance band, fifty-six percent liked Victor Sylvester's band, forty-nine percent liked Geraldo, and thirty-three percent stated that Jack Payne's band was one of their favourites, all of whom tended to stay away from anything the American industry might term "hot."⁸

As the war progressed and American influences became more prevalent, the British public developed a greater appreciation for American music and began to move away from novelty and ribald marching songs. The addition of the United States into the war and the subsequent "invasion" of American troops, who brought the music of Glenn Miller, Benny Goodman and the Dorsey brothers, and others, helped speed this change in music preference, just as it aided the adoption of other elements of American style to much of British life (particularly in the post-war years). By the end of the war, the RAF Dance Orchestra, which played significant amounts of American or American-influenced music, was listed by thirty-seven percent of responders in that same BBC report as one of their favourite bands.

Not only was music popular and available to all, the British government and military believed that music was essential to a content, "normal," society, and important to the troops and the home front.⁹ Although the government acknowledged music's importance, it believed that music should be more vigorous and uplifting, stirring, marching-style songs, and not the far more popular sentimental and dance songs enjoyed by the British public—much the same as its counterpart in the United

⁸ BBC Listener Research Report, "Dance Band Preferences," Spring 1945, BBC WAC, R9/9/9, Audience Research Special Reports, Sound & General, 1945. Geraldo's popularity was noted by Ms. Tilly Rice, a diarist from the war, who noted that she was extremely pleased to find Geraldo's band playing one night on the radio after she had scanned through almost all the frequencies she had available. His band's music was the welcome cheer and light-heartedness that she had been looking for to counteract the grim news from the war. Simon Garfield, ed., *We Are At War: The Diaries of Five Ordinary People in Extraordinary Times* (London: Ebury Press, 2006), 267.

⁹ In fact, despite the dramatic need for workers and soldiers, musicians were still able to ply their trade during the war. Given that, as Angus Calder noted, the war industry commanded every last man and woman, and dominated every aspect of life, the fact that there were any musicians whatsoever is almost surprising. Angus Calder, *The People's War: Britain—1939–1945* (New York: Pantheon House, 1969), 323–324.

States had indicated. Vera Lynn, the famous singer who spent so much of the war years entertaining British troops, noted this essential difference after the war:

Certain belligerent MPs and high military officers—none of whom was actually doing any of the fighting—jumped to the conclusion that a sentimental song produced sentimental soldiers, who would become homesick and desert at the first catch of a crooner's voice. What the boys were supposed to need was more martial stuff, a view that completely overlooked the experience of the previous world war, which, as it got grimmer, produced steadily more wistful songs.¹⁰

Part of the government's reasoning behind the essentiality of music came from the role of music in helping morale—hence its opinion on what type of music would be best.¹¹ What neither Lynn nor the government mentioned was that a sentimental soldier, might, in some ways, actually have more to fight for, especially if they wished to get home to whatever made them sentimental in the first place. Both civilian and military populations used music in an attempt to improve the morale and mentality of their constituents. Part of that effort, was, as Vera Lynn noted, to remind “the boys what there were really fighting for, the precious personal things rather than ideologies and theories.”¹² This morale aspect underpinned music's place in British wartime society.

As Britain entered the war in September 1939, the music and film industries were the pre-eminent providers of popular entertainment. Television, barely out of the laboratory, was shut down soon after the Germans rolled through Europe in 1939 because of costs and limited audiences. Radio enjoyed healthy audiences, (although it had not yet reached the saturation levels of the United States) and was the dominant

¹⁰ As quoted in John Costello, *Love, Sex and War: Changing Values, 1939–1945* (London: Collins, 1985), 103.

¹¹ Costello, in his book, *Virtue Under Fire: How World War II Changed Our Social & Sexual Attitudes*, (New York: Fromm International Publishing Corporation, 1987), wrote of what he termed “Sentimental Bullets.” Costello was specifically referring to the platitudes and sentimentality of certain love songs and their prominence during the war. He argued that the songs carried weight above their mere musical strengths, and this is what the British government and other authority bodies could not see to begin with, if indeed they ever managed to make that leap.

¹² As quoted in John Costello, *Love, Sex and War: Changing Values, 1939–1945* (London: Collins, 1985), p. 99.

media format for music during the war years.¹³ In August 1942, there were seven million BBC license holders.¹⁴ Bearing in mind that a license represented a radio set rather than one listener, the total audience was significantly larger than seven million people. The BBC had a virtual monopoly on the public's radio listening—at least until the Allied Expeditionary Forces Radio started on D-Day—and used that monopoly to provide music during a large portion of the available listening hours.¹⁵ The private radio stations, such as Radio Luxembourg suffered from the outbreak of war and many shut down soon after hostilities began. The Luxembourg government closed the station, but the German occupation force used the equipment to broadcast until 1944, including the infamous Lord Haw Haw programme.

The BBC monopoly did not include the American Forces Network, which was intended specifically for American bases (which had their own films, radio, and newspapers, and were almost separate cities within the English countryside), but which could, on occasion, be picked up by nearby British civilians as well—although only ever about one in ten could actually receive the broadcasts.¹⁶ The night-clubs, restaurants and hotels kept bringing in the paying customers—even in London, in spite of the bombing raids—and the sales of sheet music and records remained strong.¹⁷ At the start of the war, the BBC alone employed more than four thousand

¹³ As a result of paper rationing, radio also quickly became the most important source for news as well.

¹⁴ *Melody Maker*, August 15, 1942.

¹⁵ At the beginning of the war there were some pirate radio stations available, but these did not endure long once war began and the BBC was unchallenged on the home front until the American Forces Network began broadcasting on July 4, 1943. There was other radio available to the British people throughout the war, in the form of Lord Haw-Haw broadcasting from Germany, who enjoyed some popularity, but not on a level to compete with the BBC. Sian Nicholas also noted the BBC's position of monopoly on the Home Front. Sian Nicholas, *The Echo of War: Home Front Propaganda and the Wartime BBC, 1939–1945* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996), 12–13.

¹⁶ Calder, *People's War*, 308, 362.

¹⁷ Each week *Melody Maker* ran a small column that listed the top ten sheet music sellers, and the companies who had published those songs. The week of June 19, 1943, noted seven of the twelve songs listed as having been published by these three companies. Sheet Music: The Week's Best Sellers, *Melody Maker*, June 19, 1943, 2.

staff and broadcast for fifty hours a day.¹⁸ Fortunately, music had all these outlets, because the London Musicians' Union pointed out in 1940 that "the public needed entertainment far more now than it ever did before," and that "there were more troops than ever before needing entertainment."¹⁹ In short, the music industry's ability to reach British forces around the world and the public at home was unequalled by the rest of contemporary popular culture. Here was the nucleus of music's influence, effect and role in the war and the war effort, and the influence beneath most of the music industry's decisions during the war.

British people also enjoyed their music in live-music venues. The nightclub and ballroom business experienced a boom period during the war years.²⁰ In Britain, record numbers of people attended dances and shows from Glasgow to London.²¹ Such an act was a reflection of the appreciation, the "wartime craze," the public had for the act of dancing.²² The reason for the profitability of the dance business was likely a desire—on the part of the wartime citizen—to escape the chores and dangers of wartime life on the dance floor, to the rhythms of good, popular songs. The swinging, up-tempo nature of these songs had an uplifting effect on the public. *Melody Maker*, the British music journal, featured an article on the effect of popular music in October 1939. The journalist noted that in regard to the effect of swing music's up-tempo beat on the morale of the public that, "even those less partial to Swing have readily admitted that there is something exhilarating about it which cheered one up in just the way one needed cheering."²³ In other words, popular music

¹⁸ Calder, *People's War*, 359.

¹⁹ "Musicians Press for Government Action in Profession's Gravest Hour," *Downbeat*, October 12, 1940, 1–2. That the Musicians' Union had its own interest to serve with such a proclamation is undoubted, but their sentiments were indicative of the public's desire for music.

²⁰ "As Hanner Swaffer Sees It," *The People*, September 7, 1941; "Comment," *Melody Maker*, December 28, 1941.

²¹ "2183 Greet Stone at Glasgow," *Melody Maker*, July 11, 1942, 1; "Harry Roy Smashes London Record," *Melody Maker*, August 15, 1942, 1. Harry Roy had "well and truly broken" the records for business at the Golders Green Hippodrome.

²² Costello, *Love, Sex and War*, p. 103.

²³ "Wartime Radio to Date," *Melody Maker*, October 1939, 6.

provided escape for the British citizen.

The live music scene in Britain during the war suffered many war-related difficulties, such as rationing, the draft, blackouts and transportation issues, but, equally, managed to find success and provide enjoyment to thousands upon thousands of people. Nightclubs, dancehalls and any other venue that used bands to play music for dancing to, formed part of that live music scene. This scene had existed prior to the war, and its continuation during the fighting gestured at achieving a sense of normality within the chaos of war. The vibrant night life of major cities throughout Britain was affected by the war. However, the music industry strove for that sense of normality in its business through its perseverance in nightly shows, concerts and dances, throughout bombed-out Britain.

The dance floors in London and other big cities across the country, filled with fun-seekers despite the overbearing presence of war in everybody's lives.²⁴ Weary war workers attended dances hoping to rejuvenate themselves or to make the most of what leisure time they did have, because they "want[ed] so much to hear music and to dance till [they] drop[ped]."²⁵ Sometimes these dances would be in the factories themselves, but more often the local dance hall held regular evenings of music and dance and they proved extremely popular.²⁶ A dance offered a chance to unwind and relax; men and women basking in the glitz, sounds and the escapism. The dances were "shafts of light darting everywhere," "heaving masses of youngsters foxtrot[ing], tango[ing] and quickstepp[ing] the night away," and Elvira Beryl remembered that "the floor always cleared for the enthusiastic jivers . . . as they swirled and slid around

²⁴ Olivia Bailey, *We'll Meet Again: Songs and Music that Inspired Courage during Wartime*, (Rutland, UK: Caxton Publishing Group, 2002); Geoffrey Butcher, *Next to a Letter from Home: Major Glenn Miller's Wartime Band* (Edinburgh: Mainstream Publishing Co. Ltd., 1986); Sis Colin, *And the Bands Played On* (London: Elm Tree Books, 1977); Graham Collier, *Jazz* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1975).

²⁵ Joan Rice, *Sand in My Shoes: Coming of Age in the Second World War: A WAAF's Diary* (London: Harper Perennial, 2007), 157.

²⁶ Such a place was The Hendon Way, which was a popular restaurant and bar, often packed with servicemen and women.

in frenzied movement.”²⁷ As such, dances provided a chance for people to “live [their] dreams for a few short hours”²⁸ and they used this excuse to dress up (with whatever could be found), and to try to enjoy the atmosphere. For the most part this was exactly what was achieved.²⁹

Each week, *Melody Maker* listed major venues in bigger cities with live musical entertainment. During the week of November 7, 1942, for example, it was possible to attend shows in at least five major dance halls in London, and sixteen more around the country. This figure did not even take into account the dance halls of the big hotels and restaurants in London such as The Embassy, The Café Anglais, the Café de Paris, the 400 and the Berkeley, and only mentioned the largest events around the country.³⁰ Whether people danced at famous venues such as these or just wherever a dance might be found, they did so in large numbers, and at the slightest whim. Joan Rice, a WAAF stationed for the first year of the war at RAF Hendon,

²⁷ <http://www.bbc.co.uk/dna/ww2/F137977?thread=514119&post=6083222> as accessed 9 November, 2004. These accounts were written in response to the author’s postings on the BBC’s People’s War website.

²⁸ <http://www.bbc.co.uk/dna/ww2/F137977?thread=514119&post=6068327#6068327>, Mr Frank Mee, as accessed November, 6 2004.

²⁹ Frank Mee, Audrey Lewis and Elvira Beryl all found solace, escape and massive enjoyment in the dances that they managed to attend during the war. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/dna/ww2/F137977?thread=514119&post=6083222> as accessed November, 9 2004.

³⁰ Call Sheet, *Melody Maker*, November 7, 1942, 2. The bands and venues that listed were: Les Allen—Victoria, Burnley; Max Bacon, Sam Browne Act—Metropolitan; Edgeware Road; Ivy Benson and Band—Hippodrome, Lewisham; Big Bill Campbell and Band—Hippodrome, Birmingham; Elsie Carlisle—Empire, Swansea; Johnny Claes and Band—Glasgow one night stands; Billy Cotton and Band—Empire, New Cross; George Elrick and Band—Palace, Dundee; Gloria Gaye and Band—Pyramid, Sale; Henry Hall and Band—New Theatre, Northampton; Carroll Levis Carries On—Empire, Sunderland; Joe Loss and Band—Empire, Newcastle; Felix Mendelssohn and his Hawaiian Serenaders—Grand, Derby; Harry Parry and Sextet—Empire, Shepherd’s Bush; Oscar Rabin and Band—Palace, Manchester; Monte Rey—Empire, Nottingham; Harry Roy and Band—Empire, Chiswick; Lew Stone and Band—BBC Band of the Week; Billy Thorburn and Band—Hippodrome, Chatham; Troise and Mandoliers—Empire, Nottingham; Maurice Winnick and Band—Hippodrome, Manchester. Further examples from earlier in the war indicate the continued prosperity and demand for the venues and the bands. The May 4, 1940, edition listed thirteen concerts for the coming week, including the famous bands of Billy Cotton, Joe Loss, Jack Payne and Harry Roy. The week commencing October 27, 1941, listed sixteen and the edition for the week commencing March 30, 1942 informed readers of the same amount. By June 26, 1943, the success of the bands witnessed twenty-two venues appearing in the “Call Sheet” of that edition.

wrote of attending at least eleven dances during that time.³¹ Given the relative lack of leisure time, when compared to the twenty-first century, attending a dance a month indicates the importance placed on such activities. The music industry's contribution to dancing and dancing's positive effect on the public's morale formed a key element of what the industry provided during the war. Through providing this opportunity, the music industry wove itself into the fabric of society at war.

The live Music and Dancing Scene

The effect of live musical performances was essential to the impact and role of popular music during the war. It was in the venues that catered for the bands, the diners and the dancers that the spirits could be revived and the mind entertained into the early hours. The music was fresh, the people invigorated, and the war was at the back of the mind—even if only for a few hours. The power of the live scene was that it was just that—live. The stars of the music world were there to be seen and heard first hand. So loud was the clamour for dancing and popular music that new live music venues opened in spite of the war.³² The glamour of the music industry at touching distance, famous actors and public figures twirling away, while patrons sat, drank and tapped feet to the beat. One such place was the Nut House in Regent Street, London. For a time the stars frequented it, a favourite place to congregate, and “let off steam,” but anyone, in theory, could go there; witnessing the fame and fortune of

³¹ Joan Rice, *Sand in My Shoes: Coming of Age in the Second World War: A WAAF's Diary* (London: Harper Perennial, 2007).

³² It is necessary to set specific parameters for the live music scene within this discussion. Not-for-profit live shows, such as those given by ENSA, are not included here. All shows discussed here are those of a commercial nature (civilian nightclubs, bars, dance halls and hotels for example) in Great Britain. The parameters do not restrict a club or dance hall on the basis of size of number of customers, nor do they limit the discussion to the well-known big bands. Live music was performed at a number of locations, such as dance halls, night clubs, restaurants and hotels—all of which are included.

the music world.³³ The luxurious Rainbow Room that opened in Park Lane, took the name of a famous New York restaurant, attempting to create an atmosphere of opulence and splendour, hoping to appeal to those same standards.

The live music experience was intimate and yet shared; participatory and yet unique to the time, place and individual; above all, it was direct, immediate, for those at the shows. Live music flourished because it fit the mood of the people and their war-torn souls, and the bandleaders understood the power they wielded to entertain such people.

Another aspect of the live shows was the opportunity for interaction with the opposite sex, and friendship with the same sex, and for romance to blossom.³⁴ Radio, of course, suffered by comparison in this sense—the truest indication of its interactivity coming in a singular nature. Much of the lure of dances and live music came from that interaction.³⁵ The immediacy and potential finality of the war brought men and women together, perhaps even more readily, more acceptingly, than normal. Dances were thought to be the catalyst for romances to blossom, and were consequently a draw for both men and women. Joan Rice, a WAAF stationed in RAF Hendon during 1939 and 1940, attended as many dances as she could. She wrote of her enjoyment when dancing and how the war seemed less important during those times.³⁶ Young men also enjoyed dances. Robin Nott attended dances as often as he could while serving in the British army, and remembered that one of the primary

³³ "Famous Niterie Closes," *Melody Maker*, November 28, 1942, 1. Although this article was written to cover the closure of a club, it did illustrate the occurrence of famous people attending dance clubs in the capital.

³⁴ Gill McDermott, "Dance Halls and Dancing," BBC Website, WW2 People's War, article A4202272, June 16, 2005, www.bbc.co.uk/ww2peopleswar/stories/72/a4202272.shtml, as accessed September 2010.

³⁵ Flora Coole, "Bombs, Dances and Good Fortune," BBC Website, WW2 People's War, article A4503133, July 20, 2005, www.bbc.co.uk/ww2peopleswar/stories/33/a4503133.shtml, as accessed October 2010; Dorothy Taylor, "How I Saw the Second World War, Part III," BBC Website, WW2 People's War, article 2853065, July 20, 2004, www.bbc.co.uk/ww2peopleswar/stories/65/a2853065.shtml, as accessed September 2010.

³⁶ Joan Rice, *Sand In My Shoes: Coming of Age in the Second World War: A WAAF's Diary* (London: Harper Perennial, 2006), pp. 10, 21, 30.

attractions for him was the young women attending. He recalled going to dances at the Covent Garden Opera House, at which dances were often held for servicemen. Despite that Ivy Benson's band was playing, he mainly recalled the young women with whom he and his fellow soldiers sought dances.³⁷

In spite of the war and the constant bombing, the concert halls, theatres, hotels, restaurants and nightclubs throughout Great Britain sustained little adverse reaction in terms of attendance.³⁸ Instead, the live arena gained impetus from the war; the war breathing new life into what had been a decaying part of the industry. At the onset of the war many industry insiders predicted a downturn for live music venues and for the bands themselves. In November 1939 *Melody Maker* highlighted this, writing that, "in the first two days of the War, the profession of dance music was almost completely obliterated" and although the industry did experience a short lull in fortunes after war broke out, it did not last long.³⁹

After the initial fear-of-bombing-induced lull, people returned to the dance floor in droves.⁴⁰ The name bands filled the dance floors, packing the ballrooms with civilians and military alike.⁴¹ Nightclubs were booked with bands weeks in advance, as tours continued despite the inconveniences of restrictions on travel imposed by government regulations. Record-breaking takings at the box office resulted for name bands as people flocked to dances and concerts.⁴² Extremely popular during the war,

³⁷ Telephone conversation with Mr Robin Nott, Normandy Veterans Association, October 14, 2003.

³⁸ "Air Raids: Dance Halls and Theatres Report Ok," *Melody Maker*, September 7, 1940; "Comment," *Melody Maker*, December 28, 1941; "Jivin' at Greens," *Melody Maker*, October 30, 1943, 4.

³⁹ "Wartime Dance Music Booming," *Melody Maker*, November 1939, 1.

⁴⁰ Eileen Rake, "My Wartime Treasury of Memories," BBC Website, WW2 People's War, article A3228798, www.bbc.co.uk/ww2peopleswar/stories/98/a3228798.shtml, as accessed October 2010; Doris Lowden Kitty Arthur, "Billy Wheeler's," BBC Website, WW2 People's war, article A4482588, www.bbc.co.uk/ww2peopleswar/stories/88/a4482588.shtml, as accessed October 2010.

⁴¹ Irene Tipton, "In the Land Army," BBC Website, WW2 People's War, article A8762385, January 23, 2006, www.bbc.co.uk/ww2peopleswar/stories/85/a8762385.shtml, as accessed September 2010; Joan Styan, "Entertainment in Wartime London," BBC Website, WW2 People's War, www.bbc.co.uk/ww2peopleswar/user/05/u682305.shtml, as accessed September 2010.

⁴² "Dance Men's Earnings: Fantastic Lay Press Stories," *Melody Maker*, December 12, 1942, 1.

dancing has been described by those there as “the opiate of the people.”⁴³ Many thousands of young people attended dances every weekend.⁴⁴ Even during the middle of the week ballrooms were close to capacity throughout the land. Such was the popularity that the big dance halls such as the Hammersmith Palais in London held four sessions a day so that more people could attend—fitting in their social life around war-work shifts that had so changed the daily schedule for so many people⁴⁵—with as many as ten thousand people filling the dance floors of such places.⁴⁶ The Palais and the Paramount, in Tottenham Court Road, even held dance marathons and contests in order to cater to the demand.⁴⁷ The jitterbug marathon filled with as many 1,400 participants, drawn by the “colour, light, the company, the noise, [which all] seemed irresistible to old and young alike.”⁴⁸

Frank Mee was a young man during the war living in Stockton-on-Tees. His experiences of dancing were shared by many. He attended as often as possible for the thrill of the dance and the music that accompanied it. Mee wrote of his wartime dancing experiences saying that “the local dance halls and the picture houses raised the spirits of the people. They were the escape from the mundane, the misery of rationing and the hard physical work most people did.”⁴⁹ Mee believed that the music and dancing was a pure form of escapism, and that that escapism allowed people to carry on with more joy and spirit than had music and dancing been unavailable. “The

⁴³ <http://www.bbc.co.uk/dna/ww2/A2553761>, 28 October, 2004, Mr Frank Mee, “The Dancehall—Wartime escape.” Mr Mee was a young man in Stockton-upon-Tees during the war.

⁴⁴ “Brand’s Essence,” *Melody Maker*, July 24, 1943, 6.

⁴⁵ Examples of the disruption to pre-war life that came with shift work can be found in memoirs posted to the BBC Website, WW2 People’s War. Many of those affected were women, who were often joining the workforce for the first time. See for example, Jean Peskett, “No Picnic in this Park,” BBC Website, WW2 People’s War, article A4392867, July 7, 2005, www.bbc.co.uk/ww2peopleswar/stories/67/a4392867.shtml, as accessed September 2010.

⁴⁶ Olivia Bailey, *We’ll Meet Again: Songs and Music that Inspired Courage during Wartime*, (Rutland, UK: Caxton Publishing Group, 2002), 95.

⁴⁷ Costello, *Love, Sex and War*, pp. 103–104.

⁴⁸ Philip Ziegler, *London at War: 1939–1945* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1995), 51.

⁴⁹ <http://www.bbc.co.uk/dna/ww2/A2553761>, Frank Mee—Memoirs, as accessed, October, 28 2004.

lights, the music and the company let you forget the misery, austerity and danger of the war for a few short hours," Mee wrote.⁵⁰

Geraldine Poulton was another young person who revelled in the chance to dance an evening away to forget the war. In her diary, she made note of having attended dances on forty-three occasions in 1944 alone.⁵¹ That desire stemmed, in part, from dancing being the "most popular social antidote to anxiety and loneliness . . . it brought people together to enjoy themselves."⁵² All of these people desired to dance, and they came from all walks of life. Edward Murrow, the famous journalist, commented on the myriad types of people in the dance halls of London: "Places are jammed nearly every night. People come early and stay late. Uniforms and civilian clothes are about evenly divided, but practically no one wears formal dress."⁵³ Of course, few, if any, wore formal dress because of the difficulty in obtaining new clothes as a result of rationing restrictions.

Green's Playhouse in London was an example of the thriving music and dance business. *Melody Maker* reported in late 1943 that, "Business at Green's [was] simply colossal. . . . On a Saturday night . . . the limit in admissions is reached quite early in the evening and crowds have to be kept out."⁵⁴ Such was the demand for musical entertainment, especially under wartime conditions, that new clubs opened with regularity. Between November 1942 and January 1944, *Melody Maker* noted the opening of five major new clubs in London alone.⁵⁵

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ <http://www.bbc.co.uk/dna/ww2/A1979715>, October, 28 2004, Mrs Pam Traynor, 'Journal of a WAAF 1944'. This is Mrs Traynor's account of her mother's (Ms Geraldine Poulton) diary of 1944 when she lived in Lincoln.

⁵² Costello, *Love, Sex and War*, p. 104.

⁵³ Ziegler, *London at War*, 52.

⁵⁴ "Jivin' at Green's," *Melody Maker*, October 30, 1943, 4.

⁵⁵ These were, The Feldman No. 1 Swing Club in Oxford Street, in November 1942, the Coloured People's Club in Soho a couple of weeks later, the Rainbow Room in Park Lane in the summer of 1943, the Du Barry in Mayfair in September 1943 and the Swing Out Club also in Brook Street, Mayfair in early 1944.

The success of live music was—in part—a result of the war.⁵⁶ A situation was created in which people desired to be entertained in live music venues. The uncertainty of what the next day would bring created a desire to live in the present and to enjoy what was available and music and dancing provided the relief that live entertainment offered. “In Mayfair or Rotherhide, the Café de Paris or the Streatham Locarno, there was the same urgent determination to eat, drink and be merry; for though one might not actually die tomorrow, it seemed unlikely there would be much scope for merriment.”⁵⁷ The Reverend John Fluth wrote about how when he was on leave he would try to attend as many concerts and shows as he possibly could in order to satiate his passion for music, but also to attempt to try and find a degree of normality whilst on leave.⁵⁸ That normality being a return to the familiar of pre-war existence. It was no different for the civilian. Mee continued in his observations of why music and dance were necessary by noting that the “glamour lifted us for a while from the misery of war.”⁵⁹ More than anything, there was enjoyment to be had at dance halls and they provided a happier atmosphere with less cares and worries for civilians across the land.⁶⁰

That urge for relief from the war was especially true for the troops. The allure of live entertainment would draw them from far and wide to the major cities where they were stationed to enjoy nights spent dancing and listening to music. The trains were “always crowded with soldiers, sailors and airmen, dead weary after a merry long weekend in London.”⁶¹ Of course it was not just London that saw an influx of

⁵⁶ The same situation existed in the United States, although based on slightly differing premises in that most civilian Americans did not contemplate, nor deal with, nightly bombing raids. However, the desire to live for the moment rather than plan for the future found popularity on both sides of the Atlantic.

⁵⁷ Ziegler, *London at War*, 53.

⁵⁸ Letter from Rev. John Fluth to Author, March 17; 2003.

⁵⁹ <http://www.bbc.co.uk/dna/ww2/A2553761>. This was in a message Mr Mee posted to the website in response to the researcher’s approach—November, 5 2004.

⁶⁰ http://www.j31.co.uk/jons_ramblings.htm, September 24, 2003, written by Jon Layne, June 12, 1999.

⁶¹ Memoirs of Mrs C M Lowry. Held at the Imperial War Museum, file 86/12/1, 55. No date.

troops on weekends, but London did experience it more consistently. As the major source of live entertainment in England, with the biggest nightclubs, dance halls, restaurants and hotels—and the best bands, it was only natural that the troops would travel there as often as they possibly could.⁶² Once American troops arrived in England in 1943, London's magnetism for night life proved irresistible for them as well. To a lesser degree the same was true for the bigger cities around Great Britain.

It was widely noted amongst military authorities that the troops required the occasional sojourn into the nearest big city to which they were posted. However, for many units, being stationed far from population centres was a common occurrence and, therefore, they did not have regular access to live entertainment other than that provided by the military or Entertainments National Service Association (ENSA), the British equivalent of the USO. The touring bands that played concerts for troops at their bases could not offer all that the soldiers required. American Air Force personnel stationed in East Anglia, for example, were particularly susceptible to the dearth of local live musical entertainment as they were so far removed from any major city. They were also removed from the night life scene that they knew from home. The small country pub that many villages could boast—and was perhaps only augmented by a village hall—was so different from the experiences that many young Americans knew from home that they could not compete. Norwich, Ipswich, Cambridge or Bedford offered some relief, but none of these cities provided enough entertainment options, and consequently, weekend passes that allowed them the time to travel to and from London were highly prized.⁶³ In an effort to offset the lack of local entertainment, the 2nd Bombardment Division, which was stationed in East Anglia, encouraged airmen to develop their own dance bands. Some of these bands

⁶² As Philip Ziegler points out, "depending on the definition of London, in 1939 the city had between 8.2 and 12.5 million residents." It is no wonder that London drew young men and women to its core when seeking entertainment. Ziegler, *London at War*, 4.

⁶³ "New Year's Eve 'Quiet,'" *The Liberator*, January 4, 1943.

toured the area, playing at AAF bases, as well as at suitable venues in local towns. Even with such efforts, the lure of the bright lights of the big cities held fast for many.⁶⁴

The invasion of American troops into London every night was received in differing fashion by the English, but for the music industry it was a lifeline, as musical establishments benefited from the money and attitude that they brought with them. British troops were to be found in London as well, but their meagre pay, compared to the Americans, meant they could not afford to be as free-spending on their nights off. American troops did not just gravitate to London from other parts of the country, the American military actually occupied vast areas of the capital city. By June 1944, “there were 33 officers’ billets (including 24 hotels), 300 other buildings for troop accommodation, 2.5 million square feet for offices, garages, gymnasia and a hundred other uses.”⁶⁵ Seeking entertainment in its myriad forms, officers found their mess at Grosvenor House, while the rank and file headed for Rainbow Corner on the corner of Shaftesbury Avenue and Piccadilly Circus.⁶⁶

Although the public night life scene was important for the troops, it was not always possible for soldiers to have this benefit. For those who were stationed further away from bigger urban centres and did not have the means, either financially or in terms of transportation, the local music scene was often the only source of entertainment outside of the barracks available to them. In many cases the local village hall was used for dances that brought the troops together with young women of the area. It was often the case that young women were required for troops’ dances wherever they were held, because the military camps had no such population of their

⁶⁴ See for example, “twice Weekly Dances Planned for New Year,” *The Liberator*, December 28, 1942; “Jiving Liberators Playing Tonight at NAAFI Dance,” *The Liberator*, November 9, 1942; Memorandum from Headquarters 2nd Bombardment Division to Special Service Officers, All Stations, January 9, 1944, Norfolk Records Office, X/JCC/52, “List of Available Dance Orchestras,” Headquarters 2nd Bombardment Division, November 16, 1944, Norfolk Records Office, Y-B-52.

⁶⁵ Ziegler, *London at War*, 215–216.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

own. As Kay Wright, a member of the Women's Land Army stationed near Bedford recalled, "Not only did I dance with the Americans at Thurleigh, but also at many other bases in the area, for the Americans used to lay on transport from Bedford for us, all free of charge."⁶⁷ Diana Double was one of those who recalled seeing trucks shuttling to and fro between military bases and local towns to pick up and return the younger female population of the area on dance night.⁶⁸ The 2nd Bombardment Division of the American Air Force even supplied a list for Special Service Officers in its command with sources for where to procure young women for dances.⁶⁹

Dance night was a great source of entertainment for both the troops and the civilians, and it was not unusual for the dance band of the local armed forces unit (be it American or British) to provide the music. Many of the young men who would have formed local dance bands had already been drafted and as a result there were not very many local dance bands outside of the major cities. In his memoirs of his time in the army, Captain Fred Foster wrote of how, in each station to which he was sent, they formed a dance band that often was contracted to perform regularly at local dances that brought troops and civilians together.⁷⁰ After he had returned from Europe with the BEF following the evacuation from Dunkirk, he soon set about forming another band and wrote:

We had been reinforced by new intakes from the Depot, and among these were another sax player and trumpeter. The Battalion bought a drum kit and we started running weekly dances at Clayworth. These dances were open to the villagers, as well as the soldiery, who were charged one shilling at the door, out of which we received 3/6 each. A lot of the local girls were soon finding sweethearts in the army, and weddings became quite common.⁷¹

⁶⁷ Kay Wright, "The Land Army Girl and the Americans," BBC Website, WW2 People's War, article A2718614, June 7, 2004, www.bbc.co.uk/ww2peopleswar/stories/14/a2718614.shtml, as accessed September 2010.

⁶⁸ <http://www.bbc.co.uk/dna/ww2/A3181259>, November 5, 2004. Mrs Double lived in Raydon at the time.

⁶⁹ Memorandum from Headquarters 2nd Bombardment Division to Special Service Officers, All Stations, January 9, 1944, Norfolk Records Office, X/JCC/52.

⁷⁰ Captain Fred Foster, "Memories of World War II," File 01/4/1, Department of Documents, Imperial War Museum.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

The dances at which such bands played were popular with the locals, and were a source of much-needed entertainment for the troops—particularly those who had just returned from Europe, as was the case for Foster.⁷² The lack of young men, who traditionally formed the base for dance bands, due to them being called up, meant that even in places where there was still a relatively strong nightlife, military dance bands were quite often employed to play in public venues. Such a band was that led by Corporal Syd Dean who had previously led a civilian band at the Astoria Ballroom in Charing Cross Road, London. He had formed a “bright little five-piece [band],” that gave “off-duty shows and concerts” for the public.⁷³ These bands became a staple of the live music scene outside of major urban areas. Such bands should not be classified as purely military bands, because in many cases they performed none of the military duties that a traditional band would have done. Equally, there was more often than not a purely military marching style band attached to a unit as well. The role of these bands as purveyors of popular music was emphasised by this fact. The bands were formed within units to play solely popular music—most often of the dance variety, and the only connection to a military purpose was that their primary mission was to entertain the troops; each man in those official bands had regular duties to carry out as well.

The live music scene also offered a degree of normality to the proceedings of the war. There had been live music before the war, and there would be live music after it had ended, and, by carrying on throughout the war, live music was able to offer a constant in the lives of the civilian population in particular. Except for a brief period when shut down, (due to the blackout imposed because of fears of bombing, and other government restrictions on large numbers of people congregating together) the niteries

⁷² Tom Canning, message posted in response to Article A2553761, BBC Website, WW2 People's War, April 23, 2004, www.bbc.co.uk/ww2peopleswar/stories/61/a2553761.shtml, as accessed October 2010.

⁷³ “Brand’s Essence,” *Melody Maker*, September 18, 1943, 6.

of London were packed throughout the duration of the war, as people sought to be entertained—sometimes, even at the expense of their own safety. The Holborn Empire, the London Coliseum, the Finsbury Park Empire and the Stratford Empire (all in London) received damage as a result of German bombing during 1940 and a further London dance hall suffered a direct hit during a bombing raid in November 1943.⁷⁴ Even those enjoying themselves could not escape the hazards of wartime; many members of the audience and the entire band were killed as a result.⁷⁵ It was also occasionally the case that audiences had to remain in theatres and dance halls long after the show was due to end because the all-clear had not been sounded, and the Astoria even doubled as an official air-raid shelter.⁷⁶ Judy Campbell, a singer who performed and toured with Noel Coward during the war, recalled the times this happened in an article in *The Times*:

During the war I used to stand at the stage door and watch our airmen having dogfights over London. When there was an air raid we tried to entertain the audience because they weren't allowed to go home. We used to lead them in community singing and get them up on stage to dance; anything to keep them entertained until the all clear went. Sometimes that didn't happen until 2am.⁷⁷

Sylvia Jeane, a fifteen-year old at the time, also demonstrated the power of music to placate the public during very difficult times when she, “held alarms in check by singing number after number, dancing, and generally keeping the audience calm and interested” during the first air raid in Bristol in 1940.⁷⁸ Adelaide Hall laid claim to the longest show in the face of an enemy attack. Hall, the first black artist to be contracted to the BBC, was performing at the Lewisham Hippodrome in London during the blitz, when on one occasion she performed for four hours while bombs fell

⁷⁴ “Blitzed,” *Melody Maker*, January 11, 1941, 1.

⁷⁵ “Profession Mourns Missing Semi-Pro Band After London Dance-hall Raid.” *Melody Maker*, November 13, 1943, 1.

⁷⁶ “Air Raids: Dance Halls and Theatres Report Ok,” *Melody Maker*, September 7, 1940, 1.

⁷⁷ “Lifetime,” *The Times*, T2, December 3, 2002, 8.

⁷⁸ “Brand’s Essence,” *Melody Maker*, October 2, 1943, 6.

all around the theatre.⁷⁹ It was reported at the time that she sang fifty-two encore songs that evening, but still managed to return the next evening to continue her show.

With the dangers of war so much more immediate in the United Kingdom than in the United States, live music and dancing held even more potency for civilians and the armed forces alike. Although affected by the war, the live music scene attempted to carry on as it had before the war, and to a large extent it succeeded. People attended shows and dances in massive number, new clubs opened and existing venues surged ahead in the provision of entertainment once war was declared. No matter where in the country, a dance or a band could be found in order to escape for an evening the pressures and stress of wartime life.

Musicians in the British Armed Forces

With the demand for popular music so apparent, and so many of the top practitioners of the art in uniform, the dance bands of the armed forces took on a new significance, particularly those musicians and bands formed purely as entertainment units as opposed to fighting units that happened to be a band. In World War II, for the first time, the British military formed bands with entertainment as their primary purpose, and filled those bands with professional musicians. For those musicians, life in the armed forces was in many circumstances (and in many ways) a relatively easy one when compared to that of the men of similar age who were fighting. The service dance bands were very rarely at the front lines; used instead primarily and successfully as a tool to entertain the troops.⁸⁰ They were trained in the same basic way as those actually fighting, but were very rarely required to use those skills. The Squadronaires, the Royal Air Force's dance band, for example, remained in England

⁷⁹ <http://www.wartimememories.co.uk/women.html>, as posted on November 5, 2004.

⁸⁰ At a Jazz Jamboree in October 1943, the Squadronaires performed, and according to *Melody Maker*, they were, "as good as ever and still get a standard for dance music in this country which does them credit." "Smashing Jazz Jamboree," *Melody Maker*, October 30, 1943, 2.

for the duration of the war. The band toured around the country performing for the public and the troops, but did not see action themselves. The musicians were often castigated for neglecting their duties as men of fighting age. "Why are soldiers allowed to become public entertainers? A number of readers want to know," read one disgruntled article, "Why aren't they doing the serious duties they were pulled out of civilian life to perform?"⁸¹ Such complaints were more common in Britain, where there was a far more acute shortage of men for the armed forces than was the case in the United States. The charge was often levelled—in both the press and the wider society—that the musicians who had been inducted into the forces were in fact, only "toy soldiers," and that they were not really ever going to be involved in the actual fighting anyway. Added to this was a decision by the government to limit the possibilities for musicians in the forces to make money during their free time from their talents as musicians. The music press—to a degree—supported this decree, and, in effect added to the belief that they were not true soldiers.⁸²

The role or effect of music in this respect was to alienate the musicians from their soldiering peers. That they were musicians first and foremost had the effect of securing them an image that was negatively portrayed and assumed. As early as January 1940, the industry was being called into question in regard to musicians joining the Forces. The *Evening Standard* accused musicians of being cowards and not wanting to fight and using their profession to avoid going to war.⁸³ *Melody Maker*, the defender of the music industry, was outraged at the portrayal of stars in the wider press and took up the cause with gusto. Its war-long effort was to emphasise how great and important musicians were to the war, and in particular to show that they were not just musicians but also soldiers in their own right. When the Squadronaires

⁸¹ "Their Army Duties Not Neglected," *Glasgow Evening News*, June 19, 1941.

⁸² "Sensational Army No-Pay-If-You-Play Order for Musicians," *Melody Maker*, June 13, 1942, 1.

⁸³ "Profession up in Arms at 'Exemption' Slur," *Melody Maker*, January 27, 1940, 1. The article was a rebuttal of the accusations made in the national press and in particular the London *Evening Standard*.

was formed (as the Dance Orchestra of HM Royal Air Force), *Melody Maker* used the occasion to emphasise that these well-known musicians were most certainly servicemen first and foremost.⁸⁴

By early 1942, the magazine had chosen to promote the appearances and work of the Service bands. Rather than try and convince the public of these musicians' worth as soldiers, *Melody Maker* decided to concentrate on the job they were doing entertaining the troops, and to focus on their abilities as musicians and bands, while not forgetting to mention their activities as soldiers. The situation gained such notoriety as to be brought up in Parliament. Mr E Walkden, Labour MP for Doncaster observed that being a musician in the Forces made for a very easy life.⁸⁵ With the media and the government addressing the issue from a negative stance, the natural conclusion of sanctions against some of these musicians was reached in February 1942, when the RAOC Dance Band, the Blue Rockets, was disbanded and its members reduced "to the comparatively menial tasks of depot and storekeepers and clerks" as opposed to the important task of entertaining the troops.⁸⁶

The Service Bands

Jazz historian Harry Francis recalled the origins of the British military dance bands of World War II.⁸⁷ Francis wrote that these bands, new and distinct from the existing military bands and light orchestras, were formed in response to the "new governmental approach to morale boosting" and to an increased demand for jazz

⁸⁴ "Ex-Ambrose Manager Leads Ace Dance Band in RAF," *Melody Maker*, April 6, 1940, 1.

⁸⁵ "Bands in the Forces: The Facts," *Melody Maker*, February 28, 1942, pp. 1–2.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.* However, just one month later, *Melody Maker* carried a story indicating that the band would be reformed in the near future. "Blue Rockets to be Reformed," March 28, 1942, pp. 1–2.

⁸⁷ See Harry Francis's excellent account of the wartime bands for the online jazz magazine, www.jazzprofessional.com.

music in the British public.⁸⁸ The new service bands tapped in to the need for high-quality commercial dance bands where the traditional military outfits could not and did not provide such entertainment, and many service bands became household names in their own right as they blurred the line between soldier and entertainer to an ever-increasing degree.

The first and most successful example of the Service dance bands was the Dance Orchestra of the Royal Air Force (RAF). This band was formed by members of prominent civilian dance outfits when they were either drafted or volunteered for the RAF. The original members of the band came directly from Bert Ambrose's civilian orchestra when six of them decided to join up together late in 1939.⁸⁹ The anecdotes they have told of this (eventually) fortuitous decision give one to suspect that the men in question had not fully thought through this action, considering that once they had reported to the RAF and volunteered, they expected to be allowed to return to their jobs with Ambrose and perform at concerts for which they were already contracted.⁹⁰

Sanctioned by Wing Commander R P O'Donnell, the band was stationed at RAF Uxbridge throughout the war. It joined the Symphony Orchestra and the Central Band at Uxbridge and was further complemented within the RAF by the various other military bands. Whereas the military bands and the Central band did not venture into modern musical territory, the dance band was purely concerned with producing and playing the most modern and jazz-oriented music it could. With top quality musicians, time to practice and an officer in overall charge who believed in the importance and necessity of dance music, the band quickly became a very successful

⁸⁸ <http://www.jazzprofessional.com/Francis/As%20I%20heard%20It%20Part%201.htm>, Harry Francis, "s I Heard It: Jazz Development in Britain 1924–1974: The Wartime Bands," as accessed 7 November, 2004. Francis was a member of the London Fire Forces Dance Orchestra during the war.

⁸⁹ <http://georgechisholm.tripod.com/chap6.htm>, 1, as accessed November 7, 2004.

⁹⁰ George Chisholm, "Music in the Air," www.georgechisholm.tripod.com/chap6.htm, as accessed November 2004.

outfit in both military and civilian circles. As early as May 1940, the *Melody Maker* pronounced that the orchestra's playing style "should prove the new band to be one of the best in the country, and listeners concurred."⁹¹ With the RAF Dance Orchestra's early success, the enterprising and business savvy members of the band, led by Sergeant Jimmy Miller, coined the sobriquet that they would be known by throughout the war and after. "The Squadronaires" was the title taken by the band and used whenever they performed. The nickname was never officially sanctioned by the RAF, though, and consequently, they were officially billed as The Dance Orchestra of the Royal Air Force whenever they made any appearance, whether it was in the public or solely for the Forces. The nickname quickly became synonymous with the band and the public adopted it readily, but the nomenclature of the dance orchestra appears to have concerned the RAF from the start of the war. In order to promote the official name, the BBC received polite reminders from the RAF at various junctures stating the official name of the band in case there was any confusion.⁹²

The nature of this military band in that it played popular music and was not limited to marches, classical or light entertainment meant that it was very popular with the public. The band recorded on the Decca label, performed at numerous concerts around the country and broadcast on the radio, appearing one hundred and thirty times on the BBC between July 1940 and January 1945.⁹³ The press lauded the bandsmen's playing ability and style, with *Melody Maker* stating that they were "the best of all the Service (or for that matter any other) dance bands," and the BBC regularly referring to them in internal correspondence with the highest of praise.⁹⁴ David Miller, of the Music, Variety department of the BBC wrote to Douglas Lawrence, Director of

⁹¹ "RAF No. 1 Dance Band Record for Decca," *Melody Maker*, May 11, 1940, 2; Alastair Barclay, "Stewarton in Wartime," BBC Website, WW2 People's War, article A3514321, January 12, 2005, www.bbc.co.uk/ww2peopleswar/stories/21/a3514321.shtml, as accessed September 2010.

⁹² Memorandum from Douglas Lawrence, Director of Programme Planning to Mr A H Brown, Variety Booking Manager, BBC, "RAF Dance Orchestra," October 30, 1941.

⁹³ This figure was taken from BBC contracts, RAF Squadronaires file, BBC WAC.

⁹⁴ "Detector," *Melody Maker*, June 6, 1942, pp. 4-5.

Programme Planning to say, "I feel (and I know you do too) that they are a really good dance orchestra."⁹⁵ His sentiments were echoed by Cecil Madden, the BBC's Organiser of Overseas Entertainments Unit, a few years later, when he described the band as "outstanding."⁹⁶ The military favoured this band, but the consistency and predominance of the positive comments, the number of broadcasts they made and the success of their recordings in the charts indicates that their musical ability was of the highest order. By D-Day, when the band had been in existence for over four years, they could quite rightly claim to be the best British dance band as they registered the highest entry in the BBC Hit Record chart with the American song "Milkman Keep Those Milk Bottles Quiet."⁹⁷

In general, the day-to-day existence of the Squadronaires was very much like that of a civilian band. They practised, performed, broadcast and recorded in just the same manner that a non-military dance band did at the time. With so many engagements their military duties were not the most important aspect of their service. George Chisholm, a member of band during the war recognised that senior officers did not always approve of the celebrity and lifestyle of the band members, but their genuine success created a somewhat unreal military life for them. This extended to being able to function as a civilian band when the men were on leave. During such times, the band's leader, Sergeant Miller was allowed to negotiate with the BBC or any other promoter or show producer, to arrange a contract for the band, which was then paid directly to the men rather than to the RAF as was normally the case.⁹⁸

However, the band was not immune to difficulties as well, and on two separate occasions it was almost disbanded. In October 1940, Wing Commander O'Donnell

⁹⁵ Memorandum from David Miller to Douglas Lawrence, "RAF Dance Orchestra," August 30, 1940.

⁹⁶ Letter from Cecil Madden to John Watt, Director of Variety, "RAF Dance Orchestra," June 22, 1943.

⁹⁷ <http://www.bbc.co.uk/dna/ww2/A3090458>, "6 June BBC Record Chart," as accessed November 5, 2004.

⁹⁸ Letter from Wing Commander O'Donnell to Mr A H Brown, Programme Contracts Director, BBC, February 26, 1943.

wrote to the BBC to inform the Corporation that the RAF Dance Orchestra would no longer be available. "I regret to inform you," he wrote, "that after 13th October this combination [the RAF Dance Orchestra] will no longer be available for any broadcasts owing to the band being split up into two combinations and posting to Royal Air Force stations for duty. No further offers should be made for broadcast engagements."⁹⁹ Despite this letter, the band broadcast on October 20 on the BBC as normal.¹⁰⁰

The band did not disband on that occasion and continued to appear, broadcast and record for the next three years until in late June 1943, new rumours began to circulate that the band was destined to be broken up once more. On June 22, 1943, Madden wrote to John Watt, the BBC Director of Variety. This high level discussion noted that "Douglas Risk tells me that Lamping and Jimmy Miller have told him that there is grave danger of the RAF Dance Orchestra being dispersed and my own feeling is that this band is so outstanding it is worth an effort to keep them together."¹⁰¹ He finished by reiterating that "something should be done about such a good band."¹⁰² Three days later, W L Streeton, the Programme Contracts Director, wrote to Squadron Leader Lamping to try and establish whether the rumour was true and if so, to offer the BBC's support in attempting to keep the band as it was.

Streeton wrote:

We are given to understand that the question of the dispersal of the RAF Dance Orchestra is at present under consideration. We do not know, of course, whether this is correct and in any case we appreciate that the decision in this matter is one for the Air Ministry, based on Service considerations with which we are not concerned.

After discussions with the Director of Variety, however, I have been asked to say that we should very much regret any decision to disband this combination. We regard the RAF Dance Orchestra as one of the best combinations of this type now available to us and we have, as you know, been able to offer them a considerable number of engagements without

⁹⁹ Letter from Wing Commander O'Donnell to A H Brown, October 4, 1940.

¹⁰⁰ RAF Squadronaires file, BBC WAC.

¹⁰¹ Letter from Cecil Madden to John Watt, "RAF Dance Orchestra," June 22, 1943.

¹⁰² Ibid.

prejudice to or unfair competition with civilian dance bands. Their performances are first class and many of them have been given in our Overseas Service where they have been the means of entertaining large numbers of RAF personnel and other branches of H M Forces overseas, with whom we understand them to be very popular.

I think therefore you might like to know that should it be decided to keep them in being we should expect, short of unforeseen developments, to be able to continue to offer them engagements with approximately the same frequency as hitherto and although this will not naturally be the prime factor in the matter, it is just possible that it might be taken into account in considering the future of the band.¹⁰³

The matter reached an impasse or at least a temporary lull, when on July 1, 1943, Streeton informed Watt and A H Brown, BBC Variety Booking Manager, that although the rumour had been true, there was no immediate danger of it actually coming to pass, and that the RAF Dance Orchestra should be booked as normal for the foreseeable future.¹⁰⁴ Indeed, as if to confirm the status quo, the band appeared on three broadcasts in the month of July. The two occasions of the band almost being disbanded elicited very different responses from the BBC. This showed the increase in interest in the RAF Dance Orchestra over the intervening period, and that the RAF Dance Orchestra had by that time firmly established its place in dance music in the United Kingdom.

One year later, with their star glowing ever brighter, the Squadronaires were being linked with Glenn Miller's American Air Force Band. The BBC decided that a radio programme combining the obvious talents of the two Millers' bands (Major Glenn and Sergeant Jimmy) would be an excellent opportunity to showcase arguably the best dance band in Britain with its counterpart from the United States. Glenn Miller's band was stationed in Bedford by August 1944 and was, on occasion, broadcasting from BBC studios in London. The Squadronaires were reported to have been to see the Americans play and this had triggered Cecil Madden to suggest that

¹⁰³ Letter from W L Streeton to Squadron Leader Lamping, June 25, 1943.

¹⁰⁴ Letter from W L Streeton to John Watt and A H Brown, "RAF Dance Orchestra," July 1, 1943.

the BBC put together a programme with both bands.¹⁰⁵ The United States Army Air Force agreed in principle to the idea and the planning for the show commenced. The programme was to be an edition of *Swing Shift* and was to be broadcast from the Queensbury All Services Club in London for a Forces audience.¹⁰⁶

As the pre-eminent British military dance band of the war, the RAF Dance Orchestra established itself outside of the purely military world and became an “institution” in the public domain. Many of those who listened to music during World War II in the United Kingdom list the Squadronaires alongside Joe Loss, Geraldo and others when remembering the big bands of the era.¹⁰⁷ Equal levels of pride in the Royal Air Force, musical skill, promotion and modernity helped the RAF Dance Orchestra become—for many people—the best dance band in the country. It was hailed as reaching a level that no other British band could match and many believed that they were the measure of some of the top American bands as well.

The success of the Squadronaires encouraged the other military branches to organise their own dance band, as well. Many of these bands gained their own success and fame, although none were quite as successful and popular as the RAF band. In this upper stratum of military dance bands were bands such as the Royal Army Ordnance Corps Dance Orchestra (the Blue Rockets), The No. 1 Balloon Centre Dance Orchestra (the Skyrockets) and the London Fire Forces Dance Orchestra. These bands were widely recognised as the top four military outfits and were usually placed as the top four dance bands of any ilk, by critics and fans alike, partly

¹⁰⁵ Memorandum from Cecil Madden to Maurice Gorham, “American Dance Band and the Squadronaires,” August 11, 1944; Geoffrey Butcher, *Next to a Letter from Home: Major Glenn Miller's Wartime Band*, (Edinburgh: Mainstream Publishing Co. Ltd., 1986).

¹⁰⁶ It is unclear if the bands performed together before Miller's disappearance in December 1944, but it is possible as his band did appear on the show from time to time. After Miller's death, Ray McKinley took over the band and it continued to perform on *Swing Shift*, so there is a good possibility the two bands did come together at some stage. “The War in Europe and D-Day,” Miller Nichols Library, University of Missouri-Kansas City Website, <http://library.umkc.edu/spec-col/ww2/dday/bugle-boys-txt.htm>, as accessed June 2010.

¹⁰⁷ See BBC Website, WW2 People's War, for numerous examples of this.

indicating the decimation of the top civilian bands because of the impact of the draft on their ranks.

By the end of the war, a BBC survey indicated that amongst respondents aged sixteen to twenty-nine (which was the age bracket most heavily influenced by the American style of music that many of the military bands employed) the Squadronaires, and the Skyrockets were the second and fifth most popular bands.¹⁰⁸ All four of these bands managed to secure recording and broadcasting contracts, had records released and enjoyed a devoted following.¹⁰⁹ The other service bands were formed in much the same manner as the RAF dance band. The RAOC dance band was put together by Lee Street who had been a professional civilian drummer with Jack Jackson's band.¹¹⁰ When he was drafted he managed to group together enough musicians with professional experience to put together a dance outfit and soon the RAOC had a fourteen piece dance band to entertain both its own men, and on many occasions, civilians, in the form of charity concerts and fund raising dances.

In addition to these four large dance bands, there were also smaller groups from other branches of the forces, or separate to the big bands in the same branches that also played a very high standard of dance music. The Royal Navy Dance Band (the Blue Mariners), and smaller RAF outfits such as Billy Amstell and his RAF Swingtette, and Buddy Featherstonehaugh's Sextet also recorded and released records during the war. The London Fire Force and the RAF No. 1 Balloon Centre outfits were regulars on the night club circuit and were often contracted for major jazz and swing concerts such as the Jazz Jamboree.¹¹¹ The Jazz Jamboree was a showcase for the best dance bands in the country, and from 1942 to 1944 there were numerous

¹⁰⁸ BBC Listener Research Report, "Dance Band Preferences," Spring 1945, BBC WAC, R9/9/9, Audience Research Special Reports, Sound & General, 1945.

¹⁰⁹ *Melody Maker*, November 7, 1942, 5; "Blow to Blue Rockets," *Melody Maker*, November 21, 1942, 1. Harry Francis also noted that the four bands mentioned were cited as the best of the best at the time.

¹¹⁰ "Fourteen Dance Band Stars Join RAOC," *Melody Maker*, August 3, 1940, 1.

¹¹¹ "Jamboree: Full List of Bands," *Melody Maker*, October 16, 1943, 1.

examples of military bands attending and performing alongside the civilian orchestras. The 1942 Jamboree featured the Squadronaires, the Skyrockets, the Blue Rockets, the Blue Mariners, the London Fire Forces Orchestra and Billy Amstell's small RAF combo. The 1943 Jamboree attracted the Squadronaires, the Skyrockets, Billy Amstell, and Buddy Featherstonehaugh from the RAF, and the London Fire Forces group. By 1944 the London Fire Forces group was no longer in existence and only the Squadronaires and Skyrockets represented the military.¹¹²

The RAF was the branch of the military with the most and best dance bands and the smaller bands of the RAF followed civilian norms and highlighted the leader of the band rather than the unit, squadron or base in the name of the group. However, some of these British military dance bands suffered from detractors. Many people—particularly those within the press—believed that these men were being given an easy ride in the armed forces because of their status in pre-war society. A campaign by the *Melody Maker* to convince the public that the musicians were also fully-fledged soldiers was able to quiet most of the discomfort at the thought of an elite group of men being given safer and better jobs. The less respectful press called them Toy Soldiers, but as *Melody Maker* argued, it was more important that they provide entertainment to the troops, as this was what they were formed for:

For more years than we can remember bands have been a recognised part of all branches of the fighting Services because of their inestimable value in the matter of keeping up morale. From this point of view they are more necessary today than ever. They help to relieve the terrible monotony of life for troops, away from home and often in remote country districts where the only form of entertainment is that which can be self-made, who, being fully trained, have little to do except fatigues and guards, while waiting to be called into action. Originally, of course, the bands were "military" bands, but if the music of the "dance" band is today equally desired—well, what is there against providing it?¹¹³

The musician soldiers had full rank (albeit, generally of the lowest level), and they

¹¹² <http://www.jazzprofessional.com/Francis/As%20I%20heard%20it%20Part%201.htm>, Harry Francis, "As I Heard It: Jazz Development in Britain 1924–1974: The Wartime Bands," as accessed November 7, 2004.

¹¹³ "Forces' Musicians and the Lay Press," *Melody Maker*, April 18, 1942, 9.

were valuable and valued, to and by, the men and women they performed for.¹¹⁴

These well-known military dance bands were important to the morale of the soldiers, but they were also important to civilians, for whom the military connection was often unimportant. Oliver Stewart, editor of *Aeronautics* magazine was of the opinion that these musicians and bands of the armed forces should view their playing as being as important as their actual military duties such as firing guns.¹¹⁵ He believed that the bands of the armed forces were invaluable in the conduct of the war, their appeal heightened because of the mix of an excellent standard of musical professionalism and the colour of their uniform. That combination pushed some of the military bands above mere “stardom.” Their songs topped the charts and their presence was a morale boost to the nation.

The large, well-known dance bands that became synonymous with the various branches of the military were, occasionally, propaganda vehicles, but the unit dance bands were something altogether different, and in some ways more immediately important to the men of that unit. The unit bands brought the strains of popular music to the bases and towns where they were stationed. These were of particular value in remote areas. The RAF in particular encouraged the establishment of such small groups because they believed that it helped keep morale at a higher level. It was Sir Walford Davies, Master of the King’s Music who advised the RAF to form these smaller bands.¹¹⁶ In late 1939, he foresaw the need for small groups to be stationed around the country, playing for the men on their base, but also able to travel quickly and easily to various out-of-the-way sites to bring much-needed relief to the men stationed there. He was ably assisted in this drive by Wing Commander R P O’Donnell, Director of Music to the RAF, who also shared this vision of music being

¹¹⁴ Sid Colin, *And the Bands Played On*, (London: Elm Tree Books, 1977), 120.

¹¹⁵ “Famous Aero Journalist Supports Our Views on RAF Musicians,” *Melody Maker*, July 25, 1942, 9.

¹¹⁶ Ian Kendrick, *Music in the War*, (Hertfordshire, UK: Egon Publishers, 1986), 50. Kendrick’s book examined the use of music in the RAF and the chapter on the RAF bands during WWII was especially valuable here.

fully immersed in the military experience. The RAF concurred and the rank of Aircraft hand/musician was created. These men were formed into groups of five or seven and were expected to perform regular military duties during the day and then entertain the men in the evening. Over one hundred of these bands were formed and were soon posted around the country.¹¹⁷

The Orkney Islands was one such area and the RAF combination, the Skaebrae Dance Orchestra was held in high regard by those who attended their dances.¹¹⁸ In terms of the immediate and localised entertainment of the troops, the unit dance bands were *non-pareil*. The men were particularly receptive to these bands. They knew the men who played in them, and they were generally of a fairly high standard, with many of them featuring one or two ex-professional players who had been drafted or had volunteered. Such a band was an RAF Swing Sextette led by Harold Honess which gained “golden opinions from the RAF boys and from the general public around the district where they [were] stationed.”¹¹⁹ This band was sufficiently successful to appear at the Trocadero in Elephant and Castle and do a tour of RAF camps. Writing in 1940, A R Hill noted that “We have a small band—I might add that it’s practically our only source of amusement here,” he went on to request sheet music to help them entertain their fellow troops.¹²⁰ The small unit dance band was of vital importance to the unit in question. It was their one source of true entertainment. He was not alone in his enthusiasm for the musical entertainment provided by these small bands. Captain Fred Foster was himself, a member of a small dance combo and he played regularly at dances and concerts throughout the war. Their performances were generally well received by the men and he noted the enjoyment that the music brought

¹¹⁷ *Ibid*, 50.

¹¹⁸ Brand’s Essence, *Melody Maker*, July 31, 1943, 4.

¹¹⁹ Brand’s Essence, *Melody Maker*, November 14, 1942, 6.

¹²⁰ “Lines of Communication,” *Melody Maker*, April 13, 1940, 6.

both him and his audiences.¹²¹

The British military's dance bands became an important part of wartime entertainment in the British Isles for both civilians and those in the armed forces. Benefiting from the inclusion of some of the top professional musicians of the time, these bands became amongst the best proponents of modern dance music in the United Kingdom. Despite occasionally being the recipients of negative comments regarding their seemingly easy position in the forces, the vast majority of reports at the time and recollections much later, indicate that these dance bands were held in high esteem by the public, the military and broadcasts alike. The draft's removal of many professional musicians from civilian bands meant that these military bands occupied an important place in British entertainment throughout the war. These bands were, in some ways, the pinnacle of the interaction between popular music and the British military during World War II.

Conclusion

The British music scene was then, a wide and varied landscape throughout the war years. It had its own vibe, but adopted others to suit the mood of its audiences. Those in charge of the scene reasoned that what had worked in the past would work again, but they also proved flexible enough to adapt to the changing mores of the people who it entertained. Popular music in the United Kingdom was a morale booster, a message carrier, a tool to help take the fight to the enemy, just as it was in the United States. The British music scene was entertainment to the hilt throughout a very difficult period for the British people, always attempting to provide just what was needed by each group of listeners or each audience.¹²² As a profession it suffered its losses just

¹²¹ Captain Fred Foster, "Memories of World War II," File 01/4/1, Imperial War Museum, London.

¹²² Costello, *Love, Sex and War*, 105.

as any other did—bombs falling on packed dance halls during the blitz and potential musical maestros removed from the comfort of the bandstand to the hardships of the front line. Above all though, the British music industry displayed its ability to survive and thrive in a much-changed environment.

When rationing threatened to restrict entertainment, so sheet music and radio stepped into the breach and took music in to the home. When the blackout shut down music venues throughout the country, the city folk used it as an excuse to adopt their local dance hall as their air raid shelter. Music in its live form blossomed as people chose to live for the moment and dancing was a favoured way of showing this.¹²³ Nightlife entertainment was favoured by many who lived in areas where they could readily attend shows, concerts and dances, and they filled the dance venues with record-breaking crowds. The need to escape from wartime rigours sent people to seek musical entertainment, and the bands and performers gave people a momentary respite from the dangers and hardships they faced every day.¹²⁴

The military embraced the appeal of popular music and helped expedite the formation of military dance bands, the youngest of the branches (the Royal Air Force) being the most forward in promoting the use of dance music to help troops' morale levels. As a result of the draft, many top musicians found themselves in uniform, but rather than being detrimental to the music scene, it actually benefited the British popular music scene. Professional musicians who found themselves in the military in entertainment roles did so for the first time in the country's military history. They

¹²³ John Costello noted the wartime conditions that led to sex becoming a theme of popular entertainment in ways that it had not previously. The desire to dance that so overtook parts of British society can be seen as an aspect of that trend. John Costello, *Love, Sex and War: Changing Values, 1939–1945* (London: Collins, 1985).

¹²⁴ Angus Calder argued that every person who held a job in the United Kingdom (outside of those in the military) performed a vital role in the war effort. He did not specifically mention musicians, but his general point was that all aspects of society took on an importance above and beyond that of peace time, and in this sense musicians acted in just the same manner; they took on more importance because their work was to bolster morale rather than merely entertain. Angus Calder, *The People's War: Britain 1939–1945* (New York: Pantheon House, 1969).

received support from many, but also had to endure some negativity towards their non-fighting status.

The armed forces, for the first time, formed dance music bands, both official and unofficial, and the best of the military dance orchestras such as the Squadronaires and the Skyrockets enjoyed massive popularity and plaudits. These bands developed as the military responded to the needs of its men and women in uniform, where it had either not previously existed or had not been tended to. The musicians who filled the band spots were outside the constraints of commercial responsibility and had few military duties to which to attend. As a result they honed their skills and experimented with new ideas; leading to the best sounds in modern British jazz and by all accounts, the best bands outside of the United States.¹²⁵

Popular music in the United Kingdom during World War II played an integral role in the maintenance of civilian and military morale, in the welcoming and integration of American troops, in the progression and growth of the BBC, and in how the military and government viewed and used popular music (and more generally, popular entertainment) during wartime and beyond. Integrating the increasingly-popular American style of music into the popular lexicon, the BBC, the British government and military, the British public and the American troops stationed there, catered to majority tastes and boosted and managed morale.¹²⁶ War-torn, the British

¹²⁵ Ian Kendrick's work on the dance bands of the RAF provided a lot of useful information about how the bands were pulled together and the duties they undertook while in uniform. However, the biggest gap in his work in relation to this thesis was in terms of considering the effect of those bands on the larger popular music scene during the war. This thesis shows that the service bands enjoyed success and plaudits on a far larger scale, thus affecting the music scene in a much bigger way and having a positive effect on morale both within and without the armed forces. Ian Kendrick, *Music in the War* (Hertfordshire: Egon Publishers, 1986).

¹²⁶ Geoffrey Butcher consistently pointed out how the British public embraced American music and American bands in World War II. He noted, specifically, the impact in that regard of Glenn Miller arriving in England. Butcher also drew attention to the nature of bandsmen's duties while in uniform and the public reception of those bands. What is most important in consideration of this thesis is that Butcher showed, conclusively, that the American sound and style of popular music became more popular throughout the war years, and that popular music had beneficial effects on those listening to it. Geoffrey Butcher, *Next to a Letter from Home: Major Glenn Miller's Wartime Band* (London: Warner Books, 1994).

public and military needed something to help them with their day-to-day existence and struggle to survive, and popular music played a full part towards that need.

Just as in the United States, popular music became a significant factor in the morale of the people during World War II, and provided relief from the war for listeners. This aspect of popular music's role in the war years is the most significant, especially given the immediacy of the war for Britons; and even more so when put in comparison to the United States. The British military created new military dance bands in the same vein as the American bands, often playing American-style dance music and entertaining both troops and civilians alike. This development was unprecedented and indicated the importance placed on troop welfare, morale, and recreation. That the armed forces sought to improve all three aspects of military life through popular music is a testament to the way in which military authorities had come to view that music. Throughout the war, the British public, military and government turned to popular music to entertain as it had never done previously, and the music industry thrived despite the initial concerns about the relevance and importance of such entertainment for a country so completely at war.¹²⁷ Popular music solidified its presence in society and formed an essential component of wartime life for both civilians and military.¹²⁸

¹²⁷ Philip Ziegler, in particular, indicated the importance of dance music and dancing to Londoners (and by extension, Britons) during World War II. His book does not concentrate on entertainment in any great detail, but in describing the capital city during the war, he paid attention to the impact and role of popular music because of the importance placed on the city's citizens during those years. Again, such an inclusion points to the relevance of popular music even in a city receiving daily bombings where "normal" life had ceased and it might appear that something as frivolous as music was unnecessary. Philip Ziegler, *London at War: 1939–1945* (New York: Alfred A Knopf, 1995).

¹²⁸ Two primary sources are used extensively in this chapter: *Melody Maker* and the BBC's World War 2, the People's War website. *Melody Maker* was the primary music industry trade newspaper of the war years, and it covered popular music in all its facets with great detail, far more so than any general newspaper of the day. While it was, no doubt, biased towards the industry, its coverage provides the historian with an unrivalled source of information about all that occurred within the industry's bounds during the war years. The BBC's World War 2, the People's War website, which came online in 2002 and closed in 2006, hosts many thousands of recollections of the war from those who were there. Most of these recollections were collected in oral format and submitted to the site in written form. These observations and memories provide an excellent resource for the average person's life during war, and the number that refer to music, dancing, and entertainment is quite staggering.

Chapter 6

Organised Entertainment and Broadcasting in the United Kingdom

Aside from the private music industry and the music it provided for the British population during World War II, government, military and quasi-authority entities all realised the importance of ensuring quality entertainment reached those involved in the war effort. The entities engaged in these efforts included the British government, the armed forces and the British Broadcasting Association (BBC). Each part of this triumvirate addressed music for the military and for those working in munitions factories in its own way, coalescing in some significant developments in the provision of popular music during the war.

The most important of these developments was the Entertainments National Service Association (ENSA). Similar in some ways to the United Services Organisation in the United States, its main goal was to supply troops and war workers with entertainment in all guises, wherever it may be required. ENSA drew from the government and the military in order to fulfil its mission, and became one of the signature British efforts in the provision of music in World War II.

In its role as almost the sole radio outlet in the United Kingdom, the BBC also engaged in significant efforts to quench the thirst for popular music during the war years. Its regular programming included a great deal of popular music, but it was the corporation's development of new programmes specifically for war workers, in particular, that holds most relevance for this study. The *Music While You Work* programme aimed at munitions factory workers used popular music as a way of encouraging good morale and high efficiency in such factories, and the programme

became a staple part of the BBC's popular music output throughout the conflict.

Both ENSA and the BBC's *Music While You Work* are addressed in this chapter because of the central place they occupied in the United Kingdom during World War II. The BBC in general has been studied and written about fairly extensively—notably by Sian Nicholas—and thus, this thesis does not dwell on the BBC's general role in wartime Britain.¹ However, *Music While You Work* has drawn less attention. Additionally, the programme's use of popular music, much of which was American or American-influenced, justifies the story told here. ENSA has been almost completely ignored by scholars. Basil Dean, the director of that organisation, wrote his own version of ENSA in an almost autobiographical account, but Dean's work suffers, naturally, from an insider's bias. Aside from his book, there has been no work that tells the whole story of ENSA, particularly that of the role of popular music towards ENSA's objectives. ENSA's story is included here both because of the paucity of existing works, and because of the parallels between it and the USO in the United States, thus highlighting the transatlantic nature of popular music and the efforts of the Allied governments to address the need for such entertainment on such a scale for the first time during war.

The Entertainments National Service Association

World War II encompassed innovations in the way music was brought to the public and armed forces. Of these, the most important to the British music scene and the most overtly war related, was the Entertainments National Service Association (ENSA). The emergence of ENSA was crucial to the interaction of music and the war. ENSA was created as a direct result of the provision of entertainment to the troops in World War I. The provision of mass entertainment in World War I had been

¹ Sian Nicholas, *The Echo of War: Home Front Propaganda and the Wartime BBC, 1939–45* (Manchester, University of Manchester Press, 1996).

haphazard and in an attempt to avoid a repeat of that situation, the British government determined that it needed an official organising body to provide popular entertainment for the troops. Entertainment for the troops in World War I had been provided by the Army and Navy Canteen Board through the management of Basil Dean, who served as an officer in the army during the war, and went on to be heavily involved with ENSA in World War II.²

Between 1918 and 1939, the Army and Navy Canteen became the Navy, Army and Air Force Institutes (NAAFI). Then, in September 1939, the NAAFI, the War Office and the Department for Labour, following persistent urging from Dean, who in April 1939, cognizant of the entertainment situation, had written, “there is this insatiable demand for entertainment in time of war which no modern government dare neglect for long,”³ established ENSA to provide light entertainment to the troops.⁴ NAAFI was placed in overall charge of the provision of entertainment and the finances, while ENSA was tasked with providing the actual entertainers, programmes and schedules. The financing for ENSA’s work came directly from the Treasury. Sir Seymour Hicks was appointed controller of ENSA and Dean was appointed Director of Entertainments for NAAFI.⁵ Although the government and the military funded and supported ENSA, it was Dean who was credited by Sir John Foster, in his 1943 report on the entertainment industry, for the initiative that brought it into being.⁶ Foster wrote of the beginnings of the organisation, stating that the:

Association was a purely voluntary organisation without corporate existence or funds. Its purpose was to mobilise talent in the theatrical, variety, concert and cinema professions and thus provide the means of meeting any calls that

² Sir John Forster’s Report on the Man and Woman Power in the Entertainment Industry, December 17, 1943.

³ Basil Dean, *The Theatre at War* (London: George G Harrap & Co., 1956), 543.

⁴ See Dean, *The Theatre at War*, for a full description of the beginnings of ENSA from Dean’s perspective.

⁵ “Entertainment for the Forces,” *The Times*, September 13, 1939, 6.

⁶ Sir John Foster’s Report on the Man and Woman Power in the Entertainment Industry, December 17, 1943. Sir John Foster served as chief of the legal section in General Dwight D Eisenhower’s Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force.

might later be made for the services of professional entertainer to keep up the morale of the fighting Services and of the civilian population in time of war.⁷

At its inception, however, ENSA's role was envisioned solely as a military entity, as opposed to one that might entertain civilians as well. Originally, ENSA was to entertain the troops and it was only after the fall of France and the retreat from Dunkirk that the entertainment of civilians became of any concern to ENSA. Foster's report specified this delineation. In his opinion, wartime entertainment had two broad categories with which to be concerned. The first category ensured that the forces and industrial workers employed in war work should have their entertainment provided by NAAFI through ENSA. The second category outlined that private enterprise should continue its pre-war practice of entertaining civilians.⁸

Before any developments in what ENSA did or did not do, occurred, the British Expeditionary Force was dispatched to France, and ENSA soon followed. ENSA provided its very first show on September 9, 1939 and two days later, the organisation selected Drury Lane Theatre in London as its temporary headquarters.⁹ This location was quickly established as ENSA's official home. The organisation dispatched its first mobile entertainment from the famous old theatre on September 25, 1939. Within three weeks, "twenty-five completely equipped emergency shows were sent out on the road."¹⁰

Consolidation of the organisation, and further increases to the programme and schedule as more entertainers became available, followed the early departures. The expansion made it necessary to alter the make-up of the new organisation. Regional committees were formed in order to cope more efficiently with the demands of entertaining the troops. In October 1939, the Scottish committee was established

⁷ Sir John Foster's Report on the Man and Woman Power in the Entertainment Industry, December 17, 1943.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Basil Dean, "ENSA and Its Progress: Entertainment for Fifty Millions, from the Arctic to the Tropics," *The Times*, January 1, 1942, 5.

¹⁰ "The Efficiency of ENSA," *Calvacade*, September 8, 1941.

along with similar bodies for the South West, the Midlands and the North East.¹¹

Quickly, ENSA had become a large organisation. In the first five months of the war, to February 1940, the fledgling organisation provided entertainment, of one description or another, to two and a half million people.¹² These expansions and changes were guided by the Music Advisory Council, which Dean described as “probably the most representative body on British music that has ever been formed, consisting of leading composers, conductors, heads of music colleges and music critics.”¹³ ENSA continued its expansion throughout the war, so that by the end of 1943 it had provided concerts for more than twenty five million people.¹⁴

While the men in uniform enjoyed ENSA’s efforts, those who answered the call to work in essential arms producing factories also warranted entertainment. Heeding minister of Labour and Nations Service Ernest Bevin’s activities towards entertaining munitions workers, in July 1940, ENSA shifted its focus to add war workers to whom it provided entertainment.¹⁵ In May 1940, Dean had proposed that ENSA provide entertainment for munitions factory workers. The initial discussions centred on Royal Ordnance Factories (ROF) and did not include private firms, but those factories alone employed many thousands of workers. Some ROFs, such as those at Woolwich Arsenal in London and Bridgend in South Wales, employed as many as thirty to forty thousand people during World War II.¹⁶ Dean’s suggestions received immediate and strong support from the assistant director general of ordnance

¹¹ “Regional Committees of ENSA,” *The Times*, October 10, 1939, 6.

¹² Basil Dean addressed a meeting concerning the Entertainments National Service Association at the Criterion Restaurant, February 11, 1940. The transcript of this speech is held at the Imperial War Museum in ENSA box 1. This quote can be found on page three of that transcript.

¹³ Basil Dean, “ENSA and Its Progress: Entertainment for Fifty Millions, from the Arctic to the Tropics,” *The Times*, January 1, 1942, 5.

¹⁴ Sir John Forster’s Report on the Man and Woman Power in the Entertainment Industry, December 17, 1943.

¹⁵ Basil Dean “ENSA and Its Progress: Entertainment for Fifty Millions, from the Arctic to the Tropics,” *The Times*, January 1, 1942, 5.

¹⁶ “Forty Royal Ordnance Factories had been built from 1936 onwards, to supplement the three historic ones at Woolwich, Enfield, and Waltham. At their peak, in 1942, these factories employed over three hundred thousand men and women, and formed together ‘the largest munitions undertaking in industrial history.’” Calder, *People’s War*, 324.

factories G H Clamp.¹⁷ Clamp believed Dean's idea to be of great value to the factories, and consequently to the war effort. The idea found favour, and just over a month after Clamp offered his support to the scheme, the Ministry of Labour was also on board, and the first official ENSA concert in a Royal Ordnance Factory was scheduled for July 22, 1940, at the ROF in Woolwich in north London.¹⁸ It was the first step towards ENSA providing non-military entertainment and was supported by Bevin, who attended the first concert. In the autumn of 1940, the Inter Departmental Entertainments Board elaborated on Bevin's wishes, stating that "the Ministry of Labour and National Service has entrusted ENSA with the task of providing light entertainments inside factories during mealtimes and other rest periods at midday and midnight, for workers engaged on war work."¹⁹ The board's generic "light entertainments" really referred almost exclusively to music—most of which can be classified as popular.

In order to host an ENSA concert, each factory required special equipment. Up until this point, most factories had not used music or other entertainment to stimulate workers. Taking into account that each factory differed in size and type of facility, ENSA officials calculated that most factories would need improvements costing approximately one hundred pounds. The one hundred pounds covered the cost of equipment such as instruments, amplifying equipment, stage lighting and the stage itself.²⁰ Basil Dean told Clamp that these basic improvements would serve most, if not all, factories, but that when they did not, simply increasing the amount of each

¹⁷ Note from the Assistant Director of Ordnance Factories dated June 5, 1940, in response to letter from Basil Dean dated May 28, 1940. United Kingdom National Archives AVIA 22/1127

¹⁸ Note from G H Clamp to the secretary [no other information available about which secretary], July 14, 1940. United Kingdom National Archives AVIA 22/1127

¹⁹ Inter Departmental Entertainments Board, The Ministry of Labour and National Service: Arrangements for entertainment of munitions workers: Minutes of meeting, October 28, 1940. United Kingdom National Archives LAB 6/170.

²⁰ Letter from Basil Dean to G H Clamp, DG Ordnance Factories, Ministry of Supply, September 10, 1940. United Kingdom National Archives AVIA 22/1127

item would almost certainly be sufficient.²¹

ENSA “arranged mid-day and midnight concerts in Britain’s expanding munitions factories,”²² choosing these times because they fit best into most factories’ break times.²³ The shows broke up the monotonous work day, and by having them during scheduled breaks, the largest number of workers could attend. Music was played in the factories, either by recordings of ENSA musicians over the internal public address systems of the factories, or by dance bands in the canteen. Part of the appeal—most likely to both the workers and the management—was that it happened in a peaceful, relaxed manner, in a controlled, safe environment. One government official noted the benefits of the workers’ concerts compared to other group activities organised by the workers, such as games of football—which required time away from the machines and a field on which to play.²⁴ Factory managers also saw the effects on the workers. A manager at the ROF in Chorley immediately noticed the difference made by ENSA’s entertainment in his factory, writing that after each concert output rose considerably.²⁵

Wanting to know how much entertainment factories would require for the coming winter, the Ministry of Labour requested the Ministry of Supply to establish what ROFs thought of the entertainment they had received through the spring of 1941. An internal Ministry of Supply memorandum in July 1941, requested its regional representatives to “ask the Superintendents of the factories where ENSA entertainments have been given with some frequency, what they think of these entertainments and it would be helpful if they could indicate, from their own

²¹ Ibid.

²² London, “The Efficiency of ENSA,” *Calvacade*, September 8, 1941.

²³ Letter from the Operations Manager, ICI (General Chemicals) Ltd., Runcorn, Cheshire to Mr F C Everett, Assistant Director of Chemical Defense, Ministry of Supply, October 4, 1940. United Kingdom National Archives AVIA 22/1127

²⁴ Note to MPF [no other information] on 288/Gen/335. United Kingdom National Archives AVIA 22/1127

²⁵ Letter from Dr A Jaques, ROF, Chorley to Basil Dean, September 9, 1940. United Kingdom National Archives AVIA 22/1127

experience, whether the entertainments have been beneficial from a production point of view and whether their initial success is being fully maintained.” “It would also be helpful,” the memorandum continued, “if they could indicate whether there will be a smaller demand for these entertainments next winter as compared with last winter, because of the introduction of the three shift system and the consequent shorter lunch interval.”²⁶

Replies to the Ministry of Supply enquiries from factory managers included such statements as “concerts greatly appreciated, quality good,” “entertainments much appreciated” and “concerts have given much pleasure.”²⁷ From the twenty-three responses listed only one was unfavourable and two indicated that they no longer held concerts due to a reduction in break time.²⁸ In general, then, the ENSA scheme found much favour from factory managers almost as soon as it started.²⁹

The scheme received general support, but ENSA officers and factory managements spent considerable time on determining the best type of music for use in factories, both on the work-room floor and in the canteens. Dance music was most popular because it helped the workers with their tasks. Many factory jobs, principally production line positions, required steady rhythms, continuity and repetition.³⁰ Dance and popular music was not too fast, was steady in rhythm and generally provided a good background in which to work in. Best of all were instrumental songs. Some of the “hot” jazz of the time that had improvisation and different tempos within a piece were just not suitable to use in factories. Smooth lyrics, with a lively but not too

²⁶ Memorandum from SSIA, Ministry of Supply to Assistant Director, Ordnance Factories, 15 July 1941. United Kingdom National Archives AVIA 22/1306. The SSIA was almost certainly G S Franks.

²⁷ Replies received to the question of reactions in ROF's and Manufacturing firms to ENSA Entertainments. No precise date given or title to the document, but replies started to arrive after August 27, 1941. It would appear that the original memorandum requesting feedback was sent out on July 15, 1941. United Kingdom National Archives AVIA 22/1306.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ Report from Regional Representative, Newcastle, June 17, 1941. United Kingdom National Archives AVIA 22/1306; Letter from E E S Wade, Managing Director, The Lang Pen Company Ltd to Area Officer, The Ministry of Supply, July 29, 1941. United Kingdom National Archives AVIA 22/1306; “Britain's Power: Morale of Workers,” *Christian Science Monitor*, Boston, USA, July 11, 1941.

³⁰ See information on *Music While You Work* programming from BBC later in this chapter.

hurried melody suited the tempo and non-distracting style that factories required for high output.

Factory managers concurred that popular music provided the best source of entertainment. In general, they believed that plays, comedy acts, or other talk-based entertainment proved less suitable because they required the specific attention of the workers. ENSA stationed Area Officers in regions throughout the country to oversee the provision of factory entertainment. The area officer for the Midlands noted that, "The only criticism about the quality of the entertainments is that good popular music is most appreciated; but turns in the nature of Patter Comedians, it is suggested are more or less a waste of talent, owing to the conditions which make it difficult to put the patter over. The entertainments take place in the canteens and there is inevitably a certain amount of noise which interferes with the success of the patter entertainments. For these reasons it is suggested that these turns should be cut out."³¹ The same idea was proposed by the ROF in Bridgend. The manager there wrote to the Ministry of Supply to suggest that most of the workers at that plant preferred music to any shows or plays, and that if ENSA continued to provide musical fare, the factory would be happy to supply transport and refreshments.³² Simple music concerts suited factory conditions and appealed most to workers, which in turn satisfied the management of the factories, and, up the chain, the ministers in government as well, when they saw the benefits in production capabilities of happy workers.

Some of the concerts that ENSA put on for munitions workers were so large that production was even halted to allow the whole factory to be used as an impromptu theatre with a stage set up and railings erected to contain the audience.³³ With such enthusiasm elicited for these performances, many managers felt that the

³¹ Letter from Area Officer, Midland (Birmingham) to Area Officers, Ministry of Supply, dated July 29, 1941. United Kingdom National Archives AVIA 22/1306

³² Letter from R Edmonds, Royal Ordnance Factory, Bridgend to Mr Percy Thomas, Ministry of Supply, Wales Area, dated July 18, 1941. United Kingdom National Archives AVIA 22/1306

³³ "The Efficiency of ENSA," *Calvacade*, London, September 8, 1941.

break in work and the consequent reduction in output would more than be made up for afterwards as workers returned to their jobs in high spirits. The popularity of ENSA factory concerts was highlighted in July 1941, when Gracie Fields performed at a concert in a large munitions factory in Scotland. "Workmen, perched on the rafters of a Central Scotland factory, had grand seats at a concert today when Gracie Fields entertained the staff at two concerts," wrote the *Evening Citizen*. "The men climbed on to the steel beams forming the ceiling of the huge concert hall, and they had also taken seats on a partition forming the wall of the hall. Every seat in the hall was filled."³⁴

It was fortunate that the *Evening Citizen* chose to attend a concert in the summer of 1941, and especially one with such a star performer as Gracie Fields. In the first year of the factory entertainment scheme, the quality of the shows had been mixed at best. In fact, an ENSA official admitted to the Ministry of Supply that concerts provided by ENSA had been poor. "Our information is that during the first twelve months of the war these entertainments were definitely bad. Last year any factory would cancel or postpone an ENSA show if any other diversion was offered," he wrote. A ROF manager also commented on the poor quality of early ENSA shows, stating that "During the early days of ENSA we had rather a preponderance of the lower grade of artist, in fact some of the items were questionable."³⁵ At least by this time, both men were able to offer some hope that the factory concerts were beginning to succeed. "In recent months, however, factories have shown a desire to honour ENSA dates. It may be assumed, therefore, that the shows have improved and are

³⁴ "Gracie Works Four Shifts," *Evening Citizen*, Glasgow, July 22, 1941. Fields entertained troops and war workers during a thirty-nine day stay in Britain. According to one report, she performed for more than 400,000 people during that time, all for ENSA. "Gracie Leaves for Empire Tour," *Lancashire Evening Gazette*, Blackpool, August 18, 1941.

³⁵ Letter from R Edmonds, Royal Ordnance Factory, Bridgend to Mr Percy Thomas, Ministry of Supply, Wales Area, dated July 18, 1941. United Kingdom National Archives AVIA 22/1306

welcomed by workers,”³⁶ concluded the man from ENSA, while the ROF factory manager noted that “We made representations and of late there has been a much better standard of programme.”³⁷

When the factory-concert scheme had begun in the summer of 1940, Basil Dean said, “The relaxation provided by these entertainments is designed by the Minister [of Labour, Ernest Bevin] to overcome the strain of mental fatigue, and thus to assist in the maintenance of national output.”³⁸ It was clear from the start that music could have an impact on the morale of those working and listening, and it was ENSA that took on the task. Dean also realised that music would be the key element of any ENSA performances for workers. Music provided a far-superior factory entertainment than a play or a comedian because music could function in the background, besides, Dean believed much of the comedy on offer to be little more than smut and had been known to “sack an offending comedian more or less on the spot.”³⁹

Workers did not have to actively listen to or pay attention to music, whereas with plays and comedians, they did. Dean noted that “music will play a very important part,” but emphasised that it had to be the right sort of music—one that encouraged people to work, not just listen.⁴⁰ Dean’s observations were backed up by those reports from the ROFs and regional representatives in the late summer of 1941. Most of the regional representatives echoed the northeast officer who said that “the workpeople would appreciate more music and less slapstick.”⁴¹ Although ENSA was

³⁶ Letter from G Mould, Deputy Regional Information Officer to J D Porteous, Ministry of Supply (Munitions Production Department), dated July 28, 1941. United Kingdom National Archives AVIA 22/1306.

³⁷ Letter from R Edmonds, Royal Ordnance Factory, Bridgend to Mr Percy Thomas, Ministry of Supply, Wales Area, dated July 18, 1941. United Kingdom National Archives AVIA 22/1306

³⁸ “Music to Keep up the Arms Output: ENSA will do the Job,” *Evening Standard*, London, July, 3 1940.

³⁹ Calder, *People’s War*, p. 371.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ Report from Regional Representative, Newcastle, July 17, 1941. United Kingdom National Archives AVIA 22/1306

unable to provide purely music-based entertainments for the factory workers—there were insufficient musicians and singers available—it did strive to do so. Dean saw the importance of music—he leaned that way a year before the reports came in from the ROFs—but he was hindered in providing more musical entertainments by the shortage in available skilled musicians.

With the idea behind the ENSA factory shows being the workers' morale and the production of more goods, and with much of the country involved in such work, it was only natural that the shows drew the attention of the press. Many of the articles in the national and local media focused on how ENSA concerts were helping the factories and the workers. Such articles highlighted the after effects of a visit from ENSA. According to the press, those visits often increased production.⁴² Maintaining output at maximum levels could only be achieved by keeping the men and women happy enough to want to work hard at what were essentially quite boring and repetitive jobs, and ENSA's work helped in that regard.⁴³ As a result of ENSA being introduced to the war work environment, morale went up as did production. Even as early as July 1940, a Royal Air Force repair shop noted that "efficiency had been increased by five per cent since the introduction of light entertainment."⁴⁴ The link, made clear by the media, between ENSA shows and increased productivity meant that by January 1942 ENSA provided entertainment at approximately one thousand factories each week from 120 performing groups.⁴⁵

⁴² "ENSA Find That Nellie Dean is Miss 1940," *Evening Chronicle*, Manchester, December 1940.

⁴³ "Shows for War Workers," *Evening News*, London, July, 3 1940.

⁴⁴ "Shows for War Workers," *Daily Mail*, London, July, 3 1940.

⁴⁵ Some of those thousand performances each week took place in front of as many as six thousand people. But, one thousand factories each week was not enough for a *Glasgow Sunday Mail* reporter. Obviously enamoured with the effectiveness of the factory concert scheme, the reporter called for the scheme to be increased so that every factory in the United Kingdom received such entertainment. The reporter's argument took the same view as most others, that efficiency in the factory was increased and therefore the entertainment should be available to all. In this case, the reporter cited the observations of a factory manager somewhere in Scotland, who noted that after ENSA shows, the production levels increased as did the quality of the work. With each example of support for factory entertainment, ENSA's role in the war effort was more clearly defined. Basil Dean, "ENSA and Its

At the beginning of 1942, ENSA underwent more changes to its structure, with the government decreeing that ENSA was to be the sole supplier of professional entertainment from public funds.⁴⁶ In a move that led to Basil Dean's appointment as director of national service entertainments, the Lord President of the Council John Anderson, in conjunction with the Service Ministers and the Minister of Labour and National Service created a National Service Entertainments Board to "coordinate the provision of entertainment by ENSA for the forces and for munitions workers."⁴⁷ Dean likely received his position as a result of having made the original proposal to Bevin for the National Service Entertainments Board.⁴⁸ This board included four committees; the general committee chaired by the Earl of Lytton and three sub-committees concerned more specifically with three different areas of popular entertainment—orchestras (or music), theatre and film.⁴⁹ The purpose of the board was to coordinate the national service aspect of popular entertainment. The general committee oversaw the draft deferment process and reviewed any suggestions from the sub-committees for deferment of any particular individual. Sir Hugh Allen chaired the Music National Service Sub-Committee, which advised the general committee on deferments from the music industry. The committee's other members included Frederic Austin, F Dambman, Henry Havergal and Dr Frederick Shinn.⁵⁰

The creation of this board helped legitimise the music industry in wartime. Musicians, as a result of the board's formation and its activities, benefited from being employed in work of national importance. One of the board's principal benefits was its role in negating much of the threat of musicians being drafted. The board's

Progress: Entertainment for Fifty Millions, from the Arctic to the Tropics," *The Times*, January 1, 1942, 5; "ENSA Scheme Must be Extended," *Sunday Mail*, Glasgow, December 8, 1940.

⁴⁶ "Mr Basil Dean to be National Director," *The Times*, May 14, 1941, 6.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ Dean, *The Theatre at War*, 546.

⁴⁹ Press release from the Entertainments National Service Committee, March, 6 1942. United Kingdom National Archives, LAB 6/170

⁵⁰ List of committee members sent from Ernest Bevin to Lord Lytton, February, 17 1942. United Kingdom National Archives, LAB 6/170. F Dambman was the representative of the Musicians' Union.

legitimising effect meant that the music industry was now viewed as being necessary to the proper functioning of the military and the country at war. This momentous change in the music industry's wartime role was critical to the influence and position of popular music during World War II. Without such a change, popular music would have remained as a purely cultural aspect of life. With this change, popular music became a part of the military effort as well.

Despite that development, however, the music industry was not classified as essential at any point in the war. Musicians never received complete exemption from the draft, but the industry in general did secure some relief from the inconvenience of the draft. Minister of Labour and National Service Ernest Bevin believed that the music industry was important to the morale and lives of the civilian population, but also wanted the profession to make a full and proper contribution to the war effort outside of providing general entertainment. The statement released by Bevin's ministry providing for the formation of the National Service Entertainments Board clearly stated the dilemma between using men and women of draft age in the services or allowing them to continue in the entertainment profession:

The minister of Labour and National Service has been considering the difficult question of how far artists of various kinds, for example, actors and musicians, together with the technical employees of theatrical and film production firms, should be allowed to continue for in their ordinary employment rather than be called up at once for service with the Armed Forces. His general intention is that these professions also make the maximum contribution to the Armed Forces, as they would wish to do, with the minimum of dislocation to the cultural life of the country and to the provision of entertainment.⁵¹

ENSA relied substantially on live music to provide all this entertainment. The principal premise of ENSA was to take the entertainment to the troops stationed around the world (or to factory workers in the United Kingdom) and to give them a

⁵¹ Press release from the Entertainments National Service Committee, March, 6 1942. United Kingdom National Archives, LAB 6/170

good show that would take their minds away from the war they were fighting.⁵² The shows ranged from the very small (one man and an accordion) at the most remote of barracks, to the grandiose and lavish, such as a big band concert held in front of five or six thousand troops or workers. The smallest and most remote military outposts received what became known as “Ensatiments.” These were usually groups of two to four people on a motor cycle or in a truck. They brought direct and intimate musical entertainment to hard-to-reach men and women. These groups could often perform to “three or four groups of men in one day.”⁵³ Certainly, ENSA attempted to fill the need for entertainment. As the *Daily Sketch* quipped in November 1940, “There are today no ‘lonely soldiers’ in Britain—ENSA has seen to it with entertainment for everybody.”⁵⁴ No matter where troops were stationed, ENSA tried to entertain them.⁵⁵

To provide the best possible entertainment at these far-flung locations ENSA wanted professional musicians to perform as much as possible. Dean was adamant that professional entertainers should be used for two reasons. First, he considered it better to have high-quality professionals playing for the troops than amateurs and, second, there were many professional musicians and entertainers who had been put out of work by the war, who would welcome the employment.⁵⁶ Despite the availability of professionals, the director’s desire and every feasible attempt to ensure it happened ENSA never achieved the goal of only using professional artistes. Recognising that he would never have only professionals, and understanding that instead he needed to defend his organisation’s use of amateur and lower quality

⁵² Dean, *The Theatre at War*, 40.

⁵³ Basil Dean, “ENSA and Its Progress: Entertainment for Fifty Millions, from the Arctic to the Tropics,” *The Times*, January 1, 1942, 5

⁵⁴ “No Lonely Soldiers,” *Daily Sketch*, November 10, 1940.

⁵⁵ *London Evening Standard*, March 28, 1940 and the *London Evening News*, March 28, 1940. These newspapers carried details of ENSA concerts that were being played in these foreign venues and noted that they would be carried in outside broadcasts at later dates. These broadcasts later became an important part of ENSA as it produced shows for public consumption on the radio.

⁵⁶ “Amateurs in ENSA,” *The Times*, October 12, 1940, 8.

professional acts, Dean wrote in February 1940 that, "It [ENSA] has no money. It is a pool of talent, it is a congregation of voluntary services and it embraces every form of entertainment outside of the circus," informing the public and media of the reality rather than the aspiration.⁵⁷

Within less than a year of its formation, ENSA faced a severe difficulty. As a direct result of the draft, volunteering and other forms of war work, millions of people ceased working in their career of choice and joined the war effort. Musicians, just the same as any other group of professionals, formed part of that group leaving their jobs. This quickly led to a shortage of professional musicians.⁵⁸ The result, at least for ENSA, was difficulty in providing entertainment to the men and women of the armed forces. ENSA needed a solution; the shortage was proving too much of a strain on its resources. Fortunately, help was at hand. Hoping to ameliorate the shortage by encouraging those civilian musicians not directly involved with the war effort already, to do their part, ENSA established the Lease-Lend scheme in the spring of 1942. The Lease-Lend scheme allowed entertainers to give six weeks of a year to National Service through ENSA.⁵⁹ The scheme meant that musicians could continue performing in the financially lucrative civilian market but, at the same time, gain exemption from military service by performing for ENSA for just six weeks a year. The scheme began in March 1942, following the autumn of 1941 when the music industry experienced an increase in the call up of musicians.⁶⁰

Basil Dean had proposed to the London Theatres Council in the autumn that entertainers be allowed to offer their services to ENSA in return for deferment from

⁵⁷ Basil Dean's address to the Criterion Restaurant. February 1940. This quote can be found on page four of that transcript.

⁵⁸ "ENSA Faces Crisis in Scotland," *Glasgow Evening News*, March 16, 2010.

⁵⁹ *Musical Opinion*, November 1940.

⁶⁰ Sir John Forster's Report on the Man and Woman Power in the Entertainment Industry, December 17, 1943.

the armed services.⁶¹ It was beneficial, to both Dean and the music industry, because it enabled ENSA to employ more performers, while those same performers would remain in the civilian popular entertainment scene. By December 1942, ENSA had “more than 2,300 artists at its disposal,” but it still required another 1,500 just to meet the demand for “shows of progressively improving quality.”⁶² It appeared that Lease-Lend offered the solution. Unfortunately, the scheme was open to abuse. Once performers had secured their immunity from National Service, earnings from their civilian entertainment gave them less incentive to perform for ENSA again that year. Compared to civilian musicians’ wages, the ten pounds per week ENSA paid for musicians’ services, regardless of their fame or status in the entertainment world, seemed paltry. However, although not a princely sum it was still payment for what was essentially volunteering. The combination of low payments and the six-week minimum actually exacerbated the shortage of musicians available to ENSA. Once musicians had performed their minimum six-week tour, the low wages did not offer a sufficient incentive to encourage musicians and bands to take more time out of their regular schedules, from which they earned more money. Thus, ENSA gained musicians for the six-week minimum, but often for no longer. A year after its inception, the Lease-Lend scheme still suffered from some musicians abusing the system. Quite why Dean believed that the majority of musicians would provide more than the minimum of six weeks in return for draft deferment is not clear; there seemed little incentive to do so.⁶³

Evans quickly wrote to the director general of manpower to pass on this information and offer reasons and potential solutions to this problem. He noted that the manpower department had taken a strong interest in the provision of entertainment

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² “Entertainment for the Forces: New ENSA Plans,” *The Times*, December 23, 1942.

⁶³ Letter to Myrddin Evans from Lord Terrington, April 16, 1943. United Kingdom National Archives, LAB 8/778.

for the troops, but admitted that the Lease-Lend scheme had been somewhat neglected and that the department was not fully aware of how many musicians and entertainers were actually fulfilling their six-week commitment to ENSA.⁶⁴ “It is clear that the present arrangements,” wrote Evans, “which depend for their fulfilment largely upon goodwill and upon the readiness of managements and individual artistes to make sacrifices, give plenty of opportunities for misunderstandings disputes and the avoidance of what are at least moral obligations.” He added that, “There is much to be said, therefore, for your suggestion for an enquiry by an independent person in order to determine how the existing arrangements are working and to suggest improvements designed to secure the objects we have in mind.”⁶⁵ Clearly, Dean’s concerns were taken seriously.

Musicians’ participation was particularly important because both the government and ENSA had quickly appreciated how important it was to troop morale. Dean singled out the role of popular music within the organisation as the key element of the ENSA programme.⁶⁶ His comments were to be expected because of his position as director, but he was not the only member of ENSA who championed music’s cause. Dr H Bromley Derry, an ENSA committee member, added to Dean’s comments noting that “it would be true to say that melody plus rhythm will always conquer apathy or weariness.”⁶⁷ “When our effort began it was soon realised that amusement was an essential part of a soldier’s make-up, so ENSA came into being for the benefit of the troops and the banishment of staleness,” Derry continued.⁶⁸ Writing from his position within ENSA, Derry naturally defended and promoted the organisation. His perception of ENSA’s role and worth was, most likely, clouded

⁶⁴ Note to Director General, Manpower from Myrddin Evans, April 21, 1943. United Kingdom National Archives, LAB 8/778.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶ “Famous Players for Normandy: Entertainments and Good Music,” *The Times*, July 28, 1944, 6.

⁶⁷ “Value of Music in War Time,” *Yorkshire Evening Press*, York, December 9, 1940.

⁶⁸ “Value of Music in War Time,” *Yorkshire Evening Press*, York, December 9, 1940.

with a hint of bias, but his general points were based on the accounts that ENSA received about the service it provided.

An article in a Brighton newspaper summed up the role of music in ENSA perfectly when it noted that Jack Buchanon (the band leader) had said that “people these days, very naturally, like to be taken out of themselves by gay, light-hearted entertainment, and the boys in uniform—and the girls in uniform too, incidentally—seemed to like what we tried to do for them.”⁶⁹ By using music as the main element of their programme, ENSA made sure that their work fit what the majority of its audiences wanted. At the same time, music’s positive effect on listeners increased the potency and effectiveness of what ENSA offered.

During the first two years of the war comments such as “boredom is the worst enemy of an army’s morale,”⁷⁰ “Boredom is, perhaps, the deadlier enemy of morale, and boredom threatens some hundreds of thousands of our Servicemen this winter,”⁷¹ and “entertainment is not perhaps the troops’ greatest need, but it is the one they feel most clearly,” were commonly written or made.⁷² There was a clearly defined fear that low morale levels and boredom would contribute to a fighting force that was not able to function at its highest level. These concerns emanated, partly, from the fact that many British troops remained away from the main fronts once the BEF had retreated back to England in June 1940. Leading psychologists of the time, the government and the military, all noted that the men and women in uniform needed to have as high a level of morale as possible, in order to keep them fighting as intensively as needed, and to combat boredom or inactivity when not fighting.

ENSA serviced each of its three main communities—troops, war workers and civilians—at different times during the war, and affected each audience’s morale in

⁶⁹ “Imperial Theatre—Opening Next Month,” *Evening Argus*, Brighton, March 16, 1940. Jack Buchanon was a leading luminary of the British dance band scene.

⁷⁰ “Army Council Declares War on Boredom,” *To-Day’s Cinema*, London, July 25, 1941.

⁷¹ “Attack on Boredom,” *Newcastle Journal*, Newcastle-on-Tyne, November 26, 1940.

⁷² “Troops in Winter,” *Manchester Guardian*, Manchester, November 8, 1940.

different ways. One of the manners in which ENSA brought entertainment to the troops was through big concerts. A *Melody Maker* writer witnessed one such show, noting, "I enjoyed myself no end, but what was far more important, I also had the pleasure of seeing over a thousand seamen revelling at almost three hours of music and comedy, which I am certain they appreciated to the last note."⁷³ Dances, small bands and radio shows, such as *Drury Lane Calling* and *ENSA Half Hour* (both of which were available to the general public on the BBC Forces Programme), also enlivened the soldiers' evenings and leisure time. Popular music of all kinds, even swing—which in Britain was considered *avant-garde* at the time—found favour with the men in the armed forces.⁷⁴ In fact, most reports indicated that soldiers favoured dance music of all forms, including such exalted big bands as those of Harry Roy, Billy Cotton, Joe Loss and Ivy Benson—all of whom served with ENSA.⁷⁵

The effect of ENSA shows on troop morale became extremely important during the winters of 1940 and 1941. The British Army having withdrawn from mainland Europe was stuck in England, training and waiting for the start of an offensive. Many of the troops were stationed in remote areas of Britain, away from major centres of nightlife and entertainment. These troops often had no entertainment other than that offered by ENSA. Occasionally, one or two men might play the piano (if one was available), but otherwise they were limited to the local pub or a village hall. As a result of this isolation many soldiers attended shows given by the small combos that ENSA sent around. Such shows had a significant impact on the morale of the troops, even if it was only a "mere half-dozen on a lonely gun site [or] a handful

⁷³ "How the bands Entertain the Forces: Chris Hayes Accompanies Harry Roy on a Concert for the Navy," *Melody Maker*, March 9, 1940.

⁷⁴ "Comment," *Melody Maker*, December 28, 1940; "Troops Want Glamour Girls," *Reynolds News*, December 29, 1940; "Shows the Forces Favour," *Manchester Evening News*, August 6, 1941.

⁷⁵ "Brand's Essence," *Melody Maker*, June 20, 1942, 4. Benson and her band started a six week tour with ENSA which met with success in the summer of 1942.

of men in a Nissen hut.”⁷⁶ The impact of an ENSA party arriving at a remote station must have done wonders for the spirits of the men stationed there.⁷⁷ A damp evening manning an anti-aircraft gun somewhere on the south coast was not an experience to be cherished, and so the small music combos that arrived brought massive cheer to these men.

An example of the small bands that served such men, Art Gregory and his band worked for ENSA for almost two years, and spent much of that time in “the wilds of Scotland and the Orkneys . . . keenly providing one of the most welcome of ENSA’s offerings.”⁷⁸ Their performance bolstered the men’s spirits and made the job that little bit easier. This was not an effort to alter or influence the men’s physical performance. ENSA’s effect was not seen, but the improvement in morale had a mental effect that made doing their job far more pleasurable. The reasoning being that a contented soldier would eventually perform better physically.

By late 1940, discussions surrounding ENSA were concerned with the provision of entertainment for civilians in bomb shelters in London. The Musicians’ Union had begun to actively research how to best provide such a service, and ENSA responded quickly.⁷⁹ The bombings of the capital city had become intense by this point and many Londoners had spent night after night in the Underground stations. The crowded platforms and the depressing idea of being stuck underground waiting out the approaching planes or the coming of another dawn, was not a scene to inspire people and to bring joy to lives.⁸⁰ The resounding notes of live music, however, were.

⁷⁶ Basil Dean, “ENSA and Its Progress: Entertainment for Fifty Millions, from the Arctic to the Tropics,” *The Times*, January 1, 1942, 5.

⁷⁷ “Welfare in Winter,” *The Times*, October 6, 1941.

⁷⁸ “Brand’s Essence,” *Melody Maker*, June 6, 1942, 4.

⁷⁹ “Concerts in Bomb-Proof Shelters,” *The Times*, October 9, 1940, 7.

⁸⁰ For more information on the Blitz, see for example, Margaret Gaskin, *Blitz: The Story of December 29, 1940* (London: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2006), Gavin Mortimer, *The Longest Night: Voices from the London Blitz* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 2005), and Juliet Gardiner, *The Blitz: The British Under Attack* (UK General Books, 2010).

Tens of thousands of people spent the nights in these shelters, and occupying their time while down there was one of the hardest tasks they had; boredom the constant enemy.⁸¹ On many occasions the people that sheltered in the Underground stations were there for longer than the time required for sleep, as bombing raids did not just occur neatly between the hours of approximately midnight and five o'clock in the morning. The London Underground became a social meeting place. One man recalled how because more and more people used the shelters, "the Blitz brought everyone together."⁸² With so many people confined for so long entertainment gained importance. "I'd play the piano," recalled another man who had lived in London during the Blitz, "anything to take people's minds off the bombings."⁸³ Another gentleman recalled the importance of entertainment during the Blitz, and how many people sang together during the bombings.⁸⁴

The government wished to avoid a depressed public because it believed such a state of mind would more likely succumb to defeatist talk and be more easily persuaded by enemy propaganda. Consequently, a public with a happier outlook as a result of better conditions during bombing would be a much harder foe and have better overall morale levels. Entertainment in the shelters added to the cramped conditions experienced in such places because a full concert took up a large portion of the station or "underworld night club," as the *Daily Mail* called them.⁸⁵ However, the entertainment did create a much livelier atmosphere and helped people forget the war. People would go to the shelters in order to enjoy the concerts and shows when perhaps

⁸¹ At least 43,000 civilians were killed in Blitz bombing attacks in the United Kingdom between September 1940 and May 1941. "70 Years On, Memoirs of the Blitz are as Fresh as Ever," BBC website, www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-11207371, as accessed October 2010.

⁸² *Ibid.*

⁸³ "Tales from the blitz," BBC Website, www.bbc.co.uk/local/london/hi/people_and_places/history/newsid_8941000/8941201.shtm, as accessed October 2010.

⁸⁴ Ted Cook, "The Blitz and Air Raids in Coventry," BBC Website, WW2 People's War, article A3927594, April 21, 2005, www.bbc.co.uk/ww2peopleswar/stories/94/a3927594.shtml, as accessed October 2010.

⁸⁵ "Formby Stars in Shelter," *The Daily Mail*, November 28, 1940.

they would have otherwise stayed in their own homes and chanced the falling bombs. The *Manchester Guardian* noted that, "Many of the larger shelters were full, because parties and concerts had been arranged. One in Soho had an excellent cabaret, another in Covent Garden had a swing band."⁸⁶ *The Times* Educational Supplement looked upon the air raid shelter shows as a possible educational benefit of the war, but to most it was a pleasant way to spend an otherwise unpleasant evening. Londoners had become accustomed to the new style of night life, but with the help of ENSA that night life became music filled and the concerts popular.⁸⁷ For concerts from stars, such as Geraldo and George Formby, "[the public] crowded the platform, [and] sat on the railway track. Nowhere in the many subterranean passages could a shelterer be seen. They left their blankets and vacuum flasks and crowded into the underground theatre."⁸⁸ This was one of ENSA's greatest contributions to the war effort. As the average person in London enjoyed these shows and recuperated from the strains of the war to the sounds of light dance music, ENSA boosted the morale of the nation—or at least those aware of ENSA and what it provided.

Despite the great success of ENSA and the many plaudits it drew, ENSA encountered many problems and criticisms during the course of the war. In particular, the quality of the performances often met with heavy criticism. Many people tweaked the acronym, and "Every Night Something Awful" often took the place of the official title of the organisation. In addition, the type of music that ENSA played and the frequent lack of musicians available both contributed to negativity aimed at the organisation. As early as November 1940, it was even claimed that ENSA had

⁸⁶ Basil Dean, "ENSA and Its Progress: Entertainment for Fifty Millions, from the Arctic to the Tropics," *The Times*, January 1, 1942, 5.

⁸⁷ "News of the Week: Education in Air Raid Shelters," *The Times* Educational Supplement, London, December 14, 1940.

⁸⁸ "Formby Stars—In Shelter," *The Daily Mail*, London, November 28, 1940.

“outlived its usefulness,” although this was proven to be an inaccurate and mistimed accusation, as ENSA survived and thrived for many years to follow.⁸⁹

Trouble within the hierarchy further stymied ENSA’s ability to provide the best service possible. Towards the end of the war, a number of high profile resignations from ENSA drew attention to the perception that Basil Dean acted autocratically. Former Labour MP Sir Herbert Dunnico, even branded Dean’s leadership a dictatorship.⁹⁰ These beliefs mostly came from within the organisation, and charged that Dean was a law unto himself and operated without control. A Cabinet report described him as “not popular” with many of the ENSA officers.⁹¹ At an even higher level, Winston Churchill had heard “the greatest complaints about Mr Basil Dean” and he had “no doubt much better arrangements could be made.”⁹² Dean’s hunger for power and control within ENSA had been noted by the government for some time and in order to try and combat this, first, Lord May was made chairman of the Entertainments Board, and then in late 1943 Sir Edward Ellington replaced May with the new title of Controller of NAAFI Entertainments.⁹³ Dean was left in his position as Director of NAAFI Entertainments, but the intention of the changes was to quell some of Dean’s more forceful attempts to control ENSA and troop entertainment completely.

The music played at ENSA shows received much criticism. The attacks ranged from dismay at the “low-brow” nature of the music to those that believed that ENSA had misjudged what the troops wanted to hear. Much of the debate centred on

⁸⁹ *Musical Opinion*, November, 1940.

⁹⁰ “Criticism of ENSA,” *The Times*, September 8, 1945, 2. Sir Herbert Dunnico was a Labour Member of Parliament for Consett from 1922–1931.

⁹¹ United Kingdom National Archives, File CAB 124/1039, “Inter Departmental Entertainments Board: Entertainment for the Troops: report of Entertainment Board, Music Division,” January 11, 1944.

⁹² United Kingdom National Archives, File CAB 124/1039, “Inter Departmental Entertainments Board: Entertainment for the Troops: report of Entertainment Board.” Prime Minister’s personal minutes, memorandum to the Lord President of the Council, January 21, 1944.

⁹³ United Kingdom National Archives, File CAB 124/1039, “Inter Departmental Entertainments Board: Entertainment for the Troops: report of Entertainment Board.” Memorandum dated January 13, 1944.

the conflicting positions of giving the troops what some believed they should be listening to, or giving them what others thought they wanted to hear. ENSA, typically, adopted a middle-of-the-road-approach. It did not want to patronise the men with selections that the governing body of ENSA thought was best for them to hear in order to broaden their musical horizons, instead of responding to the actual wishes of the men.⁹⁴ This approach suffered from trying to appease all views, but at the same time because they were performing to such a broad audience, there had to be a compromise. ENSA chose the popular styles of music because, rightly so, it believed that these would have the most appeal and therefore be most successful.⁹⁵ Classical music and “hot” jazz had followings in both the Forces and the civilian audiences, but for the majority of those attending ENSA shows, a selection of the popular songs of the day and dance numbers was exactly what was called for.⁹⁶

Although ENSA received these criticisms, its sheer existence paid tribute to the importance of music to the British war effort. The massive mobilisation of the armed forces, the addition of thousands of civilians to war work positions and the subsequent need to entertain them all was the sole reason that ENSA existed. Without the men and women who fought and worked towards winning the war, ENSA would not have had a mandate. The clubs and gigs that existed prior to the war would have continued providing their services and the civilian population would have found its entertainment much as it used to do. But the war provided an increased and steady stream of audience members. By June 1945, “some one million and twenty thousand separate performances [had] been given at home and overseas up to VE-Day. Over

⁹⁴ “Good Music,” *Manchester Guardian*, November 1, 1940.

⁹⁵ “Pat Brand Accompanies Art Gregory on Concerts for the Troops,” *Melody Maker*, March 9, 1940; “Fine Reception for Well-Known Band,” *Greenock Telegraph*, October 28, 1940.

⁹⁶ Ted Cook, “The Blitz and Air Raids in Coventry,” BBC Website, WW2 People’s War.

300,000,000 persons, soldiers and their friends, factory workers, etc., [had] attended these performances at home and in the BLA.”⁹⁷

ENSA’s concerts provided the product for people’s inspiration in a war-beleaguered society. Since the industrial era began there has always been some form of popular culture that has provided the right messages and attitudes for a dispirited society. Popular-culture critic Theodor Adorno wrote that popular art furnishes a work ethic through the conversion of an ambiguous entity such as music into a product.⁹⁸ This is what ENSA did in the World War II with music. By giving the people the “correct” messages (those that they both needed and wanted to hear) and encouraging a work ethic towards winning the war through a betterment of the morale of those who saw the shows, ENSA was fulfilling the role of the popular culture that Adorno had described. Joe Loss and his band, lauded by the media as an example of the worth of ENSA and popular music as part of the war effort, performed that product-furnishing role, under the auspices of ENSA. The *Midland Daily Tribune* wrote that:

Entertaining the public is a service to the nation even in normal times. At the present time, keeping the public entertained is to preserve a nation’s morale, and is, therefore, the best form of national service for band leaders and their musicians. . . . One brigadier-general remarked that they were as valuable as guns and ammunition to the troops and as necessary.⁹⁹

For something to be considered essential it must in some capacity be needed above all else, or at the very least, be desired by some faction of the community in question in a strong manner. Entertainment was certainly viewed that way by the troops. The media drew the public’s attention to that need and concurred with the sentiment.

Many millions of people, both military and civilian were entertained by ENSA, and the organisation manifested itself as an essential part of the war effort. The war was not directly changed in its outcome through the actions of ENSA—after

⁹⁷ Press Conference given by Basil Dean on 12th June, 1945.

⁹⁸ Theodor Adorno, *The Culture Industry*, (London: Routledge, 1991),53.

⁹⁹ “Joe Loss and his Band,” *Midland Daily Tribune*, Nuneaton, June 13, 1940.

all, ENSA did not fire the guns, drive the tanks or make the weapons—but what was for certain, is that ENSA was able to influence the morale of those who men and women who did, so that the conduct of the war was affected by popular music and musicians under the auspices of ENSA.

The Overseas Recorded Broadcast Services

Although ENSA's shows entertained millions of men and women, the opportunities were still limited by time, travel, number of musicians and the cost of all the above. In order to overcome the difficulties inherent in providing such entertainment ENSA developed a recorded music and broadcasting programme. This programme officially started in September 1943 as the Overseas Recorded Broadcast Services (ORBS). A special meeting of the Service Committee for the Welfare of the Forces, held September 10, 1943, laid out the activities and duties of ORBS.¹⁰⁰ The committee ensured that ENSA remained in charge of the operations of its broadcasting efforts.¹⁰¹

Basil Dean appointed Stephen Williams as programme director of ORBS.¹⁰² Williams had been the broadcasting manager for ENSA until that point, focusing on producing radio shows for broadcast by the BBC. His appointment to direct ORBS was a natural transition. ORBS grew out of the regular ENSA broadcasting programme that Williams continued to run out of Drury Lane. ENSA's radio shows often could not be picked up by remotely stationed and overseas troops. In order to facilitate the recording of the ORBS discs, Williams worked with Eric Maschwitz at HMV Records. Despite the excellent pairing—both with considerable music industry

¹⁰⁰ In some ways, ORBS can be considered the equivalent of the V-Discs programme that existed in the United States. The main difference between the two being that V-Discs focused more exclusively on dance music in the recordings than ORBS did.

¹⁰¹ United Kingdom National Archives, File T 161/1163—Recording of Entertainment for the Forces Overseas.

¹⁰² Letter from JJ Mulligan to Basil Dean, September 18, 1943. United Kingdom National Archives, File T 161/1163—Recording of Entertainment for the Forces Overseas.

knowledge—difficulties arose almost immediately due to a lack of vinyl and shellac, which were used to manufacture the records. Instead, the records had to be made out of acetate covered discs.¹⁰³

Dean described the beginnings of ORBS in December 1943. His recollections do not agree completely with the overall picture, but it is worth quoting his note on the “Origin and first development” of ORBS:

This service began originally in 1941 when ENSA broadcasts by the BBC were recorded and sent to the Middle East as a means of increasing entertainment for the troops at a time when the transport of living artists was severely restricted. Later the War Office decided to interest itself in the scheme and in conjunction with the other Service Departments, a considerable enlargement of the service was organised. As a part of the new arrangements ENSA undertook the responsibility for the actual recording (either directly or through HMV) and for the dispatch of the actual records to the various officers overseas for distribution to radio stations. The recording of the regular ENSA features over the BBC was continued; and it was decided that the total amount of the service in terms of programmes should be roughly divided into three parts: as to the Services, one third, the BBC features one third and the usual ENSA broadcasts one third.¹⁰⁴

The ORBS records were reproductions of the radio broadcasts that ENSA already made for the BBC. The idea was that the troops would hear the same things as that which were broadcast on the radio, even when they could not pick up a strong radio signal. The records would be the same as what soldiers’ families listened to at home, with the additional hope being that this would forge a positive feeling of connectedness to home. The records, under their new name, were still produced and distributed by ENSA as they were entertainment for the troops and as such were in the realm of ENSA’s mandate.¹⁰⁵

As the ORBS programme succeeded it rapidly required more material than could be gained from just the few ENSA shows that were broadcast each week on the BBC. ENSA produced more shows, although some came directly from the three main

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Dean, *The Theatre at War*

¹⁰⁵ Letter from J J Mulligan to Basil Dean, September 18, 1943. United Kingdom National Archives, File T 161/1163—Recording of Entertainment for the Forces Overseas.

branches of the forces, and others still, were transcribed directly from BBC broadcasts. Williams noted however, that the material was almost exclusively British based. ENSA believed that while there was a large amount of American material available, sufficient American music was being played on the radio already, and so the ORBS records should offer something different, something that the troops were less likely to hear on general radio broadcasts, and that the records should comprise solely of British performers and performances.¹⁰⁶ The records produced by ORBS were the property of the government and as such were never meant for commercial purposes. Government ownership gave producers more freedom and choice over who they could have performing on the records. That freedom came from the nullification of civilian contracts, because in essence the government, and not the record companies, employed the musicians to make the records. This paved the way for easier collaboration between artists who may otherwise not have recorded together as they were contracted to different record companies, just as occurred in the United States with V-Discs. With all this cooperation, more than twenty thousand ORBS records were made for the troops.¹⁰⁷

Despite all this success, Dean believed that he could offer suggestions to improve ORBS. Time and again, Dean wrote proposals to streamline the running of ORBS and place it more under control of ENSA. His requests met with complete failure on almost every occasion, with the Services Committee for the Welfare of the Forces dictating the organisation of ORBS more effectively than Dean did.¹⁰⁸

While not on the scale of the V-Discs programme in the United States, ORBS

¹⁰⁶ Stephen Williams, British civilian broadcaster with Radio Luxembourg, ENSA and BBC in Luxembourg and GB 1922–1975, broadcasting director of ENSA 1940–1944. 8741/07/reel 4, Imperial War Museum.

¹⁰⁷ Steven Seidenberg, Maurice Sellar & Lou Jones, *You Must Remember This: Songs at the Heart of the War* (London: Boxtree Ltd., 1995), 115.

¹⁰⁸ Memorandum from Basil Dean to Services Committee for the Welfare of the Forces, December 30, 1943; Reply from Services Committee for the Welfare of the Forces to Basil Dean, n.d. United Kingdom National Archives, File T 161/1163—Recording of Entertainment for the Forces Overseas.

did fill a need in the provision of music to the British troops during World War II. As a part of ENSA, ORBS succeeded in making popular music even more widely available due to the records' mobility and portability. The success of the operation added another aspect to ENSA's overall efforts in World War II and the ORBS records should be viewed as an almost unmitigated positive for their parent organisation.

The BBC and Popular Music

Radio was important to popular music, and in the United Kingdom, the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) formed the major aspect of that medium throughout the war for the vast majority of the civilian and military population. The role of radio in spreading the sound of the music to almost everyone was paramount in the success of popular music both commercially and in terms of its effect on the war. Without the audience that radio provided, popular music would have had its effect and role diminished. The BBC had—and believed it had—a moral responsibility to the nation to help with the war effort. Whether this was a deeply held, ingrained belief in the corporation or a pragmatic decision encouraged by the war look is not obvious, but as the controller of radio output in the United Kingdom, the BBC held this position whether it wanted it or not. The close ties of the BBC to the British Government only heightened this sense of obligation, but the BBC attempted to uphold the responsibility admirably, even if it had no other choice. However, the programming that the corporation produced during the war was, in general, aimed at keeping the nation moving towards winning the war and thus was wholly compatible with the interests of the government as well.

With the BBC in the position of being the moral compass and the morale builder of the nation, there were internal discussions debating the correct nature of

programming. Many within the corporation believed that the BBC should educate the listening public. This view held that populist programming, such as dance music shows, were not improving the public, despite the fact that by the end of the war, one of the biggest complaints about the BBC was that the programming was too highbrow.¹⁰⁹ There was opposition to such ideas though, because there were so many listeners to the BBC and a great many demanded the provision of popular entertainment. Without being able to determine the complete and overall direction of BBC programming those directors who were against populist programming could not influence every programme and so shows featuring the big dance bands for example, were still included in the schedules. The BBC's Director of Variety, John Watt, championed the cause of dance music many times, but often found resistance towards such programming because of the desire within the BBC to make its programming as high-brow as possible.

When the BBC used dance bands in live broadcasts, the bands had to agree not to change their play list or spoken pieces from the agreed-upon format once they were on air. Heavy-handedness infiltrated even the rather laid-back dance-band programmes as producers of the shows were warned to cut off any band immediately that did not adhere to these regulations.¹¹⁰ The warning to producers included bands deviating from any written script that they might be using, which should have been submitted at least forty-eight hours in advance of the broadcast, so that it could be checked for suitability. Interestingly, the Outside Broadcast Executive G Thomas appeared to take a much more relaxed view of dance bands and was very much in favour of using them as much as possible in the programme schedule. In February 1940, only a few months before Watt issued the "stick-to-the-script" edict, the Thomas had warned that it would be best to cultivate relationships with the dance

¹⁰⁹ Cantril and Strunk, *Public Opinion*, p. 705.

¹¹⁰ BBC WAC, Box R27/71/3, Dance Band Programmes Music—General, Dance Bands, 1938–1941—File III, Memorandum from Director of Variety to all producers, June 20, 1940.

bands as they were popular with the listeners and he believed that they would be needed in future broadcasting.¹¹¹

At the end of 1938, more than two thirds of people questioned had stated a preference for dance music. In the build up to war, the BBC had taken heed of that data and included dance music in its wartime scheduling.¹¹² Dance music became arguably the most important programme content for the BBC at the start of the war as the corporation turned to broadcasting solely music for the initial few days of the war. The BBC hoped that by continuing broadcasting, even in the predicted uncertainty of the start of war, they would be able to keep a constant and reassuring presence on air. However, it has never been possible to please everyone and considering that there were only two radio stations (BBC Home, immediately, and BBC Forces from January 1940) readily available until the Americans introduced their AFN to England, there were always going to be those who disliked BBC programming. On one occasion an interviewee even remarked that dance music was unacceptable during air raids and that religious or classical music should be played instead.¹¹³ Quite why this man had decided that dance music was unacceptable, he kept to himself, or, at least the interviewer withheld that information. One can only suggest that he found lively dance music disagreeable when his life was in peril. This highlighted the difficulties that the BBC had, because at any given time, relatively few people were in the midst of a bombing raid, and in the end, the majority must necessarily determine the programme schedule for the minority.

How to use dance bands and dance music troubled the BBC throughout the war. Dance music was inherently different from the other entertainment that the BBC

¹¹¹ BBC WAC, Box R27/71/3, Music—General, Dance Bands, 1938–1941—File III, Letter from Outside Broadcast Executive to Director, *Variety*, Feb 1, 1940.

¹¹² BBC WAC, File R9/9/3 Audience Research—Special Reports 3, Sound and General, 1939. Statistics taken from a listener research poll of 1,257 people between September 1938 and January 1939.

¹¹³ BBC WAC, R9/9/4, Audience Research—Special Reports 4—Sound and General, 1940. The comment referred to was given by an ARP Control Officer who stated that people said “You don’t want this either during or after bombing” in regards to modern dance music.

provided primarily because it was not as easy to determine its educational value to the audience. Dance music was not considered high-art in the way that a piece of classical music or a concert was and it was not classifiable as the light music that had dominated the air waves for many years previously. Dance music was the popular music of the time for the young people of the United Kingdom and so the BBC placed it on its programming schedule, but how to accommodate it properly was more taxing. The decision was whether to embrace it fully or to hold it a respectable distance; the ugly duckling of the music world as far as parts of the BBC were concerned.

On occasion, the BBC found it difficult to entice name bands to appear on the radio. The BBC was unable to match the high payments that bands could get from playing live engagements in a music hall and could only offer publicity in place of financial equality. BBC internal correspondence pointed to this problem.¹¹⁴ BBC pay for dance bands was limited to about ten pounds per week per musician. This amount was actually still a very good rate of pay, but it paled in comparison to what a big name band could make in a music hall, where there were instances of bands receiving in excess of two thousand pounds for an engagement.

Even the bands contracted to the BBC as a “house band” did not always show up for programme commitments, because they were offered more money elsewhere. Such an event occurred in September 1940, when Geraldo’s band was the central BBC dance band, but took an engagement at the Hammersmith Palais de Dance because it paid considerably more than the BBC could offer.¹¹⁵ Director of Variety Watt argued that this was not an unusual occurrence as it was hard for the BBC to compete with the dance halls for the services of the big bands.¹¹⁶ Despite the internal struggles over

¹¹⁴ BBC WAC, R27/71/3, Music—General, Dance Bands, 1938–1941—File III, Internal memorandum, from Variety Booking Manager to Programme Contracts Executive, August 28, 1940.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁶ BBC WAC, R27/71/3, Music—General, Dance Bands, 1938–1941—File III, Internal memorandum from Variety Booking Manager to Programme Contracts Executive, August 20, 1940 regarding dance bands of the week.

how best to utilise dance music, the British public was largely appreciative of the BBC's efforts to entertain, as a survey in September 1943, indicated that sixty percent of people were satisfied with the BBC's programming.¹¹⁷

This thesis shall not delve deep into the role of the BBC in wartime Britain. Such a topic has been covered in far greater detail in other works. However, this brief glimpse into the mindset of certain aspects of the BBC is provided in order to ascertain the place that popular music held within the vast corporation. That the BBC was at all concerned with dance music is indicative of the place that such music held for wartime Britons. While there was a considerable internal argument concerning the use of music by the BBC, dance music became, and remained, an integral part of the corporation's programming throughout the war years. Much of the popular music played on the BBC, by house bands, on records and through live performances was American, either in origin or in inspiration, hence the link to this thesis. Regardless of BBC employees' bickering over the nature of that music and of its relative "worth" to the British public, American-influenced popular music formed a large part of the Forces Programme throughout the war.

Music While You Work

The clamour for music that had led to radio dominating home entertainment—sets being found in homes across the United Kingdom—meant that radio shows that used popular music to help define public attitude towards the war were in the ascendancy. While shows such as *Your Hit Parade* in the United States relied solely on the fascination of the general public with popular music, specialised "war and music" shows combined the fervour for jazz and the wartime situation. The radio shows that managed to incorporate the popular music scene, the work place and the

¹¹⁷ Cantril and Strunk, *Public Opinion*, p. 718.

military—or war in general—were especially important to the effect of popular music upon World War II. Examples of such radio shows in the United Kingdom were *Naval Occasion*, *Break For Music*, *Music While You Work*, and *ENSA Calling*. The specific function of these programs was to allow music and entertainment that was believed to be most suitable for the key audiences of servicemen and munitions workers to be made available in the specialised environment of these radio shows.

When the BBC began the *Music While You Work* programme in 1940, the corporation argued that it was important because it emphasised the drive towards production in the factories and pleased the workers involved in the war effort. The BBC designed such programmes both to facilitate the progress of the war and to appeal to the element of its audience that was employed in that effort. However, these radio programmes were not only available to the men and women of the services. Anyone with a radio could pick up a lot of these shows. In the instances where the respective armed forces produced shows purely for the benefit of the troops, they were rarely broadcast over the airwaves. Those shows were usually recorded on to disc and sent to the troops to be played on a gramophone.

By early 1940, the BBC had realised that it had a responsibility to produce programming to help the war effort. In response to this, the *Music While You Work* programme was introduced in June 1940 with the very first broadcast, a series of pieces played by Dudley Beavan on the BBC Theatre Organ, played on June 23, 1940.¹¹⁸ In an effort to increase productivity in the factories around the country, the experiment was set up to see how music affected this important aspect of the war. The BBC set out specific aims for the programmes. In an internal memo they were outlined as: “A. That it will emphasise the drive towards production. B. That it will

¹¹⁸ <http://www.whirligig-tv.co.uk/radio/myyw.htm> as accessed November 8, 2004. Sian Nicholas' *Echo of War: Home Front Propaganda and the Wartime BBC, 1939–45* examined *Music While You Work* in some detail. Nicholas called the programme the most important of all wartime radio shows produced by the BBC. While Nicholas provided an excellent description of *Music While You Work* and its history, she did not analyse its role in wartime music nor its impact on those listening in as much detail.

please workers involved in the war effort. C. That it will give character to two items in daytime listening. D. That it will relieve the tedium of work in such factories and shops as have receiving apparatus and loudspeakers (eight hundred at present time).”¹¹⁹ With these goals in mind, the programme was given time to develop, and within a year it had become a permanent spot twice a day on the schedule as one of the most popular programmes offered on the home front network.¹²⁰ A far larger audience than simply munitions workers enjoyed the programme. Whilst munitions workers were entertained and as a product of that enjoyment improved their productivity, there were many people who listened at home who were not engaged in war work, but for whom, the broadcast of well known bands playing light and popular music was most welcome.¹²¹ Six programmes in June, August and October of 1940 averaged ten percent of the audience, demonstrating consistently large audiences and a small sample from four years later shows evidence that the programme still commanded similar audience levels.¹²²

One such family that enjoyed *Music While You Work* outside of the factory environment was that of Stanley Jones.¹²³ As a teenager, he lived behind Ushers Bottling Stores, a beer bottle factory in Trowbridge. He recalled not only listening to *Music While You Work* on the wireless in his mother’s kitchen and enjoying the music played in that half hour, but on many days being able to listen to it coming across the loudspeakers in the factory behind his house. He wrote that “it was certainly a noisy place, but above the din, *Music While You Work* could always be heard—very loud

¹¹⁹ BBC WAC, Box R27/251/1—1941.

¹²⁰ The programme was broadcast at 12.30pm every day and again on the late shift.

¹²¹ See, for example, Jean Allen, “Wartime Down the LanePart 1,” BBC Website, WW2 People’s War, article A4492587, July 19, 2005, www.bbc.co.uk/ww2peopleswar/stories/57/a4492857.shtml, as accessed October 2010.

¹²² BBC WAC, Box R9/11/1–3, Audience Research, Listening Barometers 1–3.

¹²³ <http://www.bbc.co.uk/dna/ww2/A2043262>, as posted by Stanley H Jones and accessed January 13, 2005.

and clear—and the workers (nearly all ladies), would be singing along.”¹²⁴ In fact, on most days the loudspeakers in the factory in question could be relied upon to provide musical accompaniment to whatever activity in which they might be engaged.

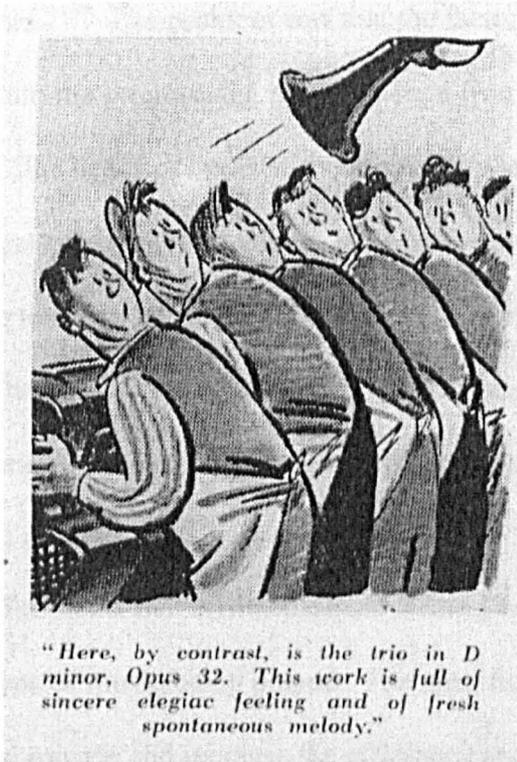
It was not an easy passage for the BBC to reach this plateau of programming success. As was typical of the BBC at the time, the controllers of the programmes dictated what was played over the air. The reasoning behind this was that the BBC thought it knew best. Early *Music While You Work* programmes suffered from many ailments, not the least being that the programme directors were being told to play music that was not suitable to the slot. Early BBC research showed that war workers wanted to hear dance music in the main, so it experimented with traditional foxtrots and waltzes, as well as, at times, trying to introduce “cultural” classical numbers.¹²⁵ What troubled BBC newsreader Alan Howland with regard to the use of dance music in the early broadcasts was a lack of professionalism. The directors acknowledged that seventy-five percent of workers in factories wanted to have dance music played, but Howland believed that the lack of high-quality dance bands accompanied by limited time to arrange and rehearse their shows, meant that the overall sound and feel of the broadcast (when using mainly dance bands) was not to the standard expected by the BBC.¹²⁶ While the public and the munitions workers quickly became enthused with *Music While You Work*, the low standard of musical proficiency and that the music played was the popular dance music, infuriated the BBC higher management. On July 9, 1940, Programme Organiser for the Music Division Denis Wright wrote to the heads of department to complain that artistic value and the needs of the general listener had to be ignored for the *Music While You Work*; format to be successful.¹²⁷

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ BBC WAC, Box R27/251/1—1941, memorandum, June 25, 1940.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ BBC WAC, Box R27/251/1—1941, memorandum from Dennis Wright to the heads of departments, dated July 9, 1940. In April 1942, Denis Wright became Assistant Music Director of the Overseas



In the above picture, the caption reads, "Here, by contrast, is the trio in D minor, Opus 32. This work is full of sincere elegiac feeling and of fresh spontaneous melody."¹²⁸ The line workers are shown confused by the choice of music for them to listen to, stopping to pay attention to the announcer rather than just continuing to work. This was the exact opposite of that for which the BBC was striving, and yet it achieved this chaotic state to begin with, as a confusing array of music was played that was not suitable in the least. In his letter, Wright outlined the idea that the music in these programmes must be of an easy listening nature and of one tempo. He did not try to hide the disdain with which the BBC viewed the public's choice in music, nor an obvious dislike of the fact that they are not able to so easily alter the public's mindset in this case. "Following our conversation yesterday, and in view of the reactions you have already received from factories, it seems that in order to make these programmes as effective as possible we shall have to be far more ruthless in

Service. Trevor Herbert, *The British Brass Band: A Musical and Social History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

¹²⁸ Un-named cartoon in Box R27/257/2, BBC WAC.

destroying artistic value and cease to consider the general listener at all during these half hours.”¹²⁹ The problem was that the factory workers were not the only ones tuning into the programme, as can be seen from the audience figures referred to earlier. The heads of the BBC believed that the music played for the factories would not interest the general public or be ‘high-brow’ enough for them and yet the public tuned in to the programme in large enough numbers to prove that this was not the case. The broadcast on March 2, 1944, for example, garnered 8.3 percent which represented a little over four million listeners, not all of whom were likely to be working in factories.¹³⁰

Problems that afflicted *Music While You Work* programme were usually linked to the type of music being played. The specific aim of the programme was to improve workers’ morale and increase the efficiency and output of munitions factories. The debate surrounding how to achieve this was the central discussion for the nascent programme. One thing of which the BBC was certain at the beginning was that “hot” numbers were not to be played. This insistence meant that up-tempo jazz and swing music was not a part of the programme. The BBC was determined to avoid music that was too convoluted and intense and had too complicated a structure because it believed that such music would only serve to distract the workers. They would not be at the peak of their production limits if they were concentrating on the music that was being played.¹³¹ What the BBC (and factory management) was aiming for was something to encourage the workers and to achieve this it was believed that “half an hour of music which is not only continuous but related in tempo and feeling” would

¹²⁹ BBC WAC, Box R27/251/1—1941, July 9, 1940.

¹³⁰ BBC WAC, Box R9/11/1–3, Audience Research, Listening Barometers 1–3. The BBC research figures were based on the percentage points as being a representation of the total population of the country. Thus, based on the UK population of forty-eight million in 1941, the capita per percentage point was 480,000 not the three hundred thousand that the BBC estimated in 1944.

¹³¹ BBC WAC, Box R27/251/1—1941.

be the best outcome.¹³² It did not come about from the very beginning, but eventually that is what the BBC would produce and through a consistent and easy-paced tempo, *Music While You Work* established a rhythm that helped the workers.¹³³ To get to that point, a great deal of discussion within the BBC as to what constituted the ideal performances took place.

However, it was within those discussions that the problems existed as although the programme ended up being that half an hour of consistency, there was little of the same quality exhibited by the production and direction echelons of the BBC. There was support for dance music within the BBC, because the people had asked for it, and yet at the same time, Denis Wright was arguing that one-steps and marches were preferable. Another argument ran that light orchestras would be better and that certainly, anything had to be better than dance bands, which were not suitable, “by reason of [the] distracting associations they may conjure up.”¹³⁴ Contrarily, the light orchestras were rejected because of a fear of “inadequate Lyon’s Corner House stuff—a reasonable background for an afternoon chat over teacups, but totally inadequate midst the rattle of a machine shop.”¹³⁵ As a memorandum of July 10, 1940, noted, “From the point of view of the general listener, we are asking for a bad piece of programme building.” It went on to say that “artistic value must not be considered,” and with a nod to the edicts that followed in a few more months, “slow sentimental numbers and selections are ruled out.”¹³⁶ The reference to the programme being “bad” for the average listener was elicited because the programme was aimed more specifically at the worker.

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ Dorothy Turner, “From W Blott & Sons, Drapery to Munitions at Chimney Corner,” BBC Website, WW2 People’s War, article A2733860, June 11, 2004, www.bbc.co.uk/ww2peopleswar/stories/60/a2733860.shtml, as accessed September 2010.

¹³⁴ BBC WAC, Box R27/251/1—1941, Letter to the Secretary, Minister of War from Gunn Gwennett. July 15, 1940.

¹³⁵ Ibid. June 24, 1940.

¹³⁶ BBC WAC, Box R27/257/1, BBC Internal Circulating Memorandum, July 10, 1940.

The internal argument included a further dimension because of personal dislike for certain orchestras and bands when they were used from certain BBC officials. Geiger and his Orchestra occasioned such a retort from one BBC employee following the band's broadcast on the programme not long after it first went over the airwaves.¹³⁷ More support for the anti-dance band argument was to be found in August 1941, from Neil Hutchison who had decided that dance bands were no longer suited to the task because they were "too anaemic, and their repertoire is far more limited than I ever thought would be the case."¹³⁸ The pendulum swung backwards and forwards, to and from dance music, as, earlier, in February 1941, and then later in September of that year, defences of dance music for *Music While You Work* came from both the head of the *Music While You Work* programme Wynford Reynolds, and Douglas Lawrence, Director of Programme Planning. Reynolds argued that the larger part of the evidence available suggested that dance music was the most suitable genre of popular music for the broadcast.¹³⁹ Lawrence agreed, but postulated that it was not surprising that dance music was considered wrong for the programme when earlier statements had declared that dreamy vocals and crooner style music were not suitable to the programme's intent.¹⁴⁰ Lawrence declared that because this type of music formed a large proportion of the repertoire of the dance bands, then those bands could not be suitable for *Music While You Work* according to the anti-dance music faction.¹⁴¹

The confusion that the heads of departments and programme producers in the BBC had with regards to the music most suitable for the programme was summed up (albeit, unintentionally) by a memorandum from Denis Wright in early July 1940:

¹³⁷ BBC WAC, Box R27/251/1—1941.

¹³⁸ BBC WAC, Box R27/251/1—1941, Memorandum to Mr Dennis Wright from Neil Hutchison, August 23, 1940.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁰ BBC WAC, Box R27/251/1—1941, BBC internal circulating memorandum, *Music While You Work*—dance bands, February 10, 1941. From D Lawrence to D.V.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*

Please: NO slow foxtrots, tangos, waltzes, dreamy numbers of any sort, vocals of the sob-stuff order, complicated cross-rhythm in hot jazz numbers or selections with frequently changing style and speed.... BUT, plenty of snap and punch, rhythm of a straightforward kind, clean clear-cut melody and brightness of all sorts.¹⁴²

This note attempted to clarify the situation, but given that some of the music suggested as not being appropriate could contain some of the elements which were considered of benefit, its efficacy was muddled. In the end, however, the BBC adopted guidelines stipulating that there should be continuity, few lyrics, more dance band numbers and as little variation in tempo as possible. Perhaps one of the most pertinent comments to come out of the BBC in relation to the discussion around *Music While You Work* indicated exactly where the focus should have been: “It may not be art, but it’s what ‘they’ want. And if ‘they’ are making the guns ‘we’ want, for Pete’s sake let us put on what ‘they’ want.”¹⁴³

Once the BBC had established the programme and it had generated its own audience, the full benefits of the show began to be realised. The BBC carried out many of its own studies and researched into the effectiveness of the show in helping the war effort.¹⁴⁴ It soon became apparent that the *Music While You Work* slot helped win the war, and *The Times* newspaper quickly wrote that the programme had “been highly successful.”¹⁴⁵ The two areas of most noticeable effect were production levels and eradication of boredom in the employees. Wynford Reynolds produced a major report for the period covering May 5 to November 30, 1941. Amongst the findings of the report were numerous examples of the role of music in improving productivity and relieving boredom. Factory managers claimed that productivity was boosted as a result of listening to the programme—even up to fifteen percent in some cases, but the

¹⁴² BBC WAC, Box R27/257/1, BBC Internal Circulating Memorandum to heads of departments, July, 1940.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁴ The figures generated for the First Report on *Music While You Work* came from a fairly large sample of factories and workers, and so can be taken to be demonstrative of the general workforce’s feelings. The *Music While You Work* experiment involved about 150 firms and 52,000 employees.

¹⁴⁵ “Music While You Work: BBC to Test Effect on Output,” *The Times*, June 17, 1941, 6.

report itself, preferred to suggest that:

Music While You Work should not be considered as a means of increasing the rate of working during a programme period but rather should it be looked upon as a tonic which will so improve the morale of the workers that output will be stepped up during the whole of the work spell.¹⁴⁶

The music played in *Music While You Work* increased the output of the worker by creating a healthier state of mind. This assertion was linked to a Medical Research Council report that found that boredom could be relieved through the use of music in the workplace.¹⁴⁷ The report gave credence to the programme and the BBC used it to raise the show's profile. However, as managers of the factories used in the BBC study were effusive in their praise for music in the workplace, the show probably sold itself anyway. Comments on the programme ranged from statements such as, "the importance of *Music While You Work* in war production is probably incalculable," to the more subtle acknowledgement that, "the application of music is an excellent method of boosting the tired worker."¹⁴⁸ The pragmatic amongst the managers uttered words such as, "the introduction of music has undoubtedly helped production if only by eliminating a considerable amount of the talking that takes place between the girls."¹⁴⁹

The Medical Research Council's report lent the weight of scientific evidence to *Music While You Work* showing that music was an excellent antidote for boredom. According to the report, music in the munitions factories could boost production by more than twenty-three percent.¹⁵⁰ It stated that "it [was] highly probable that increase in output and greater pleasure in work are due chiefly to the distracting

¹⁴⁶ BBC WAC, Box R27/257/2, "Music While You Work," First Report for Period May 5 to November 30, 1941, 9.

¹⁴⁷ BBC WAC, Box R27/257/2, 1941.

¹⁴⁸ BBC WAC, Box R27/257/2, "Music While You Work," First Report for Period May 5 to November 30, 1941, 3.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁰ "Music While You Work: BBC to Test Effect on Output," *The Times*, June 17, 1941, 6.

effects and to the pleasant emotional experiences which it [music] arouses.”¹⁵¹ These distracting effects were not in the sense of distraction from their work, but from the monotony of their tasks.¹⁵² *Music While You Work* was placed in the schedule of everyday radio programming to help achieve this goal and achieved those aims very commendably. Worker responses identified the programme as a highlight of the day and memoirs of workers from the war show the same evidence.

Kathleen Bliss was one such worker. She worked at a munitions factory in South London. Bliss noted that she—and her co-workers—enjoyed the *Music While You Work* programme and “that it ma[de] the long day pass quicker.”¹⁵³ The advent of the installation of the radio system in their factory was much heralded as they had been looking forward to it for some considerable time.¹⁵⁴ This was exactly what the BBC spent the early part of the war encouraging managers to do. Although for some the cost may have been viewed as rather high, at six hundred pounds, to install the broadcasting equipment in factories, the evident enjoyment and appreciation of the workers was repaid in the form of greater efficiency as they were entertained in part, by programmes such as *Music While You Work*. For most of those who listened (the men and women at work in factories) it was not necessarily an individual choice, but by doing so, they were more likely to have a better mentality, produced more and have a happier disposition.

Music While You Work was the BBC’s most overt attempt to use music as an aid to the war effort. The long deliberation over how best to offer that aid ended with the adoption of a mostly popular-music schedule because such music offered the biggest benefit to workers in terms of promoting efficiency and productivity. The

¹⁵¹ BBC WAC, Box R27/257/2, 1941.

¹⁵² Joyce Chalkley, “Ringshall to Ipswich and Back . . . Part 2,” BBC Website, WW2 People’s War, article A9025779, January 31, 2006, www.bbc.co.uk/ww2peopleswar/stories/79/a9025779.shtml, as accessed September 2010.

¹⁵³ Kathleen Bliss, “We Had To Laugh,” September 9, 1943, File 91/34/1, Imperial War Museum, London.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, September 2, 1943.

numerous accounts from workers, managers and observers indicate that the BBC got the content right for the show, and both anecdotal and empirical evidence point to an increase in production as a result. In terms of popular music having a direct impact on the war, *Music While You Work* was almost certainly the single most significant development of the war in the United Kingdom, and certainly the BBC's greatest direct contribution. This effort on the part of the BBC was also the first time that non-combatants were catered for in terms of popular music, and as such provides historians with the best possible indication of the role of popular music and its tangible effect on war workers during World War II.

Conclusion

The combined efforts of the Entertainments National Service Association and the BBC with *Music While You Work* are examples of the importance and relevance of popular music during World War II in the United Kingdom. Both initiatives were newly created during the war in recognition of the importance of music to the state of mind, and thus, the morale, of soldiers and war workers (and later, partly of civilians as well). Equally, both ENSA's entertainment activities and *Music While You Work* were generally positively received by those being entertained; the development of such schemes being appreciated for their innovation and help in what soldiers and war workers were attempting to do.

Never before had government and non-government organizations cooperated to provide such mass entertainment, and these efforts represent the single time in British history that this particular type of programming has been attempted by these entities in this manner. Modern-day entertainment is vastly different from that offered in World War II, but it has, as its roots, ENSA and programmes such as *Music While You Work*. While no one at the time would have recognized such a fact, the

development of popular-music entertainment for troops and war workers has had a lasting and profound effect, not simply in its legacy, but also in the impact it had on those remembering their war years some sixty to seventy years later.

Out of a modest and unprofessional World War I entertainment plan, Basil Dean and ENSA created a huge, sprawling network of entertainment possibilities for troops, war workers and civilians on a small budget, and often in the face of stiff opposition. ENSA used popular music as a central plank of its entertainment platform, in the form of small combos to huge dance bands, from intimate settings to vast factories and aircraft hangars, even to underground shelters. Piggybacking the popularity and ubiquity of popular music, ENSA cemented itself in wartime life in spite of sometimes harsh, but often warranted, criticism. The organisation and its activities are remembered fondly, and were credited with improving morale and aiding the war effort in myriad ways.

The BBC started World War II in a distinctly different position to that of ENSA; already secure in its own importance and place in British society. Even with that far stronger foundation, the BBC still had to find its way to a position where it could use its network and influence in terms of wartime entertainment to reach the most people. That it struggled at times to come to terms with the importance of popular music to the majority of the population, only points to its ability to recover and engage with its listeners in the most effective manner possible. The BBC's development of the *Music While You Work* series came about from a pragmatic need, but its use of popular music in that programme took far more deliberation and decision making.¹⁵⁵ Regardless, the BBC's used popular music for the series because it offered the most effective work environment, and in spite of any wish to "educate" listeners,

¹⁵⁵ Additionally, as Angus Calder argued, welfare and recreation had become far more important to factories and work places. As seen here, *Music While You Work* was largely about efficiency, which required relatively happy work forces, and so, the programme fit into the wider attempts Calder noted. Angus Calder, *The People's War: Britain, 1939-1945* (New York: Pantheon House, 1969).

using popular music was the only recourse possible. Spurring production of invaluable war materials was, perhaps, the BBC's, and popular music's most important contribution to the war.

Both these programmes and the amount of time spent on deciding how to use popular music provide a glimpse into how new these efforts were, as well as the realization at the time that the use of popular music was an extremely necessary aspect of wartime life. Such were the changes that had occurred to that time from the previous war that existing methods of fighting a global conflict could not cope with the societal and technological changes that everyone then took for granted. Adopting a coordinated and massive programme for the use of popular music was a profound action on the part of the British government, the British armed forces, the BBC and the people who clamoured for such a thing. In the end, these bodies reacted to what was wanted and needed as opposed to predicting such a need, but that they did helped push popular music to the forefront of the fight against the Axis powers.

Conclusion

Popular music in World War II rested in between apparent necessity and seeming frivolity, always striving to find its most apt position in relation to the war. The interactivity of popular music and World War II mimicked a see-saw; music sat on the one end and war on the other. Yet, the two opposing forces struck a fine and productive balance, working together, impacting each other, to the point that popular music became an integral aspect of World War II and vice versa. The war produced almost no music with lyrics that dealt directly with death, danger, fear, or loss; the lyrics were uniformly positive and uplifting in a conventional manner. The few songs that did have lyrics confronting such issues avoided specifically mentioning them, instead they hinted at them or skirted around them.¹ Nor did the war create huge numbers of popular hit tunes focused solely on the war. And, in turn, music had no direct, quantifiable influence on the outcome of the war. A far more subtle relationship existed between the two. The war influenced the music business in many ways, diverting resources, removing talent, providing topics for songwriters, allowing musicians a moment in the spotlight or a chance to “do their bit.” The music industry affected the war through myriad personal connections, lovers linked by a song, famous stars entertaining the troops, dance bands taking their place amongst the more traditional elements of the armed forces, while all the time many millions of people listened to the radio or to records on gramophones or to bands at concerts and dances.

Morale has been called the “woolliest and most muddled concept of the war,” and yet, many of these effects eventually link back to morale—of both civilians and

¹ Kenneth Bindas argued similarly that World War II did not produce many hit songs that dealt directly with the war. He argued that “popular music provides the glue that holds American culture together,” and, as is shown here, by focusing on positive and safe topics throughout the war, popular songs maintained that hold, never stretching the bond too far. Kenneth J Bindas, ed., *America's Musical Pulse: Popular Music in Twentieth-Century Society* (Westport CT, Praeger Publishers, 1992), 281.

members of the armed forces.² Personal connections and lovers linked across continents and oceans—whether good or bad relationships—affected morale; making people happy or sad depending on the circumstances. To this end, historian John Costello wrote that, “To the men and women who lived and fought through the greatest conflict in human history, World War II was the pivotal emotional experience in their lives. Individual testimony indicates that *what* [italics in original] people were fighting for had less to do with abstract notions of freedom or patriotism than with individual emotional values represented by sweethearts, wives and families.”³ The emotional values Costello wrote of are easily discernible in the popular music of World War II. Visits to troops by famous stars boosted morale, just as the addition of dance bands to the military did for those that heard them. The comments of the musicians who saw the faces in the crowd and were astonished at the appreciation being shown them were reflected back from the men and women in the crowds, who remembered the joy they all felt at experiencing the entertainment of the big bands and the big stars.

People from all walks of life spoke, wrote and realised the importance of popular music to the morale. General Dwight D Eisenhower, after he attended a performance of *This is the Army*, Irving Berlin’s musical show, said, “This war is a far-flung and far-reaching enterprise. It extends to all our people everywhere. You must never feel for an instant that because you are not manning a machine gun in the front lines, your work is unimportant or unessential, or that you are not in the midst of the war effort. Because it just isn’t true. War is fought in many ways, by fighting at the front, by transportation, communication, supply lines and by maintaining the

² Paul Addison, *The Road to 1945* (London: Jonathon Cape, 1975), 121, as quoted in Amy Helen Bell, *London Was Ours: Diaries and Memoirs of the London Blitz* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2008), 52.

³ John Costello, *Love, Sex and War: Changing Values, 1939–1945* (London: Collins, 1985), 9.

morale of the soldiers who must bear the brunt of it.”⁴ Although Eisenhower specifically addressed actors in this particular case, the general point he made was that entertainers had an incredibly important role to play, and that role was to boost morale. Emotions and feelings changed through enjoying entertainment, and popular music provided much of that entertainment to the populations of both nations during the war. Civilian and troop leisure time included popular music, and, according to Dr Stephen Taylor, Director of the Ministry of Information’s Home Security Division, leisure featured amongst the most important factors contributing to morale.⁵ Providing a formulaic soundtrack, the hit music of World War II—part of that leisure—reminded people of good times, urged them to do the right thing and provided comfort when needed. The music industry, as a whole, participated as a “cheerleader” throughout the war, attempting to offset a feared mass hysteria or a situation whereby no-one “performed their allotted tasks”⁶ within in the civilian population in particular, and conveying a sense of “home with all its warmth and nostalgia.”⁷

Aside from the overall, and most important, role of morale booster, the music industry affected the war in numerous ways. From the outset, the industry became a commentator on the state of the war. The industry took its cue from the conduct of the war, initially attempting to raise patriotic fervour, and creating imagery of the enemy to help inspire people towards the goal of winning the conflict. As the war progressed, recording companies released music intent on maintaining that spirit, then on fostering patience, then to remind people for what they were fighting and sacrificing. Later still, the songs turned their attention to victory, or at least, the

⁴ As quoted in Alan Anderson, *The Songwriter Goes to War* (Pompton Plains, NJ: Limelight Editions, 2004), 183. Furthermore, Berlin’s show did include numerous musicians and bands who played swing and jazz music, so Eisenhower’s comments pertain even more directly to this thesis than at first might seem the case.

⁵ Bell, *London Was Ours*, 52.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ A A Hoehling, *Home Front, USA* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Co., 1966), 125.

prospect of it. The industry, in effect, acted as a barometer for public opinion, but also national hopes.⁸

But, no matter how important the songs and the industry became, they still could not directly participate or influence the fighting itself. No matter how many songs urged people to produce more munitions, or to promise fidelity to loved ones far away, or to engage in practices aimed at helping win the war, the fighting was not, as one general commented, going to be won using instruments and songs.⁹ And yet, conversely, the Allied governments most certainly made use of the power of popular entertainment, including music, to help win the war.¹⁰ However, in the main, the war affected music and the music business rather than the reverse.

World War II affected the music industry in every possible manner. It reduced the manpower available to all facets of the business, at every level of professionalism. Rationing took its toll on the industry, limiting source materials for everything from paper to make sheet music to chemicals and products necessary to manufacture records. Government rules limited travelling and hurt many recording companies. The limits placed on travelling reduced exposure for bands, leading to fewer opportunities for bands to promote their songs.¹¹ The music industry had to learn to adapt.¹² But, the effects were not all negative; the significant increase in personal incomes, for instance, allowed people to interact with popular entertainment in ways

⁸ Jordan Braverman, *To Hasten the Homecoming: How Americans Fought World War II Through the Media* (Lanham, NY: Madison Books, 1996), xx.

⁹ Otto H Helbig, *A History of Music in the US Armed Forces During World War II* (New Jersey: Trenton State College, 1966), 6.

¹⁰ Jordan Braverman, *To Hasten the Homecoming: How Americans Fought World War II Through the Media* (Lanham, NY: Madison Books, 1996), xx.

¹¹ Kenneth Bindas, for one, has pointed out that many of the things that occurred in World War II in terms of the war affecting music hastened the end of swing music. This thesis provides ample evidence of the dramatic nature of those changes and, although it ends at the end of World War II, it is fairly easy to see the progression to the point where all these changes precipitated swing's demise as the most popular music form in the United States. Kenneth J Bindas, *Swing, That Modern Sound* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2001), 145–67.

¹² Braverman, *To Hasten the Homecoming*, xx.

not previously available, and many other effects also dramatically improved either the fortunes of the practitioners or improved the position of music in relation to warfare.¹³

War was a catalyst for changes that otherwise might have taken many more years to come to fruition.¹⁴ In particular, the armed forces adapted to its new breed of soldier, providing a much more structured entertainment schedule. Reacting to reports such as that made by Lieutenant General Henry H Arnold of the army air force that all the men wanted was new phonograph records, popular music came to the forefront of military music in a way that it had never been.¹⁵ Radio broadcasting reached new levels of importance to military operations and the knock-on effect led to more and more entertainment programmes broadcast for troops. War pushed music into the civilian work environment as well. First the British and later the Americans began to supply music and entertainment to factory workers, who were often stuck in monotonous, repetitive jobs, producing essential items for the war effort. The practice stuck, and remained after the war, through to the present.

The war also produced an environment conducive to experimentation within music. As each branch of the military, in both countries, added permanent dance bands to their number, so the opportunities arose for the musicians involved in those bands to hone their skills.¹⁶ Unburdened by many of the duties that most troops undertook, musicians in the military were charged with entertaining their fellow soldiers. Given hours to practice, they challenged each other, and the elite musicians

¹³ John Morton Blum, *V was for Victory: Politics and American Culture during World War II* (London: Harcourt Brace & Co, 1976), 100.

¹⁴ One such change was noted by Jim Godbolt. He claimed that World War II created a massive increase in the number of jazz musicians in the United Kingdom. He did not provide much evidence for this effect of the war, nor did he analyse why, but if we accept his argument then, again, it is possible to see how war interacted with and influence popular music. Jim Godbolt, *A History of Jazz in Britain, 1919–1950* (London: Quartet Books, 1984), 192.

¹⁵ "Music Goes to War," *The Billboard 1943 Music Year Book*, 20.

¹⁶ Clora Bryant's excellent oral history of jazz and swing musicians provides many examples of the importance of these sessions and practices. Nearly every musician that she interviewed pointed to how much they benefited from those sessions, and many of them indicated that they could thank being in the military for the development of their skills as musicians. Clora Bryant, et al., *Central Avenue Sounds: Jazz in Los Angeles* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1998).

learned, tested and pushed the boundaries of their musical skills. In this sense, the war helped advance musical techniques for these men, but only for those who were capable; the best musicians benefited, the average musicians did not. Whereas much of the musical wartime landscape stymied musical development, encouraging musicians to stick with the status quo, the familiar, this coming together of top-level talent created a hot bed of innovation within the musical community.¹⁷

And still other effects simply changed music and the music business in one way or another. Neither overtly positive nor obviously negative, such effects altered the process of music production or the direction in which the sounds and styles of music were moving.¹⁸ Not all remained in practice after the war, but some did. One of these developments arose through the combination of the American Federation of Musicians' strike and the development of the V-Disc operation. This combination led to unlikely pairings of musicians and bands. The exigencies of war nullified recording company contracts that would otherwise have prevented certain musicians from performing and recording together. The United States government and military circumvented the strike putting a hold on recording commercial music by developing the V-Disc operation. While the AFM strike remained in place the top musicians could not record anything, yet, the V-Discs gave them a chance to record and to be heard playing new music—albeit only by those in the military receiving the records, not the general public. Furthermore, V-Discs gave musicians contracted to different recording companies the opportunity to work together, because V-Discs were a military operation and thus stood outside of the conventions and regulations of the civilian music industry.

¹⁷ For a discussion of the musicological innovation that came about from jam sessions and endless practice, see Scott Deveau, *The Birth of Bebop: A Social and Musical History* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1997).

¹⁸ Bindas wrote of how war changed the direction music was heading, although he did not offer any reason nor any real hint at the direction. Still, his analysis of the effect of the changes holds with this thesis's findings that the war had dramatic effects on popular music. Bindas, *America's Musical Pulse*, 139.

In many ways the war stagnated the natural progression of music. Rather than musicians creating new sounds as they developed their techniques and attempted to offer something new to the consumer, many of the best bands chose to use well-established styles that people associated with the good times from before the war. Yet, this primarily applied to commercial music. In spite of this tendency, music did change during the war, and was ready to break free of conventions as soon as the fighting ended. In particular, a group of young African American musicians, having avoided being sent to fight, congregated in New York City, jamming and challenging each other with new techniques and sounds.¹⁹ This group included Dizzy Gillespie and Charlie Parker and formed the vanguard for bebop. The war provided the specific circumstances for this group to come together and begin the process of moving towards bebop and other new styles of jazz.

Such jamming and technique development occurred elsewhere, not just in New York City, as the war threw musicians together in unexpected situations. Thrown together in various branches of the American and British military, some of the best musicians in the United States and the United Kingdom found that they had more time to practice than they had enjoyed as civilian professional musicians. In the forces to play music, these fortunate musicians spent much of their time learning new techniques, adopting sounds they heard from the big cities and urging each other to become even better musicians. That the militaries of each country essentially paid professional musicians to become better is of particular interest.

Music also helped advance the position of African Americans in the United States Military. As of the beginning of the war, African Americans suffered from segregation, from limited opportunities and from discrimination in all its guises. Although improvements in these conditions were forthcoming in World War II,

¹⁹ See Scott Deveaux, *The Birth of Bebop: A Social and Musical History* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1997) for information on this phenomenon.

African Americans still ended the war in a position of inferiority to white Americans. Yet, advancements were made. In particular, music offered opportunities for African Americans to advance in rank and prestige above where they had been able to at the start of the war. The United States Navy employed a distinct segregation of the forces and limited African Americans to the very lowest of ranks. At the Great Lakes Naval Training Station (and other navy camps) however, African American musicians encountered less discrimination than African American sailors who were not recognised musicians.

World War II forced the military to address entertainment issues, and the civilian entertainment industry was no different. The song writers of Tin Pan Alley, in particular, took to World War II effortlessly, and an immediate reaction was evident. The advent of war for the United States stimulated society in general and gave American songwriters new subjects about which to write. Within days of the American entry into World War II, songwriters had written songs about the attack on Pearl Harbor, and many more soon followed. The fighting raised instantly useable themes for the writers to base lyrics upon, yet, with exception of the end of the war, few songs were written about any individual event; a stark contrast to the history of war-inspired music.

Once the initial rush of Pearl Harbor-themed songs had ended, song writers turned their attentions to five main war-inspired themes. These five themes, enemy, love, patriotism, heroism and home included almost every single song written about or during World War II in one form or another. Tin Pan Alley amateur song writers across the United States latched on to these themes, producing hundreds of songs until the end of the war.

These song writers were patriotic to a fault. Few songs expressed discontent with the conduct of the war or urging resistance or demonstration against it.²⁰ Song writers penned songs, full of bravado, hope and belief, intended to inspire the listener to believe in the ability of American troops to help win the war. As the vast majority of Americans supported involvement in the war, music industry executive knew that producing overtly anti-war songs made no business sense. Tin Pan Alley and other songwriters used the war efficiently for their own purposes of selling the songs they wrote. Even if there had been no real sentiment behind the songs written during the war, pure business practicality would almost certainly have led to much the same end product. While few truly war-themed songs made it into the lists of the most popular songs, many songs that were in such lists did have one of the five main war-related themes.

In terms of direct interaction between popular music and World War II, the increase in use of music in wartime society provided the greatest change. Music in war was nothing new; it had been used in warfare throughout history. However, the military- and government-sanctioned use of music as more than purely a marching beat had only begun to move into military life during World War I.²¹ During World War II, music in war and in wartime society took on a much larger role than it had ever previously enjoyed.²²

²⁰ As Gary Giddins pointed out, the kind of music that appealed to people was "friendly, unassuming, melodious and irrefutably American." It is no wonder, then, that the song publishers did not write songs expressing discontent or anti-war rhetoric; this would not have been irrefutably American. Gary Giddins, *Riding on a Blue Note: Jazz and American Pop* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1981), 19.

²¹ A A Hoehling's conclusion that the American military's provision of musical entertainment in World War I was haphazard indicated the massive change in stance of the government and military between the two wars. When compared to the unprofessional manner in which music was supplied to troops in World War I, the systems put in place in World War II seem far more positive, which indeed they were. A A Hoehling, *Home Front, USA* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Co., 1966), 126

²² Although James Collier did not engage in any deep analysis of why, he did note that World War II saw popular music take on a much more important role than it had done prior to the war. His examples of a few changes, including such things as the military providing bands for its men and women, provide further examples of the role of music in World War II. James L Collier, *The Making of Jazz: A Comprehensive History* (Boston: Houghton-Mifflin Co., 1978), 329-331.

The changes in popular music that occurred between the two world wars—most specifically the move towards a non-participatory enjoyment of music—helped create an entertainment and cultural environment conducive to the increased use of popular music in war.²³ The change occurred slowly, but rather than all entertainment for troops being self-conducted, more and more it came from officially-provided entertainment, whether that was in the form of comedy shows, variety shows, motion pictures, or popular music. The provision of the equipment and some time for the troops to entertain themselves was left in place by the military of both countries. The forces published song books for the troops, so they could play popular tunes on piano or other instrument. The song books contained both lyrics and music for a wide range of songs, with a focus on the popular tunes from home. Despite the continued practice of printing song books, the military authorities began to introduce other entertainment, both in response to troops' requests or needs, and as a result of changes in technology, which made it easier to provide such entertainment to soldiers, sailors or airmen, regardless of where they were stationed.

The societal changes that had occurred in the manner in which entertainment was enjoyed between the two wars affected the provision of entertainment in the forces during World War II. As radio and gramophones became common household items (in the United States and more slowly in Britain), the traditional means of listening to music (playing at home or attending a concert) were surpassed in popularity by listening to music through these new devices.²⁴ Sheet music continued

²³ Ross Gregory argued that an improving economy (in the United States) prior to 1941 and the uncertainty of the future as war loomed, increased the desire for entertainment. With such changes in society, music's ability to shape how entertainment was appreciated by Americans during World War II appears far more likely. Ross Gregory, *America 1941: A Nation at the Crossroads* (London: Collier MacMillan Publishers, 1989), 223–24.

²⁴ Gary Bloomfield, Stacie Shain and Arlen Davidson argued that radio was the "most powerful medium in the United States during wartime." Bloomfield, Shain & Davidson, *Duty, Honor, Applause: America's Entertainers in World War II* (Guilford, CT: The Lyon's Press, 2004), 137. That title could be awarded to either radio or film, but in terms of popular music, radio almost certainly held more influence because of its ubiquity and involvement in the day-to-day lives of Americans.

to sell well throughout the war years, although they were the last years as it turned out, but fewer and fewer people gathered to play and sing songs together. Expenditure on entertainment rose by roughly one hundred and twenty percent between 1938 and 1944.²⁵ With more money to spend on leisure time as luxury goods sales fell because of rationing, people turned to the radio, to gramophone records and to attending dance halls and night clubs to enjoy popular music in that leisure time.²⁶

Improved transportation networks also helped change the style of musical entertainment. Bands toured the country playing dances and concerts thanks to better railroads (trains could travel at faster speeds) and the new and rapidly growing road infrastructure for buses and cars. Combined with radio and gramophone records, the improvements in transportation meant that people all over both countries were far more likely to come into direct contact with famous bands than they had previously. In effect this was another reason to move to a non-participatory form of musical entertainment. In other words, why play the songs if you could hear them being played by the very best, and by those who had made them famous in the first place?

With such shifts in consumption of popular music in the general societies of each country, the respective militaries eventually shifted to stay in tune with the people who would make up their military strength. Dramatic changes in standard policies do not come easily to organisations such as nations' militaries, but over the course of World War II, both American and British armed forces did make policy changes to the provision of entertainment. Most significantly amongst these changes was the introduction of dedicated dance music bands to the armed forces. Before World War II no such band organisation existed in either the British or American armed forces. At the start of World War II the bands of the various branches existed to provide military music for marching and formal occasions. Quickly, band policy

²⁵ Angus Calder, *The People's War*, 366.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 355.

changed, expanding from a strictly military function, to becoming a leading entertainment provider as well.

Instead of providing the timing for soldiers marching to battle, military bands were needed to provide a different musical incentive; “American troops enjoyed listening to singers . . . [but] they did not sing themselves.”²⁷ In other words, they needed someone to provide the music for them. The role of marching bands now included soldiers and sailors’ morale in all of their activities, and not merely when marching. Military dance bands of World War II served to keep the men and women of the armed forces happy, with high levels of morale and prepared to fight when called. Yet they went even further. Military dance bands stationed in both the United States and the United Kingdom furnished music for functions and dances outside of regular military duties; they played for civilians, both at live concerts and on the radio. With World War II, the remit of the military band changed completely, moving away from military function to become an entertainment provider for the whole population.

While World War II was not the first war in which music held propaganda values intrinsic to the fighting and winning of war, it was the first war in which those propaganda values could be heard by millions of people. For the first time, popular music was able to play a mass-propaganda role in warfare. Any song that contained an admonition to keep one’s lips sealed about secrets, or to stay faithful to loved ones wherever they may be, or included a reference to heroism and courage, or told listeners how to feel about the enemy, was a propaganda song. Given that so many popular songs during World War II did include at least one of these ideas, or one of many others that could be included in such a list, the potential for propaganda in wartime music was limited only by the number of people listening to any one song at any one moment.

²⁷ Rose, *Myth and the Greatest Generation*, 174.

Prior to World War II, music had not been easily accessible to vast numbers of people at the same time. When troops were sent abroad before World War II, almost the only way to hear the same music would be to play it on a piano. The changes in the provision of entertainment in the years leading up to World War II were arguably more significant than any in the history of musical entertainment, with, perhaps, the exception of the printing process allowing the production of sheet music. However, the invention of radio and the percentage of people that owned radios by 1939 in the United States and in the United Kingdom, and the far higher quality and longer-lasting phonograph records that also made their way into vast numbers of homes across both countries, had changed the way people interacted with music far more than cheap sheet music did.²⁸ Printing sheet music simply allowed for more people to play the same piece of music as anyone else who had that piece of music. Listening to the radio and phonograph records took the activity out of music and placed it squarely in the auditory participation exercise category.

With these changes, the possibility of reaching millions of people with propaganda messages through musical entertainment became a reality. And, although neither the American nor British governments participated in large-scale use of music for propaganda purposes in their own countries, music still had recognized propaganda value. Both governments encouraged the production of certain types of songs, or songs with certain messages, and even urged songwriters to “wave the flag and shout hallelujah for all conquered and oppressed peoples.”²⁹ Only occasionally, however, did either government actually request or produce a song with a particular

²⁸ *Variety*, January 7, 1942, 158; Sherwood Gates, “Radio in Relation to Recreation and Culture,” *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* (January 1941): 9; Paul F. Peter, “The American Listener in 1940,” *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, January 1941: 1; “87% of Nation has Radios,” *Variety*, March 11, 1942, 35; *Melody Maker*, August 15, 1942.

²⁹ Allen L. Woll, “From Blues in the Night to Ac-cen-tu-ate the Positive: Film Music Goes to War, 1939–1945,” *Popular Music and Society* 4: 2, 66–76.

message; the most notable occasions being those songs pertaining to the war bond drives in the United States.³⁰ This did not, in effect, matter.

Popular songs covered the gamut of emotions during World War II, as well as depicting acts worthy of a country at war. In certain cases, songs with messages of heroism, or of doing one's duty, or of patriotism in other senses all achieved popular success at one stage of the war or another. Few of these songs were extremely popular, although classic examples of those that were included songs such as "Praise the Lord and Pass the Ammunition." Despite few "propaganda" songs reaching the tops of the charts, their mere recording and publication meant that they may have been played on the radio or in jukeboxes across the country at some point, even if only sparingly. Despite the possibility of potentially small audiences for such songs, the fact that they were played through these media meant that the audiences had the potential to be large even if they did not become fan favourites. That these songs might have been played through large media outlets such as the radio and jukebox network, even if only once, gave rise to the possibility of large audiences at any one time, even though they might not have ended up with large fan bases.

Those large audiences provide the key to the importance of the propaganda values inherent in much of the music recorded and produced during World War II. The sheer number of people who might hear a song at any one moment made the messages contained within all songs—but primarily war-related songs—all the more relevant, powerful and critical to the war effort.

Not only was the potential for listeners to hear such propaganda so great, but to the average citizen, those messages also seemed to emanate from somewhere other than the government. In effect, the messages seemed less like propaganda because they derived their origins from the entertainment world and the business of the

³⁰ "Any Bonds Today," written and composed by Irving Berlin, published by the American National Red Cross, 1941; "Keep 'Em Flying," words and music by Bill Coleman, published by Broadcast Music, Inc., 1941.

entertainment industry, not politics; because people like Glenn Miller, whom most people did not tie directly to the government, were recording and broadcasting those messages.³¹ The recording companies only recorded music which they believed would be successful; there was little margin in publishing endless government-produced songs full of overt propaganda. Instead, Miller, for one, believed that the real benefit of music in propaganda terms was in the fact that swing was genuinely American.³² The average citizen listening to privately-written and produced songs that included propaganda-style messages took to them more seamlessly as a result of this separation.³³

The changes in civilian society in terms of entertainment preferences had effects outside of the civilian environment. As a result of changing society, the armed forces of both countries soon found the need to create dance bands and make substantial other changes in the use of music in the armed forces. Those changes also forced the military of each country to consider the overall welfare and entertainment of troops, whether in training, or stationed abroad or actually at the front lines. Prior to World War II little organised entertainment existed for troops, particularly when not in training. In World War I, Irving Berlin's "Yip, Yip, Yaphank" catered directly to troops and included numerous songs that were hits in their own right in the civilian world. However, the American military authorities neither put much stock in the necessity for organised entertainment. In the United Kingdom, limited attempts to

³¹ Jane Mersky Leder, *Thanks for the Memories: Love, Sex, and World War II* (Washington DC: Potomac Books, Inc., 2009), 108–11. Thomas Cochran posited that there were actually far less attempts by the government to coordinate public opinion in World War II than there had been in the Great Depression. Using less overt methods to engage with public opinion empowered popular music, for instance, to do so. Thomas C. Cochran, *The Great Depression and World War II, 1939–1945* (Glenview, IL: Scott, Foresman, 1968), 181–82.

³² Jane Mersky Leder, *Thanks for the Memories: Love, Sex, and World War II* (Washington DC: Potomac Books, Inc., 2009), 108–11.

³³ Although not specifically about music, Elmer Davis, director of the OWI, said that the "easiest way to inject propaganda ideas into most people's minds, is to let it go in through the medium of an entertainment picture when they do not realise that they are being propagandised." The two aspects of popular entertainment had so much in common that his words indicated the extent to that which people would accept propaganda through their entertainment. Dorothy B Jones, "The Hollywood War Film: 1942–1944," *Hollywood Quarterly* 6 (1945–1946): 1–19.

organise formal entertainment for troops lasted for the duration of the war, but in general the efforts were haphazard and had no central planning or structure.

During World War II all this changed. The creation of the USO in the United States, which historian Kenneth Rose has accurately termed “critical to military morale,” and ENSA in the United Kingdom indicated the increased value placed on entertaining troops during wartime.³⁴ Massive mobilisation of entertainers, including musicians, took place on both sides of the Atlantic, as these two organisations scrambled to put themselves in place to provide all the entertainment needed. The USO and ENSA were the two most formal examples of scheduled, planned and organised mass entertainment for the armed forces. The USO and ENSA provided shows and concerts throughout their respective countries, as well as creating a vast network of overseas operations, so as to meet the requirements of men and women stationed far from home.³⁵ This network brought leisure and entertainment activities, as well as a “taste of home” to troops often stationed far from population centres in their own countries, or far from home in foreign countries.

The most significant examples of government intervention in the use of popular music during the war came in the form of the V-Disc and ORBS operations in the United States and the United Kingdom respectively. The formation of completely new programmes designed to provide popular music entertainment for the armed forces of each country was the single most important act in this sense for each country’s military and government during the war. Both programmes developed into massive enterprises, producing consistently high-quality products to be consumed by

³⁴ Kenneth D Rose, *Myth and the Greatest Generation: A Social History of Americans in World War II* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 163.

³⁵ For the purposes of this thesis, I have chosen to largely ignore the USO Clubs as they had far less importance to popular music than did the shows. Bloomfield, et al, argued that USO Clubs were “important no matter the location,” and while it is certainly true that many servicemen used them wherever they were stationed, to place too much importance on the clubs in terms of music would be to raise the position of those clubs too high when it comes to the provision of musical entertainment. When the USO Clubs hosted dances with live music, then they held far more direct influence, but in general this was not the case. Bloomfield, et al, *Duty, Honor, Applause*, 183.

troops throughout the world. Significant sums of money were put into these projects and their success provided welcome relief for those who received the end results. Each project provided the governing bodies with entertainment on a scale that otherwise could not be produced, and helped maintain morale levels throughout the vast military operations undertaken during the war.

This development in entertainment provision by the armed forces of the United States and the United Kingdom grew out of the convergence of the previously described changes in civilian entertainment mentality and the truly global nature of World War II. Far flung armies with modern, young men and women populating them required the leisure and entertainment that they had grown accustomed to in their civilian lives up to that point. World War II was the first war to bring these two elements together and provided the basis for all wars that followed in terms of the caring for the well-being of troops and the taking advantage of the consequent stimulus to the levels of morale.

Yet another development as a result in the changes found in contemporary civilian entertainment was that of the creation of the American Forces Radio. The new entertainment options provided for troops by the American Forces Radio service continued once they were sent abroad. Once stationed abroad, entertainment options that young Americans had become used to both as civilians, and then members of the military became harder to find. Not only was entertainment, including music, often considerably different to that available in the United States, the American bases in the United Kingdom were often in remote locations, far away from any cities with high quality and abundant night life, thus increasing the difficulties encountered by those troops. Live music in particular was difficult for American troops to access outside of their own bases and, consequently, many relied on the radio to listen to the hit songs of the day. Sometimes, shortwave radio broadcasts from the United States could be

received, but most often American troops were limited to broadcasts from the BBC. Naturally, BBC broadcasts favoured the tastes of the home nation. The BBC did make concessions to the nationalities stationed in the United Kingdom and produced and broadcast many shows specifically aimed at Americans, or Canadians, or other allied nations with significant populations within the United Kingdom. Despite these attempts to fulfil the listening needs of such diverse groups, American troops did not receive the amount they wished for, nor, often, the type of musical broadcasts they wanted.

The end result of the discrepancy between what American troops wanted or needed and what they could get from British society and the BBC led to the creation of the Armed Forces Radio Network (AFN). The network (which later went on to include television as well) broadcast American music, American radio programmes and American personalities across the United Kingdom. The AFN achieved what it set out to do. Conscious of the paucity of easily-accessible entertainment in remote areas of the United Kingdom, and the reality that the BBC had to primarily cater for the tastes of the British troops, the American military needed a radio network aimed at American soldiers, sailors and airmen and that is what the AFN provided. Had the military authorities not started the AFN programme, American troops would, no doubt, have found British entertainment options to satisfy at least some of their perceived desires. However, the provision of the AFN services meant that American troops stationed in Britain remained in touch with American popular music and American musical celebrities. The radio service provided an excuse for troops not to become fully immersed within British culture. At the same time, AFN also provided a service to the British public. Practically impossible to limit who could listen to AFN (despite the military's best attempts), British civilians living close enough to broadcast areas were able to pick up the signal. Consequently, the modern, exotic nature of

American music mentioned above, continued and increased its sway on young British listeners.

Across the Atlantic, as the sole official British provider of radio content and broadcasting in the United Kingdom during World War II, the BBC played an important role, for British-based audiences, in the many facets of radio—including popular music.³⁶ The BBC entered World War II at an increasingly strategically difficult period in its lifetime.³⁷ Internal divisions existed as to what role the BBC should play in the lives of Britons; was it the duty of the BBC to “educate” its listeners with programming of the highest cultural value, or should it be attempting to provide content that would appeal to the most listeners.³⁸ The war magnified those same issues even further, yet in some ways made the decisions a little easier or more obvious. The wartime conditions essentially led to the BBC determining its primary role as provider of radio programming from which the largest number of people could draw the most satisfaction. It is almost certain that the BBC would have ended up with this same conclusion without the interference of war, but it would not have happened so soon. Internally, many higher ranking members of the BBC, believed that the corporation’s primary responsibility was to educate and improve the culture of the listener. The war, through its many societal changes, helped force the issue to its natural conclusion much sooner.

³⁶ Asa Briggs noted that broadcasting gained influence as a result of the war. This assertion is amply reflected in the role that radio played during the war, as can be seen in this thesis. Asa Briggs, *Sound and Vision: The History of Broadcasting in the United Kingdom*, vols. 3 and 4 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970, 1979), 28. At the start of the war there were approximately seven million radio licenses in the United Kingdom, but by the end of the war, that number had risen to ten million, thus indicating the increase in use of radio and, as a result, the potential for even more impact on the day-to-day lives of Britons at war. *Ibid.*, 69.

³⁷ Briggs also provided a description of the kind of difficulties that the BBC dealt with throughout the war, and within that narrative, it is evident the positive role that popular music played in the BBC’s wartime programming. Briggs, *Sound and Vision*.

³⁸ Robert Mackay likened the internal divisions in the BBC to a front in the military war, with music as that which was being fought over. He used a similar analogy to place popular music at the forefront of everything the BBC did. As this thesis shows, music formed a massive part of the BBC’s wartime programming and that the discussion over how best to use that music concerned many within the BBC.

As war approached and upon the start of the fighting the BBC believed that radio broadcasting may cease completely or that, at the very least, that it would be substantially curtailed due to war. In drawing up contingency plans, BBC officials set out schedules that were made up of music programmes and news.³⁹ Music played this role because it came pre-packaged. A music programme could be put together ahead of time and did not require live broadcasters and could be run with a limited staff. The BBC believed that popular music was the best choice for such a role as it could be used as background and did not require someone to explain it to the listener, and much of that music had an American influence.⁴⁰ It was generally, agreed BBC officials, upbeat and positive music, and thus suited the purpose perfectly. Despite the BBC's aversion to popular music, the genre found its calling in the initial period of the war. The music filled the public's need for the familiar, and it cemented its place in British society through its daily invitation into people's homes.

Once past the first few weeks of war, the BBC quickly returned to a full and varied schedule. However, as the war progressed, its two networks, Home and Forces, began to diverge so that there was almost a classic and a popular network—Home being the more traditional and Forces the more modern. Despite this separation, over the course of the war there was a closing of the gap between the two networks as Forces gained more and more popularity and the BBC realised that its audience seemed to prefer the modern, more colloquial, nature of Forces over that of Home. Some of the Forces broadcasts' popularity amongst non-military listeners resulted from the fact that they realised that their loved ones in the Forces would be listening to that station. The desire for separated parties to be connected (in whatever way possible) increased the appeal of Forces for those separated people. Additionally,

³⁹ Gilbert Chase, just a year after the war ended, claimed that nothing was more important for radio than music, and his argument was borne out by both the BBC's consistent use of music, as well as that of American broadcasters, throughout the war. Gilbert Chase, ed., *Music in Radio Broadcasting* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1946), v.

⁴⁰ Angus Calder, *The People's War: Britain—1939–1945* (New York: Pantheon House, 1969), 311.

Forces broadcast a more generally appealing programme schedule, much of which was war-influenced, in that it connected with a younger, more active audience, less inclined to accept the preaching style of the traditional Home network broadcast.

Generally, the BBC's interaction with, and use of, popular music increased as World War II progressed. As big corporations sometimes are, the BBC was slow to react to the changes in society in the few years leading up to the war, many of which echoed those occurring in the United States, in terms of how people received their musical entertainment. While news certainly made up the largest portion of BBC programming, popular music in all its various guises provided the second largest amount of programme content for the war years.

World War II was an era of significant change in the music industry, while at the same time music affected the war in definite ways as well. Throughout the duration of the war, popular music and British and American wartime society influenced each other and affected the course the other took. Music dealt with the obstacles of war, but just as competently, rose to the challenges presented and made the most of them, adapting and innovating where necessary or possible. The war caused popular music to introduce war themes into its repertoire, to adapt to the difficulties caused by rationing and the drafting (and volunteering) of musicians and to provide entertainment for populations stressed by war.

World War II brought together popular music, modern, entertainment-based society and mass warfare, for the first time. The results lay in the changes to subject matters of lyrics, in how the military adapted its bands to cater for new tastes in society and to integrate new technology such as higher quality records and better radio broadcasting ability. Furthermore, World War II influenced the success and vibrancy of the live music scene, as increased wages allowed more people the opportunity to experience entertainment outside of the home. Broadcast music programmes and

networks were also forced to deal with wartime circumstances. Radio broadcasters included programmes aimed specifically at the armed forces or adapted existing programme schedules to incorporate shows for factory workers while still having to appeal to civilians. Each change was small in and of itself, but combined with each other created a system of music for morale when it was most needed. Never before had the music industry changed as significantly as it did during, and because of, World War II. Whereas before the war, popular music had existed purely to provide entertainment to listeners, during the war it took on the role of boosting morale and acting towards the eventual victory that the United States and the United Kingdom sought.

This thesis shows that popular music took on a unique role in World War II, which has never occurred since. Popular American music during World War II was positive and in favour of the war to a degree that has never occurred since then. Almost every song writer, band and singer threw their whole-hearted support behind the war, urging victory and demanding sacrifice. When put in a basic comparison to subsequent conflicts (which this thesis does not attempt to do), the position of popular music in World War II has never been replicated again. The USO and other mass entertainment has been used since then, but given the general messages of music from Vietnam, say, the total support shown by popular music in World War II was unique. More recent conflicts, such as those in Iraq and Afghanistan, are not even really comparable to World War II, such has been the change in how modern society engages with music, and certainly there have been few, if any, overtly pro-war songs in those conflicts. As music has moved ever more to appreciation in an individual sense, as opposed to the larger group sense (even in World War II, the group played a far larger role than it does now), the possibility of replicating the role of popular music in World War II has diminished to the highly unlikely at best.

This thesis also shows that warfare caused the stagnation of popular music as the industry addressed the needs of its audiences, which searched for the familiar, not wanting to contemplate the typical industry desire for something new at all times. Audiences, unwilling to let go of the safe, pre-war environment they knew and (obviously) preferred, clamoured for their favourite bands to provide the songs they knew before the war changed everything. The music industry naturally followed these wishes, anxious to reap profits in uncertain times, and conscious of not alienating their clientele so that they remained faithful to their bands and label.

And, finally, it shows that the relationship between popular music and World War II was dynamic and important for both sides of the equation. Without the advent of the war, the music industry would have continued in its pre-war mode. Changes in the most-popular style would no doubt have occurred more quickly, although the big band may have prevailed for longer. The travel restrictions and rationing that stopped most big dance bands from travelling the country would not have occurred and thus the progression to smaller combinations would not have taken place so soon. From the standpoint of the song writers, the war created a unique and useable dynamic that provided them with an almost endless supply of lyric possibilities. The biggest and most successful bands benefited from that same lyric/theme supply, as well as from the wartime conditions that created a growing economy. The military took advantage of the relationship between music and the war by increasing its provision of entertainment to its troops, building networks of entertainers that travelled the globe to bring a taste of home to troops. Military music changed too, from function to entertainment, as dance bands were added and marching music ceased to be used in its traditional troop-movement role. The changes that music underwent within the military have lasted since World War II. No longer needed for martial endeavours,

the developments introduced by the military during World War II have endured and can be traced back to the importance placed on music during those years of upheaval.

Unique as all periods of history are, the circumstances within both civilian and military societies in the United States and the United Kingdom during World War II provided the impetus for popular music's many changes, but equally for people to hold on to the familiar. This music provided the soundtrack to the war, a part of everyday life, while turmoil surrounded the globe. If we accept that part of what the Allies fought World War II for was to preserve a way of life, to continue to live in freedom, then popular music was fighting for.⁴¹ Popular music was a link to that way of life, a link to home for all those fighting in Allied forces around the world. As has been shown here, music did not directly influence the fighting of the war, not in terms of battles, of how they were fought, but it did influence those doing the fighting. Popular music, in its existence, its vivacity, its safety, its memory of good times and good places gave men and women another reason to fight and win World War II. A signal of what people thought about their nation, a symbol of hope for those spread around the world involved in conflict or still at home, powerless to help, this was truly, music worth fighting for.

⁴¹ Citing the myth of the "good" war, Kenneth Rose still acknowledged that Allied forces fought to preserve something that was exactly that noted here: good, safe, a way of life that people in the United States and the United Kingdom wanted and believed was worth the sacrifice. Rose, *Myth and the Greatest Generation*, 251.

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